

THE INGREDIENTS OF VICTORY **(Joshua 1:1-11, 16)**

Graduation was just a few months away. The high school principal wanted the seniors, particularly the young men, to hear about the options available in the military. He planned a school assembly and arranged for three military recruiters to come and speak. The assembly was supposed to last just 45 minutes with each recruiter taking a third of that time. The Army recruiter spoke first. Instead of taking his allotted 15 minutes, he took over 20 minutes to deliver his pitch. The Navy recruiter was not to be outdone. He also took over 20 minutes. Before getting up to speak, the Marine Corps recruiter looked at his watch. He only had two minutes. He stood before those high school seniors looking sharp in his dress blues. He eyed the students for a full sixty seconds without saying a word. It was clear to the students that he was sizing them up. After what seemed like an eternity, he spoke. He said, "I doubt whether there are more than three of you who could cut it as Marines. I want to see those three men as soon as this assembly is dismissed." He and the other two recruiters walked to the cafeteria where each had set up a table. Moments later, a mob of senior boys crowded around the Marine recruiter.

Before gender-neutral language became the norm, the Marines advertised that they were looking for "a few, good men." Their commercials ended with the tagline: "The few, the proud, the Marines."

What is God looking for? Scripture portrays His followers as soldiers, and Jesus as their Commander. Is He looking for a few good men and women? Jesus told a potential follower that no one is good but God. Paul quoted Isaiah in his letter to the Church in Rome saying that none are good, no not one. God is not looking for a few good people because there are none to be found.

To the Church in Corinth, Paul wrote:

Consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

It is hard to make Paul's words here look glamorous and attractive on a recruiting poster. "Come join the Church. We are the foolish, the weak, the low, and the despised. In fact, we are a bunch of zeros for we are the things that are not."

Soon, Lance will be going off to boot camp and basic training in the Marine Corps. I have heard it said that one of the goals in basic training is for the recruit to be broken down so that he can be built back up.

God has a similar goal for His soldiers. God breaks us down so that He can build us up into the image of His Son. No one struts into the Kingdom of God feeling wonderful about themselves. We bow in humble recognition of our waywardness and rebellion. God

breaks us down so that He can build us up.

The primary goal of basic training is to train young men and women to be soldiers. It is meant to prepare them for battle and war. I once read that an untrained soldier is nothing more than a target.

The same is true of Christian soldiers. I feel led to turn your attention to the Book of Joshua. We may not cover the entire book, but this book talks about the conflict God's people faced when it was time to go into the land God had promised them and forcefully take it from the inhabitants who lived there. God's people became a literal army, and God gave them victory.

Our battles will look different, but the Church is still God's army. We are going to spend some time in Joshua allowing God's word to train us to be God's soldiers in this day. The opening chapter shows us the ingredients that go into bringing us victory in the battles we face. Let's read Joshua 1:1-11, 16.

As we look at "The Ingredients of Victory," notice . . .

Ingredient #1: A God Who Guides and Provides

Our victory begins with God. There will be no victories in the battles we fight if we fight them apart from Him. God is the One who assures us of victory. We read in Romans 8:37, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." John adds in 1 John 5:5, "Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" Jesus, however, warned in John 15:5, "Apart from Me, you can do nothing." So, what is it exactly that God provides? I find three things in our text.

1. God Provides His Plan.

God tells us in Jeremiah 29:11, "I know the plans I have for you." I have heard it said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans." We don't need to tell God our plans; we need to ask Him to reveal His.

In Joshua 1 God revealed His plans to Joshua. Look at vv. 2-3. Basically, God told Joshua to lead the people across the Jordan River into the land that He had promised Abraham to give to his descendants. The time had come. They were to go into the land because He planned to give it to them.

God's plans are always better than our plans because He can see what we can't see. We have blind spots. We can't see around corners. We can't see the future. We can make guesses, but often those guesses are inaccurate. God, however, has perfect foresight and unmistakable insight.

When you are facing a decision, go with God's plan, not yours.

I read that the distance between Egypt and the Land of Promise was 14 days. God's people could have been in the Promised Land much earlier, but they opted for the scenic route, and it took them 40 years.

God had told them His plan four decades earlier, but they didn't like His plan. It seemed too scary. They were afraid they would fail. When you refuse God's plan you have already failed.

If you wish to emerge victorious over whatever the challenge before you happens to be, go with God's plan.

