

# THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

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## PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT

## I. CHANGES

How do you feel about the way people dress these days? Or what about the new choruses they want to sing in church? Do you feel comfortable around computers? We spend a lot of our lives trying to avoid change. "After all," we say, "we are comfortable where we are." We like to think that if things are good and we leave them alone, they will always be good. But that is not true. As one famous writer once said, "If you leave a thing alone, you leave it to a torrent of changes. If you leave a white fence post alone, it will soon be a black post. If you particularly want it to be white, you must be always painting it again. Briefly, if you want the old white post, you must have a new white post." This last technological century so drastically changed civilization that it wouldn't be recognized when compared to the previous 4,000 years of history. But despite the amazing speed at which those changes took place, it was a snail's pace compared to what is coming now and what we are already experiencing. Not only is change something we can expect, change is something we must **anticipate and embrace**.

One of the places in the Bible where a huge change took place is between Deuteronomy 34:12 and Joshua 1:1. Moses the deliverer had died. Big changes needed to happen.

The books of Moses talk about Moses the deliverer. The book of Joshua talks about Joshua the victorious savior. Moses delivered the people from the bondage of sin but they were weak believers wandering around without victory or success in their lives. Joshua provided salvation for them by giving them a permanent residence in the Holy Land. This is an Old Testament picture of how the New Testament Jesus will provide a heavenly Canaan for us.

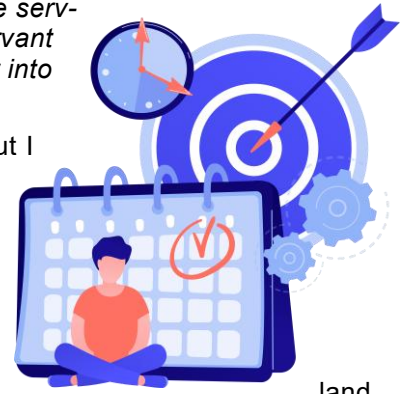
Moses died and a change took place, a big change. Now Israel had a new leader. This Joshua was to lead them into the Holy Land. They would have a new land and a new way of living. Instead of living in tents, they would live in houses. Instead of walking through desert plains, they would climb lush hills. Instead of only herding livestock, they would also plant fields and vineyards. Drastic changes were on their way.

Our whole country faces great challenges too. Teams of church planters are bringing people out of the land of sin. But many new believers wander in a spiritual fog. These people need a structure, not only a church building, but a well organized system of love and care. Most church leaders need help in forming a better spiritual government for their people. Many church leaders don't know how to organize their church ministries and don't know how to lead their people into higher levels of Christian peace and usefulness. Your discipleship/mentoring's task is to be a Joshua and to raise up Joshuas.

## II. AN ASSIGNMENT

Let's read verses one and two of Joshua chapter 1. *"After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them — to the Israelites."*

Tell me what is happening in verse two? At first glance, we see a command. But I think it is a little bit more than a command. A command is when I say to George, "Lay that book on the table." That is a command. All he has to do is to obey and do it. But if I say to George, "Would you please get some books from the warehouse and bring them," he needs to start thinking about how he is going to do it. ***It is a whole assignment, and that is a lot bigger than a single, one-time command.*** A command requires only obedience; an assignment requires responsibility. Yes, they are different. You see God didn't give a step-by-step detailed plan. He simply said, "Do you see that over there? You are supposed to go in." Joshua the leader had to figure out how.



land

Can you see the thoughts whirling through Joshua's mind? "Hey, we can't leave the wilderness! I'm new at this leadership thing as it is. Moses only showed me how to live in the wilderness. I don't know about war strategies, and living in one place, and building cities."

Often we are in a similar predicament. Maybe you too are facing a daunting assignment. Maybe this is the first year you have been a director or an administrator. Or maybe you are doing the same ministry as last year, but now you are reaching out to a new province. Or maybe you don't have the finances you need. Or maybe you are facing opposition, so you need to learn to do things in a different way. The list could go on and on. But remember, God's assignment for us is clear: "Make disciples of all Ukrainians, baptize them, and teach them everything." He did not say how. He left that up to you. You are one of the New Life for Churches leaders. This is your assignment. The responsibility of every New Life for Churches leader and coach is to create an effective ministry that results in making other people effective.

But God didn't just give Joshua an assignment and then leave him alone to fulfill it. Neither does God expect us to fulfill the assignments He gives us in our own strength. He does expect obedience, but that is nothing compared to what He offers in return!

## III. A PROMISE

Let's look at the next three verses. We are going to read from verse 3 to 5.

*3 "I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates — all the Hittite country — to the Great Sea on the west. 5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

What is the form of address God uses here? This is a section of promises. It is not a song. It's not a complaint like we may read in Jeremiah. It's promises! Who does the promising? Some ministry leader? I hear someone saying "God." Yes, it is God, and that is a whole lot better than some promises from a ministry or church leader. If it is God promising... wow!

