

**Joshua 1:1** After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, <sup>2</sup>"My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. <sup>4</sup>From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. <sup>5</sup>No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. <sup>6</sup>Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. **7** Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. <sup>9</sup>I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.' <sup>10</sup> Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, <sup>11</sup>"Pass through the camp, and command the people: "Prepare your provisions; for in three days you are to cross over the Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess."'

Wow! This is an intense encounter between God and Joshua. If you are a basketball fan, think of Calipari pulling the big center Demarcus Cousins out of the game for losing his head. He gets in his face and stares him in the eyes and when Cousins looks away, he puts his hand up pulls his stare back to his face. Or pick any reality tv show when it comes time for a motivational talk. Well after the leader of Israel, Moses has passed away, God has one of those talks with Joshua. Joshua! Why? Because....Joshua this is your window of opportunity. Don't miss it.

Israel has been wandering in the wilderness, but has been promised land by God and Joshua is the one to lead them there, and God says, "Go Now." Start moving. "Every place the sole of your foot will tread, I have given to you."

And then in the rest of our scripture text, God gives Joshua very specific about just how Joshua is to lead the people. And every single bit of the instruction that follows for Joshua is about Joshua focusing squarely on God. In order for Joshua to take advantage of this window of opportunity, he must....

First be strong and courageous - His countenance should reflect confidence in the Lord, so that when times are tough the people can see that their leader has more confidence in the God.

Second, he must be careful to meditate on all the Law of God...Meditate in this scripture text means mumble to himself. In order to be a faithful leader, Joshua must stay on track, "not departing to the left or to the right."

This kind of life looks disciplined. Joshua is to keep God's law on his tongue, not letting it "depart from his mouth" without more of God's law waiting in reserve to be spoken the next time. Joshua is in other words to never let this wisdom be in short supply. That takes effort to keep up. Joshua is to have these words fresh inside him "day and night". Joshua has a real opportunity here; the people will follow. The name

Joshua means, "God saves". If Joshua carries that name with confidence and authority, carries himself with a "strong and courageous" demeanor, and keep God's word in his face at all times, God says he will be successful.

But, if Joshua does not meditate on God and carry himself with confidence in God, he will miss his window of opportunity to lead the people.

Do you know what it means to face a window of opportunity? If you do, then you are a Joshua.

We know what it feels like to miss windows of opportunity in our own lives. A father decides he has to make a business trip instead of take his 8 year old daughter to Disney's princesses on Ice. He's going to regret that 10 years later. But, it's too late. She doesn't want to go anymore. That window of opportunity has passed. We know what it's like to miss windows of opportunity.

We all laugh about how resistant to change our congregation is. Our congregation is mostly older, but 30 years ago we were a younger congregation. There was a window of opportunity 30 years ago to make small incremental changes that would not have felt so large, but congregations like ours resisted. Now those same changes have piled up and seem monumental. And the young people have not replenished themselves because they were not listened to. Presbyterian Churches missed many opportunities to reach out to people who are now in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. And what caused that missed opportunity more than anything else, "that's the way we've always done it." It's too late to fix that, we missed that opportunity.

My window of opportunity...

Our church and other churches like it have new windows of opportunity. If we profess the love of Jesus Christ, everyone of us is a minister and a leaders in Christ's church. We can all follow Joshua's lead and meditate on the word, keeping it in our mouths. It is going to be hard work, but the land is ours if we will just take a step through the windows of opportunity before us.

Maybe you are tired of hearing it by now, but in January we turned one committee, Evangelism and Outreach into three committees Hospitality, Mission and Outreach because we saw that the work that God had for this church in loving the people of and around this church was too much work for one committee. God was giving us an opportunity to do more. So, we've split that committee into 3. And we are setting up opportunities to fellowship, get to know each other, and eat like you wouldn't believe. We are going to have a talent show; first because it's fun. But also because when you get people to gather in this church, those people start to feel comfortable and they start to open up their lives and share. We have a window of opportunity to invite friends and anyone you know to come to this and get to know us better. But, it's just a window and then it's closed and gone forever.

We have a window of opportunity for Mission and then it's gone. We have helped the ones that we know about the young man who needed the glass eye from the car accident and the little girl Kalee who we gave tickets to....Disney's Princesses on Ice. With the young man who needed a glass eye, we contacted the Lion's Club. He wouldn't have done that on his own. Sometimes it's just a matter of putting people in touch with the places that can help them. But there are always more opportunities for mission and opportunities to talk about the things we are doing. We certainly have windows of opportunity there.

We have a window of opportunity for Outreach and then it's gone. Every church has members (active and inactive) who could use more attention. When we don't see them in church, they can be easily forgotten. They need love encouragement. We know all too well that we do not have forever to tell people that we care about them. We did 11 funerals last year and I had a chance to have a good conversation with most of them, but it was only a window.

And what about the people that you know used to come here? Have you talked to them? Have you asked them questions? Please tell me about it. Our Outreach committee wants to make sure that everyone knows this as a loving congregation. We would be happy to go see anyone that any of you think would benefit from the ministry of this congregation. But you have a window of opportunity.

We have a window of opportunity for Christian Education. We had a youth lock-in last Sunday. Why in the world would we have a lock-in on Easter Sunday? The busiest Sunday of the year for Stephanie and me? Because we are crazy. We did it because we just passed the safe places policy and we needed to get this youth ministry rolling. There is a window of opportunity.

As you know, our church has a youth mission trip coming up. On this trip we are going to be doing all kinds of things, including working with the poor and children in Chatanooga, TN. We are going to be teaming up with young people from other of the United States, having time of worship and fun at See Rock City and the National Park in Chattanooga. When we get back, we are going to continue to do the kind of things with the youth that we did there. What an opportunity! We have four youth going....and three leaders? Come on, is this all we know are four youth? We gotta do better than that. We have money set aside for youth that cannot go to anything else because this ministry is so important. Who do you know that needs to go on this trip...whether they are affiliated with this church or not doesn't matter. Give some names to me. You have a window of opportunity to give some youth a chance to do something special.

In any way that you give your time or money to the ministry of this church, you are giving time and money to God. You are Joshua and God is putting God's hand on your shoulder right now. "Be Strong and Courageous" "Careful" to be faithful to all the

teaching that God has given to you. Keep God's wisdom close to your mouth. There is a window of opportunity, don't miss it.