2. *God Provides His Promises.*

Look at the beginning of v. 5, and then vv. 6-8. God promises Joshua that he and the people will be victorious, but God does lay down some conditions. Joshua and the people are to be obedient to the Law of Moses, which is the first five books of the OT. Personally, Joshua is to meditate upon it daily and nightly. Most of all, Joshua is to be strong and courageous. We will look at that more closely later in the message, but this command to be strong and courageous is so important that God says it three times. Anything God says once is important, but when He says it three times, you better underline that and put a star beside it. It is going to be on the test.

Let me tell you about the great missionary Adoniram Judson. He was one of the first modern missionaries. He went to Burma and remained there for 40 years during which time he learned the Burmese language and translated the entire Bible into Burmese. There were no Christian churches or Christians when he arrived. There were 100 churches upon his death with a total of 8000 Christians. He once said, "The future is as bright as the promises of God."

We need to learn and live by the promises of God. That is where victory is found.

3. *God Provides His Presence.*

Look at the second half of v. 5 and v. 9. You and I can face anything if we face it with God because nothing gives us confidence like knowing God is with us. When Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission, He promised, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 8:20b).

For our continuing battles, we need God's continuing presence. God provides that by His indwelling Spirit.

John tells us in John 1:14 that the Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us. The word "dwelt" literally means "to pitch your tent." For 33 years, Jesus pitched His tent among us. Now, by means of His Spirit, Jesus pitches His tent, not among us but in us. We have His presence in us.

It is one thing to have the presence of God. It is another to practice the presence of God.

He was born in 1611, more than 400 years ago. He was given the name Nicholas Herman. He served in the army where he suffered a foot injury. It left him with a noticeable limp for the rest of his life. When he was 40, he entered a monastery in Paris, France. He took the name Brother Lawrence. He became a monk/cook. I suppose that made him a French Friar. Brother Lawrence lived in the monastery for another 40 years until he died in 1891.

The year after his death a Catholic Priest gathered letters written by Brother Lawrence along with the testimony of others about the conversations they had with Brother Lawrence, and he published a book under Brother Lawrence's name. It was entitled, *The*

Practice of the Presence of God.

Brother Lawrence wrote:

I have found that we can establish ourselves in a sense of the presence of God by continually talking with Him. It is simply a shameful thing to quit conversing with Him to think of trifles and foolish things. We should feed and nourish our souls with high notions of God which will yield great joy . . .

Whether he was peeling potatoes in the kitchen or talking with a friend or a superior, or doing work around the grounds of the monastery, Brother Lawrence kept his focus on the love of God. He confessed, “My set times of prayer are not different from other times of the day.”

I can’t think of anything that would revolutionize our lives more than to learn how to practice God’s presence. That would surely bring personal, spiritual revival.

The first ingredient of victory in the battles we face is a God who guides and provides. He provides us with His plan, His promises, and His presence.

We come now to a second ingredient. Look at what God said to Joshua in v. 6.

Ingredient #2: A Leader Who Listens and Leads

Earlier, God said that He was going to give the land to His people. Now, He says that Joshua is going to cause the people to inherit the land. Joshua, like his predecessor Moses, is an example of how God uses a human leader to accomplish His purposes.

Think about the time God called Moses. Moses was 80 years old. For 40 years he had been living on the backside of the desert in a place called Midian where he was a shepherd for his father-in-law’s sheep. One day he sees a bush that is on fire, but the bush isn’t consumed by the fire. When he approaches it, God speaks to him. During the conversation, God says of His people in Egypt, “I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.” Moses is thinking, “Yeah, God!”

Moments later, God informs Moses, “I will send you to Pharaoh that you may My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:8, 10). Now he is thinking, “Whoa, God. Wait a minute! Why are you bringing me into this? You just said you were coming down to deliver them. Let’s stick with that. I’m good with that.”

God uses leaders, but leaders have to listen to God, do what He says, and then lead. Often, leaders lead best by quietly doing what He said. When followers watch a leader simply doing what God said, that makes an impression. It has been said that far more is caught than is taught.

You don’t have to have a position to be a leader. What is leadership? Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less. If you have influence over someone else, you are a leader. If someone looks to you, you are a leader. The best way to lead is by example. Before you tell people what to do, simply do what you want them to do.

Look at what God told Joshua to do. Look at vv. 7-8. Joshua was to obey the Scripture. He was to talk about Scripture. He was to meditate on Scripture. God told Joshua that if he would do those things, he would have great success.

