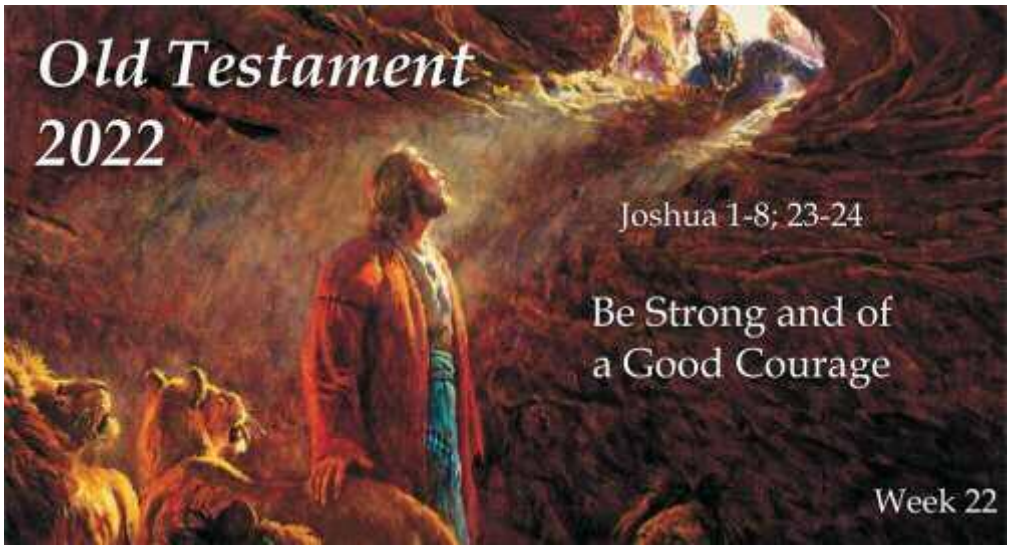


Week 22 is scheduled for study May 23-29, 2022. Courage requires doing things that intimidate us. Sometimes being faithful to God takes us into uncomfortable circumstances. We never have to worry about whether God will be faithful. Our worry should be whether we will be faithful to Him.

Day 1

As you study the book of Joshua, consider how the things you learn about the Israelites can increase your faith in Jesus Christ.

Joshua 1:1-9 - God will be with me if I am faithful to Him.

Here is a point of interest for you.

Alan Webster, an institute instructor and teacher for the Temple Preparation Seminar in the Reading England Stake. In the link at the beginning of this paragraph, Bro. Webster answered the following question in the Ensign/Liahona April, 1994: The scriptures teach that if we keep the commandments we will prosper. Yet many faithful members of the Church face hardships. Why aren't we always blessed with prosperity when we are living worthily?

Perspective makes a big difference

Here is a quote that might be useful for today's lesson.

> President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said: “The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature.”

Just as Joshua had to grow into his calling as the prophet who replaced Moses, so to do we need to exercise the same kind of faith in God that He can use our humble efforts and achieve great things in life. By great things I don't mean conquering wicked nations or anything so grand. I mean great as in raising a righteous family, establishing ourselves as faithful latter-day Saints, or becoming fully converted to the gospel of Christ and opening ourselves to the full offering of blessings it can bring into our life.

Just because we are righteous (which means holy) it doesn't mean we will be blessed with all the riches of the earth. God's first emphasis is and always has been on eternal blessings. What we do with those blessings may or may not affect what happens to us in mortality financially or socially. What happens to us in mortality is only important to us in the eternal sense if we put the eternal part of our lives at the forefront of our priorities. Once our eternal lives are provided for with the covenants and lifestyle that will get us there, we can then focus, if it is important to us, on making life in mortality more comfortable, or on how we can be a greater blessing to others while we are here.

If/Then

In today's verses the Lord gives Joshua an If/Then promise. If he fulfills the requirements God gives him, then God will do the following. I have rearranged the verses and am only including the actual parts of the If/Then.

IF YOU WILL

> 7 ... be ... strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

AND IF

> 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein ...

THEN

> 8 ... thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

AND

> 6 ... unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.

