

Essentials of Leadership, part 2

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, June 5th 2022

Scripture Reading

Josh. 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: 2 "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. 5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe 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. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

I. Introduction

This is our third and last Sunday dealing with verses 1-9. We have spent this long on it because (as an introduction to the book) these verses give foundational principles that will later be expanded upon. We first looked at seven inescapable concepts that make or break the ability of Christians to capture and transform a culture.

Then we began looking at how Joshua exemplifies fourteen principles of leadership. Since it has been a couple of weeks, let me quickly review the first eight.

We saw from verse 1 that even after you become a formal leader you should seek an upward mentor and never stop learning. We saw that even Moses had an upward mentor in Jethro. But since everyone leads to some degree (even young children) I encouraged everyone to have upward mentors, to have sideways mentors between equals or friends, and to have a downward mentorship with someone who wants to grow. The young children can help younger children to learn responsibilities.

Second, we saw that the phrase, "*after the death of Moses,*" summarized the incredibly long time that Joshua had to wait before he could fulfill his life calling of conquering the land of Canaan. That wait called for patience with God's timing. All of us have to wait for the things

God has called us to do. Though David was anointed and called to be king by God Himself, he still had to wait fourteen years before God put him into the office of king. Moses had to wait forty years in Midian before he was ready to lead Israel out of Egypt. So patience is often an essential characteristic that leaders have learned.

Third, we saw from verse 1 that a leader should learn to commune with God. That can be seen both in the specific guidance God gave, as well as in the words “it came to pass,” which showed a waiting upon God before he got that guidance.

Fourth, we saw that a leader’s leader must first prove himself to be a servant’s servant. Service is the gateway to leadership just as Christ’s service was the gateway to His Kingship.

Fifth, we saw from verse 2 that a leader should not be chained to past failures or even to past successes. As Paul said of himself, “forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

Sixth, we saw that a formal leader should be a person with a God-given vision and purpose and be able to share that vision with others.

Seventh, we saw that a leader must lead by example and be a man of action who can help others to take action.

Eighth, we saw in verse 4 that a leader should have written measurable goals that stretch his faith. God’s goals laid out for Joshua were huge, were well-defined, and were measurable.

II. A leader must always live in the presence and power of God (v. 5)

And that brings us up to verse 5, which shows that a leader must always live in the presence and power of God. This is yet another thing that distinguishes Spirit-filled leaders from ordinary leaders. Verse 5 says,

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

This is not talking about God’s omnipresence. God is always present with everyone whether they obey Him or not; whether they are in hell or not. Instead, this is a kind of presence that can be lost. For example, God told Israel in Exodus 33:3 “I will not go with you because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.” Obviously God was present in one sense. But God said, “I will not go up with you...” In some sense they had lost God’s presence.

The clue to the kind of presence we are talking about is in the words, “*as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.*” How was God with Moses? Exodus 33:11 says that He was with Moses as a friend. This reflected the same kind of relationship that God had with Abraham

who was also called the friend of God three times (2 Chron. 20:7; Is. 41:8; James 2:23). As a friend, God protected Moses, communed with Moses, took away his fear, guided him, and manifested Himself to Moses. And He is promising to do the same for Joshua.

Now, it may seem audacious for Hebrews 13 to quote this passage and say that the same promise applies to us. But it does. Amazingly it does. Hebrews 13:5-6 says,

Heb. 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said [and now comes the quote], "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Every once in a while in our corporate readings we read the verse that says, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you." That seems audacious to some people. But let me read some verses that give the same promise of God's presence with us. In John 14 Jesus said,

John 14:21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

The Greek word for "manifest myself" is ἐμφανίζω. It means to have a tangible experiential presence. And he didn't just promise that to the disciples. He promised it to anyone who loves God and keeps His commandments. Well, that really puzzled Judas, and in the next verse it says,

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

Wow! The Trinity will make their home with us? Yes. That's what it says. That's the kind of manifestation of His presence that can take place. There is a presence of relationship, friendship, and fellowship. Many intellectuals have a hard time appreciating this, and they minimize it as mysticism. But it is not. The Puritans were about as academic as you could get, yet they reveled in the presence of God. Richard Sibbes's writings make my heart yearn for a closer and closer relationship with God. John Owen (one of the most brilliant of the Puritans) wrote a 450 page book with this typically long Puritan title: "Of Communion With God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Each Person Distinctly, in Love, Grace, and Consolation; or The Saint's Fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Unfolded." In that book you will discover the numerous promises that show we can have God's presence with us as Joshua did. And we need it, if we are to be effective leaders. Let me read a couple of other Scriptures: Jesus said,

