



The leader

TEACHING SUMMARY

For forty years in the wilderness, Joshua lived in Moses' shadow, learning in the unseen places. Three lessons forged him into the leader who would one day cross the Jordan. The first lesson came at Rephidim. Amalek attacked Israel, targeting the weak, the weary, the stragglers at the rear. Moses turned to Joshua. "Choose men for us and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

Joshua obeyed. He led the warriors into the valley while Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed. Whenever his hands dropped, Amalek prevailed. Moses' arms grew weary. Aaron and Hur brought a stone for him to sit on and held his hands steady. Joshua overwhelmed Amalek with the sword. Victory above decided the battle won below. The sword in the valley depended on the lifted hands on the hill. Prayer was long-range artillery, and the sword was hand-to-hand combat. Without intercession, Joshua could do nothing. The mountain of prayer brought victory in the valley of conflict every time.

The greater Joshua fights our battles and intercedes for us still. He always lives to make intercession. The Spirit helps us in our weakness, interceding with groanings too deep for words, according to the will of God. When we do not know how to pray, the Spirit takes our confusion and translates it perfectly to the Father.

The second lesson came at the tent of meeting. Moses used to pitch it outside the camp, far off. Anyone who wanted to seek the Lord could go out to it. Whenever Moses entered, the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the entrance. The Lord spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his young assistant Joshua son of Nun would not depart from the tent.

All Israel watched from their own tent doors, worshiping at a distance. They found it intriguing, but they remained far away. But Joshua lingered. He loved the Lord's presence. He eavesdropped on conversations between Moses and God. He learned that without abiding, he could do nothing. The presence of the Lord was precious. It was everything.

Jesus would later say, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. No longer do I call you servants; a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”

Obedience proves love. Friendship with the Lord is intimate. It is radical. Joshua learned to linger in the tent. He learned to abide.

The third lesson came at Kadesh-Barnea, two years after leaving Egypt. Israel reached the border of the promised land. Moses sent twelve spies. Ten returned terrified. “The land devours its inhabitants. The cities are fortified and very large. We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

The people wept all night. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron. “Would that we had died in Egypt! Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes. “The land we passed through is exceedingly good. If the Lord delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Only do not rebel against the Lord. Do not fear the people of the land, for their protection is removed from them. The Lord is with us. Do not fear them.”

Fear kept Israel out. Faith would have brought them in. Perspective was everything. The same land, the same giants, the same grapes. Fear crippled their walk. Faith would have carried them forward.

Joshua learned that fear is a lack of faith. Faith is the currency of heaven. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

The wilderness did not go to waste on Joshua. He learned the power of prayer, the necessity of abiding, and the requirement of faith. He would need every lesson when the time came to cross the Jordan.

The desert places forge what the promised land requires. The lessons learned in wandering prepare for the battles ahead. Joshua emerged equipped. The Jordan waited.

And the greater Joshua waits, ready to lead His people home.