FOR

> 5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.
>
> 9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

These are the conditions of the covenant God made with Joshua and all Israel. Except for the part that they were displacing an entire people, everything else applies to us as well. The Lord has never removed the mandate to fear not man, but fear (reverence) God only.

Are these not the same basic promises God has made to us through the gospel Christ has given us? Are we not all promised that if we exercise our faith in Christ, be faithful to his commandments and covenants, that God will prosperous us and make it so that no one can stand against us as a people? Of course we recognize that by using the word prosperous we are not referring to monetary wealth and comfort, but to forgiveness of sin and eternal blessings and promises. The Lord said in more than one place that "... he that hath eternal life is rich." Can there be any kind of prosperity in mortality to rival this kind of wealth? Eternal life is, after all, the greatest of all the gifts of God, and the whole purpose for us being in mortality in the first place. This is why we can be strong and courageous in this life, for when God is for us, who can stand against us?

Day 2

As you study the book of Joshua, consider how the things you learn about the Israelites can increase your faith in Jesus Christ.

Joshua 2 - Both faith and works are necessary for salvation.

We have two ways we can look at the behavior of Rahab the harlot. If you are a cynic then she was an opportunist who saw safety by siding with the enemy who was going to take her city. She went with the most powerful to save herself. If you trust that Paul knew something of Rahab we don't know then Rahab was a sole believer in the God of Israel in a city God had sent teachers to, but who had rejected His messengers and were ripe for destruction. Paul says Rahab exercised faith by hiding the spies Joshua sent into the city. She put her life and that of her family on the line to extract a promise of safety when Israel came in to destroy Jericho.

The lesson of Rahab, is that believing isn't enough. Sometimes our belief requires action in the form of commitment. In her case the commitment required was to literally put her and her family's lives on the line to hide the spies of Israel from those who would have killed them. Talk about a heart pounding adrenaline rush! She had to hide them from the guards of the city, lie to the guards then gather her family who would come and then trust that the spies she protected would live up to their word. In all of Jericho there wasn't anyone else who was willing to exercise faith in the children of Israel.

I'll leave it up to you to decide how Rahab's situation may apply in your own life. Remember that most of the time God only requires small amounts of faith from us. But sometimes we are surprised by huge tests of faith that may require all we have to pass the test.

Did you notice in the lesson today that Rahab was an ancestor of both King David and Jesus Christ? Does that change your opinion of her at all? If such people can come through an ancestral line with a prostitute in it, can we possibly be in an ancestral line that God will bless as our posterity exercises faith in God also? I'm confident that Rahab had no idea at the time that she was to be a part of the greatest ancestry in history, or that her act of faith would inspire people for hundreds of generations to come.

Day 3

As you study the book of Joshua, consider how the things you learn about the Israelites can increase your faith in Jesus Christ.

Joshua 3-4 - I can experience God's "wonders" if I have faith in Jesus Christ.

In the days of Moses, the usual pattern of miracles was that the children of Israel complained or found themselves in want in some way, and the Lord surprised them with a miracle. But after two generations of a steady diet of miracles, the Lord was treating them in Joshua's time with a little more spiritual maturity. When the priests led the procession to cross the Jordan river, they were told the walk into the river then stand still. Joshua told them that once they entered the river the Lord would cause the water, like the waters of the Red Sea, to stand up on itself "in a heap." We don't know how deep the river was back then. The river today is far smaller than it was back then, for today they restrict the water's flow as it exits the Sea of Galilee. We do know that the bottom of the river was full of large rocks.

The Ark of the Covenant was carried by the priests alone, which was their custom, but they were followed by one representative of each of the tribes of Israel. They represented all of Israel that day. This act of faith, that God would do for Joshua what He had done for Moses, was God's way of demonstrating to Israel that it wasn't the prophet who performed the miracles, but He who caused them to happen. He wanted them to know that He was supporting Joshua just as He supported Moses before him. After Israel had all crossed over the river, each of the twelve representatives were sent back into the river bed to select a large stone to build a memorial of the events of that day from the rocks obtained from the very spot they crossed.