John 14:18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

That coming to us removes a sense of insecurity and orphan spirit and somehow makes us feel like we belong. And isn't that what Romans 8:15 says? Yes. It says,

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

And there are hundreds of verses that speak of this closeness of relationship with God that sustains us, gives us wisdom, protects us, loves us, and directs us. Unlike worldly leaders who rely on their own wisdom and make their own way, God is the one who stands by us, ministers through us, gives us wisdom for leadership, and blesses our efforts. I know elders in Reformed churches who are in office mainly because they are successful businessmen, or successful teachers, or they have certain degrees. But that is not enough. Without God’s manifest presence in our lives, our leadership will not produce everlasting dividends.

Are there conditions for experiencing God’s presence? Yes. We’ve already read some. In John 14 Jesus said that He would manifest Himself to us if we love Him and keep His commandments. That “if” is a condition. Granted, God’s grace enables us to have the condition, but it is a condition. Isaiah 59:2 says,

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

The bottom line is that it is not an exaggeration for Hebrews 13 to apply the promises given to Joshua to each of us. We need God’s presence just as Joshua did. Joshua was not expected to do anything apart from God’s presence and power going with Him.

And I want to make a side-note about God’s sovereign initiative in making His presence known in the first place. I mentioned the condition of loving God and keeping His commandments. But God first gave us the capacity and ability to love and obey Him. We love because He first loved us. So even these conditions are not a works righteousness condition. God’s sovereignty is not just found at election or in calling and regeneration. God’s sovereign grace continues what He began so that no one can take credit. As Paul said, “what do you have that you did not receive” (1 Corinthians 4:7). That’s a good reminder - what do you have that you did not receive? Nothing.

God had already hinted at His sovereign grace when he used the word “given” in verses 2 and 3. Canaan was a gift of grace. There was nothing in Joshua that could merit the gift of Canaan. Nor was Joshua sufficient to take it on his own. Certainly the *concurrence* of Joshua and Israel with God’s grace was required, but it was God alone who would be able to give it to them, and who would enable them to conquer, and who would enable them to maintain the land. And as soon as they forgot that fact, they would lose battles (as they did in Ai, when they presumed to be able to conquer in their own strength in chapter 7). So if it takes God presence and power to make Joshua successful, then it was imperative that Joshua learn to always live in God’s presence and power.

That was something that academic Phil had to learn way early on - my academics do not count without God’s anointing. It doesn’t matter what my task is (whether counseling, preaching, writing, administration, etc) I commit my ways to God and acknowledge that without His blessing, my labors will not be successful. The first part of my mission statement (which was solidified in the early 1990s) states,

I want to live out my callings as husband, father, pastor, writer, teacher and reformer with a constant dependence upon God's authority, presence and power and with an eye to pleasing Him rather than man. I want every facet of my ministry to be characterized by the overflow of the Spirit's power. I want to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection in all that I am and do.

Have I perfectly lived that out? No, but that is my desire. So, principle 9 of leadership is that a leader must always live in the presence and power of God. That cannot be emphasized too much.

III. A leader must be aware of his own weakness (vv. 6,7,9), which will in turn force him to appropriate God's strength and courage (previous point)

But point 10 is the flip side of principle 9 - a leader must be aware of his own weakness, which will in turn force him to appropriate God's strength and courage. Some people give up when they recognize their weaknesses and inabilities. And I say, No, no, no. That is a necessary *prerequisite* of a good leader.

Now, granted, we tend to think the very opposite. We tend to think that the people God uses are famous, or eloquent, or brilliant. And we get discouraged because we are not strong enough to do the job. We let George do it because we think someone else could do it better than we could. And consequently we do nothing of significance because all of us are weak and none of us can do the things that God calls us to do.