## A. Victory Assured

God said, "I am going with you. Wherever you put your feet down I will be there. I will never leave you or forsake you. As a matter of fact, **I will make you** \_\_\_\_\_." Wow! Look at that! **Surefire victory.** How much simpler can it get?! God is telling him, "Here is a job, and don't worry, you will be successful." Do you know something? That is exactly what New life for Churches Discipleship can offer you: certain victory! On the basis of the scriptural precedent, by following Jesus' example, through the power of the **Holy Spirit** and by the grace of God, a discipleship ministry can guarantee success. I don't have a desire to boast. I don't need to boast. God allowed men to rediscover **Jesus' secret ministry.** He gave them wisdom to show us how to use it today. And He blessed the men who wrote discipleship lectures and courses. Everywhere you look, there are hundreds of examples of the success that is guaranteed to come, because we are doing God's work His way.



Now listen to another promise God gives here in verse 5: "*No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life.*" Now what does that mean? Does it mean that everything is going to be just wonderful? Ah, Hallelujah! I don't think so. It doesn't say that no one will try to resist you. In fact, it implies that people will. They will try to pounce on you. They will want to attack you. They will be angry. But God will not allow them to destroy you.

This point is beautifully illustrated by what happened in one area at the very beginning of the local church discipling ministry. One brother strongly opposed New Life for Churches and was rather nasty. He said, "Local church discipling is nothing, I'm going to start a real education program and teach Greek and Hebrew and History and How to Preach." Eight months later this same brother came to the New Life leader and said, "Can you help me? I can't do this." Shortly after that his ministry folded. The discipling ministry however did not only continue there in that region but 30 or so new churches were born as a result of it. There is fighting, there are attacks, but the promise of God is that no one will be able to stand up against you.

## B. The Catch

Some of you are probably sitting there thinking, "Yes, but..." You are expecting there to be some strings attached, to be some kind of catch. And you are right! Look back at what it says here in verse 2: "*Go across this river into the land I'm about to give you.*" Verse 3: "*I'll give you every place where you'll set your foot.*" God didn't say, "I'll make your army into invincible giants; then go." Or, "Wait till they come to you." You know how most Christian ministries work? It goes like this: "We have here a big, nice House of prayer, please come." "Come to us, come, come, come," that is our slogan. "We have a nice church here, please come." But Jesus said, "**GO** into the entire world."

He says wherever your foot is going to tread I will give it to you. You believe God wants you to start a new group in a new city? Go there one day. Fall down on your knees in that city and weep over its sin. Walk around that city and claim a work for God. Don't leave it up to someone else. You do it! You become acquainted with the local situation and you know the local ingredients and you are there physically, in person. Take your shoes off like Joshua did and claim that city for God. God says that it should include the total territory from one border to the other, completely. I'm convinced that there are still many churches where men and women are waiting for you to start a good leadership training ministry.

## IV. THE ENCOURAGEMENT

Let's go further in the Scriptures. First we saw an assignment. Following the assignment, number two was 'A Promise.' And then comes point number three, the encouragement in verses 6 and 9.

6 "*Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous.* 9 *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*"

When you think about the encouragement God gives him in the verses we are looking at today, what kind of a personality do you think Joshua had? Does he strike you as a bold lion, ready to crush anything that stands in his way? Or does he seem like a small jackal, huddling whimpering in the corner? Is he a mighty elephant smashing its way through the jungle, or is he a little monkey, looking around cautiously with big eyes? We could rephrase the statement like this: "Why are you afraid Joshua? What's the problem? Why are you trembling?"

"Ah, Moses died! I've been given bigger responsibilities than I think I can handle. Oh, it will be very difficult! If only the Leadership Training president was here!" God says, **"I'm here! I'll go with you!"**

In this passage we see encouragement. What have you mostly heard about chapter one of Joshua? Usually we hear this part, this encouragement to "be strong, be courageous." It is spread around to cover every situation, like mayonnaise on bread. But wait a moment, that is not what the chapter is saying. That is looking at it out of context. The chapter started with an **assignment** and next it was followed by a **promise**. Only then came the **encouragement**. God didn't spend time trying to encourage everyone in the Israelite camp who felt a little nervous. He gave these words to a \_\_\_\_\_ to whom He had just given an assignment. They were given to a man of whom he expected much, to a leader who was facing change he didn't think he could cope with. Joshua had reason to become strong and very courageous. He knew what God wanted Him to do, and He knew what God's promise was.

The New Life for Churches ministry follows this principle. The encouragement comes after the assignment and after the promise of success. Each of the Leadership Training team members has received an assignment. Perhaps your responsibility is to train several groups of church leaders. Perhaps you are in charge of overseeing a whole province. Perhaps you have administrative, financial, or other responsibilities. We want to encourage you to become strong and to be very courageous like Joshua.