Our wonders

I am guessing that most of us live quiet lives, unseen by most, and not earth shaking in our daily activities. We aren't followed by paparazzi, reporters, or fans. Our life is pretty quiet in comparison to those who seek the limelight continuously. What wonders can we expect in our quiet lives?

The best way I have found to find the wonders God talks about in my own life, is to count my blessings. How many times have I had a prompting that has blessed the life of another, or even saved my own life? When we follow the promptings of the Spirit, it is natural that the wonders of the Lord are revealed in our life. When you give or receive a blessing, how many times have you had words given to you that only God could know?

How often have you served someone else and seen God's spirit of comfort poured out upon them through your simple ministrations?

Have you received a testimony of tithing, Fast Offerings, the Word of Wisdom, or other commandments? Has your willingness to attend the temple, read and contemplate your scriptures, or just say your prayers regularly, opened private moments between you and the Lord through the Spirit?

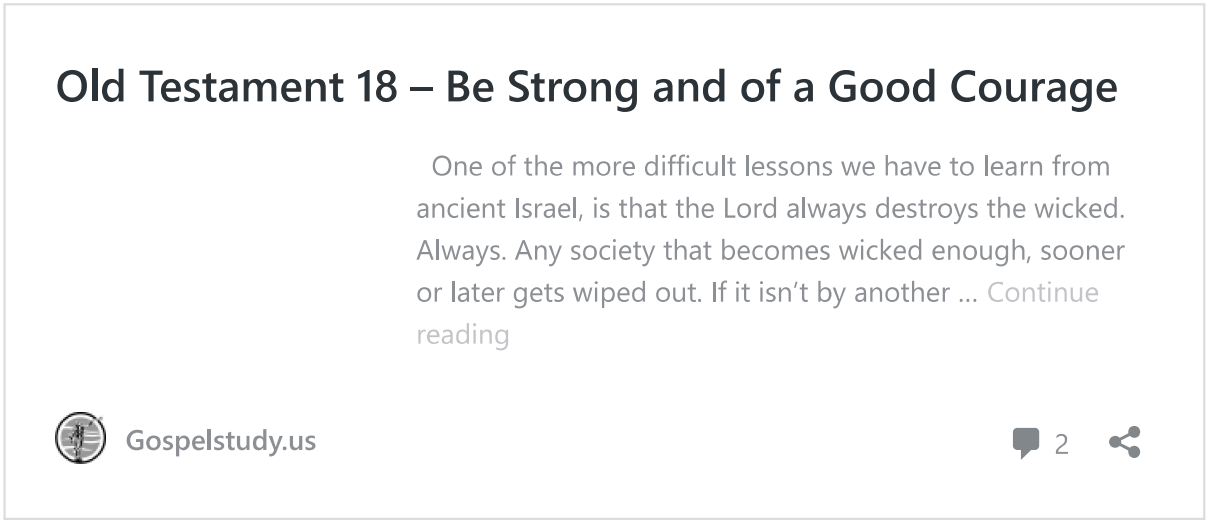
Yes, sometimes we do see real "wonders" in this life of the miraculous kind. But I think that our lives are already filled with many wonders of the smaller and more common variety, because of our daily obedience to the covenant path we have chosen to walk. We just need to remind our self occasionally that the wonders of the Lord come in all shapes and sizes, and that we haven't been ignored nor forgotten. God gives His wonders to all the obedient. We just have to open our eyes and acknowledge that we have been the recipient of those blessings all along.

Day 4

As you study the book of Joshua, consider how the things you learn about the Israelites can increase your faith in Jesus Christ.

Joshua 6-8 - Obedience brings God's power into my life.

The manual asks us to "consider how you battle temptation in your own life." They are using the battle of Jericho and Ai as their examples of the physical battles Israel fought. We are probably all aware of what the Israelites had to do to take down the walls of Jericho, but let's look at the battle from the perspective of the Israelites having to fight it. This article was written the last time I wrote commentary on the Old Testament. It has fictitious journal entries from one of the Israelites who fought in the battle. I hope you enjoy the change of perspective.