God's words to Joshua may at first seem to imply that God will only use us if we are successful, strong and bold. In verse 9 God said to Joshua, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." But think about that for a moment. Why did God have to tell Joshua several times over in this chapter "Be strong"? Because Joshua was so conscious of his inadequacy and his weakness. God said, "Be strong" because Joshua felt weak. He said, "Do not be afraid," because Joshua's heart was failing him; he was frightened. God said, "Neither be thou dismayed," which meant that the man to whom He was speaking might be tempted to quit the job. Right? Do you ever feel like that?

There may be some here who are tempted to throw in the towel on something you know God is calling you to do because you are so weak. It is when men and women feel like that, that they sense their dependence upon God the most, and God picks them up and uses them in a mighty way. This is one of the key themes in the book we gave you, *Gentle and Lowly*. It takes our eyes off of ourselves and onto Jesus. Most of us are too big for God to use. We are too full of our own schemes and our own ways of doing things. We are too self-confident. God has to humble us and break us and empty us. Scripture says, He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Paul said, "when I am weak, then I am strong." It is good to feel inadequate concerning the task that lies before us *if (and only if) it drives us to depend more upon the Lord*. So principles 9 & 10 belong together.

IV. A leader should lead for the benefit of others (v. 6b)

The next leadership principle is found in the second part of verse 6. Verse 6 says,

Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Why was Joshua to be strong and of good courage? - “...for to *this people* you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give *them*.” Joshua was doing this for Israel. He was leading for the benefit of others. And all true Biblical leadership is designed by God to be for the benefit of others.

By the way, this was one of the rules for *all* spiritual gifts. Did you know that formal leadership is a spiritual gift? While all are called to lead by example, some are gifted with leadership. And here is what 1 Peter says about all gifts. “As each one has received a gift, *minister it to one another...*” (1 Peter 4:10). Gifts weren’t for the purpose of building *you* up and making *you* successful. Gifts were given by God for the purpose of benefiting others. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says much the same: “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one *for the profit of all.*” When leaders begin to use their office for self-seeking and self-serving purposes, they quickly and easily slide into the Diotrophes syndrome of abusive leadership. And we are seeing abusive leaders being exposed in many denominations. Again, all of these principles hang together. This hangs together with the servant’s heart principle that was stated earlier. Jesus called the group of twelve apostles to serve “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). So Joshua was called to lead for the benefit of others.

V. A leader should be anchored in the promises of a God who cannot lie (v. 6c)

Point 12 says that a leader should be anchored in the promises of a God who cannot lie." What kept Joshua going when the going was tough? What energized him when friends turned against him? What kept him from giving up in the face of impossibilities? It was the promises of God. Verse 6 says that this inheritance was “the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.” If God swore to give the land, God’s very character and reputation was at stake if these promises failed. And every leader will at some point be tempted to become cynical, negative, and/or a doubting Thomas. Meditating on the promises of God and claiming the promises of God is the cure - and is critical to success. If leaders act as if God’s promises are true, his or her followers will begin to act as if God’s promises are true, and there will be a culture of faith that flows from those promises.

And there are various kinds of promise. Eschatology deals with one category of promises - promises related to the future of planet earth. Christian leaders across the world must once again be energized by the promises that God will give the nations to King Jesus; that the Great Commission will not be a failure; that He will build His church and the gates of hell will not win - they will lose. If the whole church would once again embrace the Postmillennial faith of the Puritans, it would become an unstoppable force.

But there are other categories of promises besides eschatology. There are hundreds of promises that give personal faith for our sanctification - and when victory over sin habits seems impossible, it is important to rebuke one's own lack of faith and begin meditating upon such promises.

There are promises related to the Bible being a perfect foundation for taking dominion of every facet of life. In many Christian Colleges, faith in those promises is undermined.

There are promises related to victory over the demonic hosts that are arrayed against us. Do we take those seriously?

You see, here is the problem : if we don't believe what God has promised, we will be like the ten spies and discourage the hearts of other Christians and never have the faith to conquer. Years ago my son gave me a very vivid example of this. When he first moved to California he visited a lot of churches. But one of the churches was especially depressing. I know the pastor of this church. The pastor preached a faith-killing sermon. He held to a radical two-kingdom worldview and didn't believe the Bible applied to most of life. He was also a pessimillennialist who believed that the church would eventually be extinguished. The whole message was so discouraging. And five minutes after the service ended, everyone split - absolutely no fellowship. It reemphasized to Ben how important it is for leaders to be grounded in God's promises and to ground their followers in God's promises.

