

PART 2

How would you answer this question: When did you become a man? Not sure how to answer?

You may be wondering if manhood is determined by age, experience, responsibility, affirmation, or something else.

Sadly, most men do not know how they got to be a man. Other men may wonder if they really are men or just grown up boys.

It is amazing how passivity, irresponsibility and mediocrity often rule in the lives of men. The biblical definition of manhood seems to be unknown to some men. Instead of men being men, they exhibit perpetual boyhood triviality.

For this reason, I have chosen this series to introduce you to Joshua, a man whose story and life achievement clearly demonstrate a vital character trait for men: courage.

Courage is a voluntary risk to do what is right despite the momentary fear of what could go wrong.

As Moses' successor, Joshua had some big shoes to fill. When we look back to men who greatly impacted history—especially those in our own nation—there are plenty of empty shoes needing to be filled today. Unfortunately, there are often more shoe polishers (politicians) in Washington D.C. than there are shoe fillers (leaders).

Joshua was not only up to the challenge before him in both leadership and courage, he was prepared for battle!

Read **Joshua 1:3, 5-6**

Courage is a voluntary act. It involves closing the door on the past, considering God's promises for today, and then stepping up and stepping out to bring change for the future.

BE MEN'S FORUM COURAGEOUS

³Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses... ⁵No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ⁶Be strong and **courageous**, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them... ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and **courageous**. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." —Joshua 1:3, 5-6, 8-9 ESV (*bold added for emphasis*)

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. ¹²Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. ¹³Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. ¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. —Psalm 19:7-14 ESV

Read **Joshua 1:8-9**. According to these two simple verses, we learn that Joshua did not blindly muster his courage. There were things he understood and believed that would secure his future and strengthen his resolve. Biblical courage is not something you manufacture on your own from within.

What is the truth-source for your life? How do you determine what is right and wrong? To whom do you turn for guidance, judgement, etc.?

Boy Scout Oath: *On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my Country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.*

This oath, like all such oaths, recognizes a basic belief in God with a pledge to keep physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight. How can you know something is crooked unless you have a tool?

What is our tool? The Bible!

Success in life is not a secret to be discovered; it is a journey experienced through awareness, agreement and alignment with God's Word.

Courage is having the audacity to believe that the majority is not always right, but God is and His Word endures.



Read the Book! Joshua did. Moses kept a written record of God's words and actions. Today, his writings are known as the *Pentateuch*, the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

What can we learn from Joshua?

The Exercise of Listening to God's Word

Many people only want to *talk* about their opinions about God. However, the starting point is to *listen* to God. We are instructed in Scripture to "be still, and know" (Psalm 46:10 ESV).

Living a life of courage is not just reading Scripture aloud or discussing it with others; it is getting God's Word into your mind and heart—hearing, processing, thinking about and meditating on each word. Scripture should be more than "talk" in your life; it should transform your thoughts!

"We are not what we think we are; but what we think; we are."

The best way to hear is to READ the Word of God. "...faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17 ESV). Read thoughtfully, slowly, repeatedly, prayerfully, imaginatively and inquisitively.

What should you read and hear in God's Word?

Biographies. Study the lives of people in the Bible: David, Nehemiah, Joshua, etc.

Letters. Consider reading one letter a day for a month: James (5 chapters), 1 Peter (5 chapters), 1 John (five chapters). As you read, God will speak to you through His Word.

Proverbs. 31 chapters, 31 days. Get in the pattern of reading one chapter a day. By the end of the month, you will have read through the book of Proverbs for instruction on how to be healthy, wealthy and wise.

Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Learn about Jesus.

Words. Research words or themes in the Bible. In my recent message series, *What Every Christian Needs to Know*, I included "words" such as *baptism, hope, thankfulness, temptation, grace, forgiveness*, etc.

Read **Psalm 19:7-14**. Note the six characteristics of the Word of God and the six benefits found in each characteristic.

The Essentials of Meditating on God's Word

Meditation is to the mind what digestion is to the body: break it down, sort it out, send it around.

I learned this quote long ago and it has proven useful when meditating on God's Word: "I kept six honest serving-men

(they taught me all I knew). Their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who."

—Rudyard Kipling

Meditation Allows You to Sort and Distribute the Word of Life

Ask yourself these questions as you read and study:

Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a sin for me to avoid?

Is there a command for me to obey?

Is there a lesson for me to learn?

Is there a blessing for me to enjoy?

Meditation Allows You to Internalize and Memorize God's Word

You may think you are not good at memorization. However, if I offered you \$100 for every verse you memorized, I am guessing you would be better at it than you think. The issue with memorization is not ability; it is motivation. You just need a little boost to get started. Let me challenge you, or better yet, challenge each other to get the Word in your lives. Develop a Word-driven life. When you know the Word of God, you will know the will of God!

The Excitement of Acting on the Word of God

Joshua read and reflected upon the Word, and as a result, he was prepared and ready for battle. The Word provided resolve and fuel amid conflict, resistance and risk.

Courage does not always involve loss and sacrifice; it is often about movement and change. "And Joshua commanded the officers of the people..." (Joshua 1:10 ESV). In preparation for this movement into the Promised Land, Joshua selected two spies, not 12. Joshua had learned that lesson. Appointing a committee is sometimes the surest way to see that nothing gets done!

"... you have not passed this way before" (Joshua 3:4 ESV). The people of Israel quit walking the same way as before. They took a new path.

It is not how much you know that counts in life, but how much you grow. Sadly, many of those surrounding Joshua knew the Word, but had not embraced it, acted upon it or applied it to their lives. In the New Testament we find a great challenge and warning concerning Scripture: "...be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves (James 1:22 ESV).

The greatest translation of the Bible is the translation of God's truth in and through your life.

Remember, **courage is having the audacity to believe that the majority is not always right, but God is and His Word endures!** ■