Using just the battle of Jericho, let's consider some of the issues of faith required of Israel to win the fight. The original city of Jericho was built on a mound or hill. It is estimated that there were several thousand citizens in the city, but they had built a high, strong wall all the way around the city so that no one could enter except through the gate. Even with overwhelming numbers, Israel couldn't take the city without great losses, because of their wall.

The Lord's instructions were simple: the symbol of His covenant with His people was to be out in the fore of the parade that encompassed the city each day. The trumpets were to continually announce that god's people were present, and that the work of their God was in process. The Israelites followed at a very respectable distance behind the ark and the priests with the trumpets - some 2,000 cubits, or 3,000 feet, some half a mile in distance. It just occurred to me that this showed a tremendous amount of confidence that they would send their most sacred object, the object that defined them as a people, a half mile ahead of them, and without any protection to guard it. This showed God's and Israel's complete confidence that they were safe from any harm.

The people were to be completely silent during their course around the city each day. Not a sound was to come from their mouths as long as they were there. What must they have been thinking to walk all the way around the city each day in silence, just looking at those massive walls that were so thick that they had houses built upon them. The seventh day must have been a day of great anticipation, for the Lord promised them that when they had encompassed the city a full seven times, and then heard the long blast from the ram's horns, they were to release their shouts with everything they had, and the walls would fall flat. That must have been almost impossible for them to even

imagine. Yet that is exactly what happened. The citizens were laid bare in a matter of a single moment, completely defenseless and ready for the slaughter.

Our Jericho

We all have obstacles in our life that can represent our own personal Jericho. These are habits, weaknesses, or situations in our life that seem insurmountable. Yet the Lord has given us promises and simple instructions He claims will help us come off conquerors of our own situations. The simplicity of the prophet's instructions, like study your scriptures, pray more often, attend the temple regularly, etc. may seem completely unrelated to the problem or obstacle in our life that needs to be overcome. But the Lord has a way of opening a path to victory in the most remarkable ways. We may find that what held us back from repenting fully suddenly begins to disappear as we do the things the prophet tells us to do to find the strength we need to overcome our problems. Our hearts may change, our desires become more pure, our patience increases, our ability to forgive enlarges and comes more easily.

God knows what must be done for us to come off the victor in our own battles. And often His instructions don't seem to be related to or sufficient according to our understanding to enable us to do what needs to be done. So the choice is ours. We can say, "I may not understand, but I will still do what I am instructed to do, because I am willing to exercise my faith that God can bring down the walls of my personal obstacle." Or we are left saying, "I don't understand how it all works, therefore it can't possibly work, so I won't even try."

Israel required that they take their belief in their God and in His promises to them and demonstrate their belief by an act of faith, that of walking around the walls in complete silence. It made no sense to them, but they were willing to hold off on judgment to see what the Lord would do. Are we just as willing to hold off on our judgment and do what God has commanded through His prophet, so we can also see just what God will do in our life?

Day 5

As you study the book of Joshua, consider how the things you learn about the Israelites can increase your faith in Jesus Christ.

Joshua 23-24 - Cleave unto the Lord your God.

Joshua's death signaled a time of unprecedented danger for Israel. For three or four generations they had been led by prophets who provided them with unparalleled miracles and signs of God's power and favor as a people. For more than forty years the people had traveled as a group, doing everything together. Their whole identity was bound up in their position of favor before the Lord. With Joshua's death, much of the source of that identity disappeared.

Whereas Israel had all been one - literally - they were now living in their own territory or lands, so Israel was now divided into independent states by tribe. The Ark of the Covenant was no longer in their midst, but in the tribe of Judah. That meant those who had their land far away from Jerusalem would have to travel to visit where the Ark was to offer their yearly sacrifices. They all had the law Moses had given them, but no prophet lived among them, which took away their only source of revelation for all of Israel.

Can you see why Joshua was so careful to warn them and remind them of their duties toward God? They had lived for generations as a protected people, highly favored by God. Joshua promised that God would continue to fight for them as they finished the work of driving out those nations that hadn't already been driven out. But they would have to do this on their own, without the help and direction of a prophet to lead them. Now the people would have to prove to God, and to themselves that they could remain faithful of their own volition, and with no one looking over their shoulder to remind them of their responsibilities to God.