By the way, this is what it means to pray according to God's will. Christ was not asking us to guess the Father's secret will. Deuteronomy tells us that the secret things belong to God, but the things which are revealed belong to us and to our children so that we can do them. So Jesus was calling us to pray the Scriptures - to pray His revealed will. And when we do that in faith for kingdom purposes, He answers. So challenge yourselves to be grounded in God's promises.

VI. A leader must have a strong, courageous, and convictional living out of God's law (v. 7)

Next principle: We have looked at general strength and courage in verse 6, but strength and courage is also needed for embracing God's law. Why? Because God's law is so out of sync with the world's way of thinking. It makes us seem strange to them (or what the King James translation calls a peculiar people to them). So verse 7 says,

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

Leaders need to be courageous in standing strong for truth because there is often pressure to compromise from fellow leaders and from followers who still think like the world. People don't realize the powerful impact of peer pressure and why it takes courage to stand against it. Solomon Asch did a scientific study in the 1950s showing the dangers of group influence, and that study has been repeated numerous times with the same results since then. When he asked a group of students to provide the correct answer to an easy

question, 95% answered correctly. However when actors were inserted to confidently assert the wrong answer, the number of students who responded correctly fell from 95% to 25%. The answers were altered by peer pressure, or what he called evaluation apprehension - the fear of looking stupid before one's peers. This is what makes Christian politicians cave in and compromise on principles over and over again - evaluation apprehension. King David felt it in himself, but he vowed, I will not be ashamed of your statutes when I speak before kings. He was tempted to, but he resisted it. If Joshua needed courage and strength of resolve to not be embarrassed by anything in God's law, we need that same God-given strength and courage.

And the modern church has for the most part failed in this area. Let me give you some recent examples that are particularly blatant:

1. God's law in Exodus 21:22 calls us to treat abortion as murder and to make it a crime to take part in the murder of babies. Yet somehow this law seems too harsh to Pro-life organizations, and they oppose any legislation that might even remotely be interpreted as making abortion *to be treated as murder*. For example, in early May of this year, Louisiana had a great bill that declared "the right to life and equal protection of the laws to all unborn children from the moment of fertilization by protecting them by the same laws protecting other human beings." What could be wrong with saying that a child should have the same protection of the law in the womb as it has outside the womb? You would think that is a no-brainer. But it made compromised antinomian Christian proliferators irate. More than 70 pro-life organizations vigorously lobbied against that bill and wrote an open letter¹ stating that all women who have abortions are victims and should never be treated as guilty since they already have enough inward guilt. It's a bizarre letter. This despite the fact that the bill itself had language protecting women from prosecution if they were forced or coerced into getting an abortion. But the pro-life organizations don't want the men or women be treated as a murderer. It's too out of step with our culture's attitudes. They have failed God's test of loyalty to Him before loyalty to others. It's possible they have evaluation apprehension. The cynic in me makes me think that abolishing abortion would end Right to Life's need for existence and their cushy salaries. But whatever the motivation, whether fear of public opinion or something else, there are 70 pro-life organizations that won't get a dime of my money because they would prefer that abortion continue in Louisiana than to agree with God's law that abortion is murder. It's a horrendous failure. Everyone of them has turned to the left of God's law - and it appears that they have done so because of fear of public opinion. But Jarrod shared some good news recently. Thankfully the Southern Baptist denomination has recognized their failure in this regard and had an abolish abortion resolution passed last year. Praise the Lord. They went from affirming abortion in 1972, to apologizing for that in 2015, to wanting to abolish abortion last year. So, miracles do happen.