Centuries later, King David said the same thing. In Psalm 1 David promised that the one who delights in the law of God and meditates on it day and night is the one who will prosper in all he does.

Who are you listening to; who or what has your attention?

Seven times in Revelation 2 & 3, Jesus says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

When the Spirit speaks, guess what He speaks. He speaks Scripture. Scripture is the sword of the Spirit, and He wields that sword to do His work.

Leaders who lead well, listen to what God says, and they do what God says. Then, they lead others to do what God says. They lead by example and by the directions they give.

John Maxwell is a leadership expert. He has written over 100 books; most of which deal with leadership. He said, “Everything rises or falls on leadership.” Think about that. If a sports team continually has losing seasons, what happens? The owner fires the coach. But if a team continually excels, what happens? Either the coach gets a raise and a contract extension, or he is lured away to another team.

The same happens in the world of business. If a business falters, the CEO gets canned. If it prospers, he gets a raise.

Everything rises or falls on leadership. In the OT, when the King rebelled against the Lord, the country followed him into sin, and they faced judgment. When the King was righteous, the people followed, and they were blessed.

As God’s people, we are going to face battles. If we are going to be victorious in those battles, we need godly leadership. We need leaders who listen to God and leaders who will lead by the power of their example and the wisdom of their words.

There is a third ingredient for victory.

Ingredient #3: Followers Who Follow and Fight

It doesn’t matter how good the leader is if his followers refuse to follow. In v. 16 of our text, we have the testimony of several tribes who vowed to follow Joshua. In v. 12 we find that Joshua went to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. He wanted to speak to them personally because they were a special case.

Numbers 32 tells how the Israelites came to possess some land east of the Jordan. Those three tribes wanted and were permitted to occupy that land as theirs with the understanding that when it was time to go take the land west of the Jordan they would go and fight with their fellow countrymen until all the land was secured. Only then could they go back home. They agreed. Now that it was time to cross from the east side of the Jordan to the west, Joshua went to the leaders of these tribes and said, “Do you remember the agreement you made with Moses?”

The answered, in effect, “Yes, we do. And as we followed Moses, we will follow you.” Interestingly, they said something to Joshua that God had already said three times. They urged Joshua, “Only be strong and courageous.”

Followers want to follow leaders who are strong and courageous. They are not excited

about following leaders who are weak and fearful.

Joshua was not just calling upon the people to follow. He was also calling them to fight. Yes, God was giving them the land, but they still had to fight and take the land. God was assuring them they would be victorious, but they had to do their part.

As God's people, we have battles to fight. We will be victorious, but we must fight. What battles are before us? There are many. We should battle for morality, for religious freedom, for truth, for the persecuted church, for those who can't fight for themselves, and many other battles.

But I want to talk about just one battle we need to wage. We must fight for the family. The family is under assault. Our enemy knows that the primary unit of society is the family. If he can successfully destroy the family, chaos will reign in the larger society.

He is doing a good job of ravaging the family. In his book *Point Man*, Steve Farrar laid out Satan's strategy. He wrote:

The enemy is no fool. He has a diabolical method he employs time and time again. When he wants to destroy a family, he focuses on the man. For if he can neutralize the man . . . he has neutralized the family. And the damage that takes place when a man's family leadership is neutralized is beyond calculation.

There is a male crisis in our culture. Men are being taken out by the enemy. He uses drugs, alcohol, pornography, extramarital relationships, loss of purpose, loss of identity, loneliness, discouragement, and selfishness. Satan will use every weapon he has against men.

Satan's goal is to get fathers out of the home. If he can succeed in getting fathers out of the home, the likelihood of destroying the children goes up exponentially.

Let's suppose you were allowed to visit a jail or a prison. Let's suppose you were allowed to interview each prisoner. Let's suppose you questioned them about their relationship with their dad. You would be hard-pressed to find a prisoner who had a dad in the home all the time he was growing up, and that had a dad who was closely involved in his life.

Fatherlessness is ravaging the home, and that is why Satan is doing everything he can to destroy men and marriages.

As a church, our job is to fight for the family, fight for men, fight for marriages, and fight for the children.

The Marine Corps motto is *Semper Fidelis*. It is usually shortened to *Semper fi*. It is a Latin phrase that means, "Always faithful."

As the soldiers of God's army, that is a fitting motto for us. We are to be always faithful. As leaders, as people who have influence over others, we should always be faithful to our Commander. We should be faithful to listen and to lead. As followers, we must be faithful to follow and to fight. Those are the ingredients to victory.