This is also why Joshua was very careful to remind their leaders what happens to a covenant people when they violate their covenants with God. He warned them that allowing their children to marry into the surrounding nations would bring destruction upon all Israel. This is the same promise carried on down through the Nephite people. Whenever God gives His people a land of promise, and makes special covenants with them, they are always guaranteed His blessings and promises as long as they remain faithful to whatever covenant He makes with them, but violation of those covenants always ends in the destruction of the people.

There is only one path to take to guarantee that we will be blessed, both personally and as a people, and that is to cleave unto the Lord. By each family being careful to keep the

commandments, the whole nation is blessed and prospered. Everyone is happier and safer. It is only when we personally abandon the Lord and His commandments that we no longer have claim on His protection and guidance.

FHE/Personal Study

Joshua 4:3, 6-9 - Testimonies and customs

We are fickle people. We forget our promises. We forget why we did something in the first place. And we tend to forget to teach the importance of what was so important to us to our children and grandchildren. This forgetting business is a destructive force that is always with us, and must constantly be battled. Preventing one generation to the next from forgetting the importance of something that is vital to their happiness and protection requires ritual, monuments, customs, and whatever else it takes to teach our young and remind ourselves what our duty to God is from day to day.

In the latter days, one of the signs of the times is the destruction of all that created who we are today. Evil designing people want to remove all the reminders of the past that created all that was good about our nation, no matter what country we live in. They destroy our monuments, rewrite our history, twisting it to suite their wicked purposes, and teaching our young that those God blessed us with, the good men and women who inspired us in our youth, were really just untrustworthy people we should vilify. No matter what country we live in, God sends good people in every generation to set examples for us to follow to be better people. But how do we remember them and what they did for our society?

It is through monuments, big or small, plaques, paintings, memorials, books, and a host of other methods that we keep the memory of their accomplishments and teachings alive. Even in our own families, how do we teach our children and grandchildren about who their ancestors were, how valuable they were, what they believed in, what they stood for, and how that affects the present generation today? Are we reading their journals to see their daily struggles and experiences with God? Are we writing our own journals for future generations, with an eye toward teaching them to look to God and live?

Society today discourages us from venerating our ancestors, from remembering our heroes, and from remembering our country's past. It doesn't serve the purposes of those who want to rewrite history to serve their own designs for us to remember these things. This is why it is so important that we make a part of our life the act of remembering. We must include all of our family and friends, our posterity, and make it an important part of our life. Isn't this what was built into the law of Moses? God commanded them to memorialize what He did for Israel by remembering what He did for them the night He passed over Israel, and smote the first born of Egypt. He memorialized the miracle of passing over Jordan by having one member of each of the twelve tribes collect a large stone and build a memorial to remind future generations of God's goodness and faithfulness in their lives. And don't we all take the sacrament each week and personally make the promise to remember Christ each day of our life? How's that going?

God is no less on our side than He was during the life of Moses and Joshua. He is actively participating in our life each and every day that we keep His commandments. But how are we teaching and demonstrating God's faithfulness to our family, friends, and children? What family customs have we set up for our children to teach them of God's mindfulness of our family? Do we have special days of the year in which we do things to remember the stories of our ancestors who were good people, and who led us to find the gospel? When we participate in national holidays or birthdays, church ordinances like baptisms, baby blessings, weddings, etc. do we take the time to remind ourselves and our family about our duties toward our God, because of all the blessings He so generously gives us?

My point here is that God is not going to come to our Family Home Evening, or interrupt our personal scripture study to remind us of His blessings and faithfulness in our life. We must do that on our own. It is we who must choose to remember Him each day, and to choose to teach of His goodness to our children. We must be His witnesses to our family and friends. We mustn't be shy about our devotion to God. It is we who must cleave to Him, not the other way around. And we must demonstrate to our children and grandchildren how that is to be done. When Israel had problems and had to be corrected by God with punishments, it was precisely because they didn't take Joshua's counsel to heart. They didn't faithfully teach their families to cleave to the Lord, and as a whole nation, family by family, they wandered off the covenant path.

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

OT22-2022 - Be Strong and of a Good Courage

Week 22