¹ For the text of the letter, see <http://www.nrlc.org/uploads/communications/051222coalitionlettertostates.pdf>

2. Another example: Genesis 1 is so clear in what it means that even a child can understand it. Jesus certainly took it in its literal meaning of a world created shortly before man was created - all in six literal days. But this is so out of step with our culture's evolutionary thinking that Christian scholars are embarrassed by it and have come up with all kinds of theories that try to insert billions of years into Genesis 1. It's a classic example of evaluation apprehension - not wanting to look stupid in the eyes of their peers. So far, I have run across 21 different theories of what Genesis 1 means - theories that don't even remotely reflect the clear language of Genesis 1.
3. Another example is the Revoice movement. It purports to be an attempt to lovingly reach the LGBTQ community, but in reality it is bringing the LGBTQ thinking, feelings, and worldview into the church. There are pastors in the PCA, the Evangelical Free Church, and other churches who call themselves celibate Gay pastors, or Celibate Trans pastors. Romans 1 is clear that a gay identity or even approving of a gay identity is something to be shunned. You would think that was pretty straightforward. But rather than repenting of the gay culture, they affirm it, celebrate it, and say that much of it should be brought into the church. After a couple of years of fighting, the PCA voted on whether to add this qualification for pastors: > "BCO 16-4. Officers in the Presbyterian Church in America must be above reproach in their walk and Christlike in their character. Those who profess an identity (such as, but not limited to, "gay Christian," "same sex attracted Christian," "homosexual Christian," or like terms) that undermines or contradicts their identity as new creations in Christ, either by denying the sinfulness of fallen desires (such as, but not limited to, same sex attraction), or by denying the reality and hope of progressive sanctification, or by failing to pursue Spirit-empowered victory over their sinful temptations, inclinations, and actions are not qualified for ordained office."

Get this - what they were voting on *was simply for pastors*. Yet even *that* vote was lost. We see denomination after denomination straying to the right hand and left hand of God's laws. Why? Verse 7 tells us why - they lack a Spirit-given courage to embrace God's law without embarrassment. What about you? Do you have evaluation apprehension?

VII. A leader should constantly study and meditate on God's Word (v. 8)

The next principle is given in verse 8. Just as kings were required to write out God's entire law word-for-word and study it diligently, all leaders should constantly study and meditate upon God's Word. The last picture in your outline has a quote from the Puritan writer, Thomas Brooks. It says, "It is not he who reads most, but he who meditates most who will prove to be the choicest, sweetest, wisest, and strongest Christian." God told Joshua,

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe 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.

Now let's stop and think about that for a moment. Joshua was not a pastor. He was not a seminary professor. He wasn't even a teacher. He was a military man. Why on earth would he need to meditate on the Pentateuch day and night? Why would such meditation make him successful in his calling? A number of reasons. First, the Bible does speak to everything Joshua did. But secondly, meditation draws us close to God. Third, it shows loyalty and devotion. Loyalty to God's law is loyalty to the law-giver, God. And loyalty to God is key to success in anything we do. Jesus said, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). Psalm 1:1-3 universalizes this very promise to everyone. And 1 Timothy 4:15 applies it especially to leaders, saying, "Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all."

I have found meditation on God's Word to be one of the most powerful tools for overcoming my sins and character flaws. I have used meditation to overcome fear and anxiety. I have used meditation to completely rid my thoughts of perverted thinking when I was in my twenties. I have used meditation on God's word to stir up faith. So what is involved in meditation?

1. First, select a passage from the Bible. You can do that topically to address issues you are facing. Or you can go through the Psalms. Memorization is even better, but if you are poor at memorizing the Bible, at least select a passage to ponder on.
2. Second, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you meditate on the passage.
3. Third, read the passage a line at a time and then stop - preferably reading it out loud. Interestingly, the word for meditate has the "out loud" idea built right into it. And commentators² say that's also why verse 8 says that the Word *shall not depart from your mouth*. It was being spoken softly to oneself. Doing it out loud also helps to keep your mind from wandering. But read or recite the passage out loud. That reinforces the Scripture through three gates of learning- sight, hearing, and saying.
4. Fourth, once you've read the line, paraphrase it and try to understand each word.

² One example: "The common thread here is an activity that is done aloud. With reference to meditating upon the law, the idea is that one reads or recites the law aloud to oneself. In the ancient world, almost all reading was done aloud. Augustine remarked in a well-known passage in his Confessions (6.3) that he noticed St. Ambrose reading without moving his lips, a spectacle odd enough for him to comment upon. Silent reading was rare, although not unknown in the ancient world (see F. D. Gilliard, "More Silent Reading in Antiquity: Non Omne Verbum Sonabat," JBL 112 [1993]: 689-96)." David M. Howard Jr., Joshua, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998).

5. Fifth, turn that line into a prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, or supplication. This hugely helps to apply the passage.
6. Then go on to a new line in the passage and repeat until you have gone through the passage.
7. Once you have gone through the entire passage, ask God to show you if you have missed anything else and go through the passage once again, seeing it as God speaking to your heart.

I read a Puritan who likened meditation to a cow chewing on its cud. Just as a cow keeps burping up balls of grass and chewing and rechewing them, we chew on God's Word asking God to transform us with that Word and asking Him to make the Word part of us. It is impossible for you to make meditation on Scripture a daily part of your regimen without the Lord blessing you with huge growth and without your relationship with God Himself strengthening. David Howard said,

The key to Solomon's success was the same as for Joshua: "Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the LORD gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged." The vocabulary in this passage echoes that of Joshua 1 in remarkable ways. In both cases, God's chosen leader was to focus on knowing and obeying God's laws. That was the key to their success as leaders.³

VIII. Six more applications of these verses

I want to end by giving six more applications of these verses that we have not covered yet.

1. First, leaders should always seek to improve themselves. Joshua had grown a lot in the previous forty years, but God called upon him in these nine verses to keep growing. Always seek to improve yourself.
2. Second, for God to treat the first five books of the Bible as already being canon, it implies that canonicity happened the moment the prophet wrote the book. God alone can make a book canonical, not the church. And He made the books canonical through His prophets, not through the church. Francis Schaeffer said,

Joshua knew Moses, the writer of the Pentateuch, personally. Joshua knew his strengths and weaknesses as a man; he knew that Moses was a sinner, that Moses made mistakes, that Moses was just a man. Nonetheless, immediately after Moses's death Joshua accepted the Pentateuch as more than the writing of Moses. He accepted it as the writing of God. Two or three hundred years were not

³ David M. Howard Jr., Joshua, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 89.

required for the book to become sacred. As far as Joshua was concerned the Pentateuch was the canon, and the canon was the Word of God. The biblical view of the growth and acceptance of the canon is as simple as this: When it was given, God's people understood what it was. Right away it had authority.⁴

3. Third, the "day and night" part of verse 8 is reflective on Deuteronomy's statement that God's law needed to be applied to all that we do when sleeping or waking. The church needs to be restored to a sense of the sufficiency of Scripture for all of life. Pray for Biblical Blueprints as we seek to stir up a renewed confidence in the sufficiency of scripture by providing the Biblical axioms for math, statistics, geometry, hermeneutics, economics, and other areas of life. There is nothing day or night that the Bible does not speak to, and all that it speaks to, it speaks with authority.
4. Fourth, God doesn't just want an academic understanding of what the Bible says. He called Joshua "to *observe to do* according to all that is written in it." We are called to obey and live out God's law. And such obedience makes God willing to prosper all that we do.
5. Fifth, the word "written" underscores the fact that Christianity is a religion of the Word - the written word. You don't have to guess at what it is about. It's written for all to see. This is why it is so important that we teach our children to read and that we read, read, read. Christianity is a religion of the Word - the written word.
6. Sixth, God *wants* us to have success. He *wants* us to prosper. Certainly he throws tests of loyalty into our lives by sometimes removing prosperity (like he did with Job), but even there we can be a success in the way we respond to God's tests. Some people say that this is only a valid promise for Israel. But 3 John 2 says, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." Yes, God *loves* to prosper and bless those with steward's hearts. Certainly in heaven we will be richly blessed.

But I want to once again end by reminding us that these leadership principles are not "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" principles. These are principles that keep driving us to God's wisdom, God's grace, God's help, and God's intervention. If we don't approach each of these principles by God's grace and presence we will end up either frustrated or proud. Verses 5 and 9 are at the heart of everything we have talked about. Those verses indicate that we cannot do any of this without God's wisdom and strength.

So, yes, leaders are commanded to do things and to have character and to be bold, etc., but ultimately we can obey God's commands because God is with us and will help us. As Augustine worded it, "God enables what He commands." Joshua could not have done his

⁴ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), p. 34.

calling in his own strength. Nor can we. So keep pressing into the Lord and daily receive from Him the strength and wisdom needed to keep growing as a leader. Amen.