As a matter of fact you need to do better than Joshua. Much better! Under Joshua, the people did not take possession of the whole land. We want you to do better; we want you to take possession of your whole region. Begin by establishing a key discipleship group in every church to train the brothers. Then begin a strategy of conquering your area for Christ. Establish NEW churches in every town and village. Make your province a Christian province. Plant daughter churches in a few strategic area cities. Later work out from there. Take all the territory! Do better than Joshua.

## V. SUCCESS GUARANTEED

Let's look at verses 7 and 8 together.

*7 "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*

How will you get the success that we envision, that New Life for Churches, under God, even dares to promise? Moses provided Joshua with five books for spiritual help; our ministry provides you with discipleship manuals for practical help. Be careful to obey all these Small Group instructions; do not turn from them to the right or to the left. By closely following these manuals, you can be successful wherever you go. Meditate on these guidelines day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

The church nowadays is more and more becoming aware that \_\_\_\_\_ **is Jesus' method**. It's the most successful thing in any church that any Christian brother can do. It's Jesus' method. **It's Jesus' desire. It's Jesus' idea**. That's why it's successful. That's why we can guarantee success. God is the same yesterday and today and even tomorrow. He says: "As I was with Moses so will I be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you."

So what will your attitude be? You have a flat tire and your spare tire is out being repaired. What will your attitude be? "Ah, what we are going to do? Where is God? It is hot and I'm late. Where is God?" You already know where He is. He says, "I'm with you." Do you see how completely different your attitude should be? "All right," you say. "God, see this tire. How are you going to drive on with this car? You are here and I'm here." If you really recognize that God is with you in your problems, your whole attitude will be different. Your whole ministry will be different. You will be courageous and enthusiastic. God knows what He is doing. He said there will be much opposition: church leaders, team members that don't get along, continual change, money problems, problems with students, problems with your team and problems with everybody else. There will be all kinds of problems. But God says, "You will be prosperous and successful."

## VI. AN INITIATIVE

Let us read verses 10 and 11.

*10 “So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: 11 “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.’”*

So what do we have in these verses? How do they relate to the previous verses? I like the word initiative. I like this explanation: God gave it to Joshua, and he gave it to the others. Now I want to talk about this passage and get some things out of it for us. This Bible passage isn't exactly a 100% the same as your personal situation today. So far there is no “New Life” Israel and you don't have to cross the Jordan with all your coaches.

The situation has changed, but the message hasn't. God is now speaking to you. He could be talking to you or some other discipleship leader saying, “You and all these people get ready to go into the land I'm promising to give to you.” You need to get ready to go into your land. There are still many areas in your province that you have not really claimed for God. “Get your supplies ready.” Make your preparations. Help your team get ready for it. But don't take too long about it. The time for action is now. The time for change is now. To live in the past is to fail in the present. Something drastically **NEW** has to happen. You need to go in! You have to conquer the whole land.



## CONCLUSION

From time to time, lobsters have to leave their shells. Apparently it is a necessary part of their growth process. While they are growing, they need their shell to protect them from being torn apart. And yet, as a result of having grown on the inside, their old shell would soon become their prison—and finally their casket.

The tricky part for the lobster is the brief period of time between when the old shell is discarded and the new one formed. During that terribly vulnerable period, the transition must be scary to the lobster. Currents gleefully cartwheel him from coral to kelp. Hungry schools of fish are ready to make him a part of their food chain. For a while at least, that old shell must look pretty good—even if it had begun to feel like a shirt he had outgrown ten years ago.

Sometimes lobsters die between shells. That's life and death in the ocean blue. Though sad, perhaps it's not as sad as the possibility of slowly suffocating in a shell that no longer fits.

We are not so different from lobsters. If we did not have a shell—a structure—a framework—within which to grow, then I doubt any of us would have made it this far. Even so, change and growth are necessary for survival. Being Christians means being so \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ that when he bids us follow, to change, to risk, to grow, to leave our “shells” behind, we do what He asks and we do it immediately.



Big changes must come your way. But instead of getting uptight and worried about them, face them head on. If you are doing an assignment for God, all you have to remember is that God says, “Cross into the land that I am about to give you. I will give you every place where you set your foot.” And let the small group manuals pave the way to your success.

Fortunately for us we have “the rest of the story” as well. We see that as soon as Joshua gave the command to go in God did do great and mighty miracles. Mighty obstacles just dried up before their eyes. Huge obstacles came tumbling down at their feet. Fierce enemies just ran away and died. It was God's doing, God fulfilling His promises, and He will do it again. He will do it for you. You don't need to be perfect ones. God can use you just the way you are. If you just open your heart and do what God wants you to do, He really will bless your ministry.

How did Joshua begin? He began by cleansing his people. Then he met his God. Drastic changes need to take place. Our country needs to be Christianized all over again. There needs to be a **Leadership Bible study group in each church**. There needs to be a church in every city and there needs to be a group of believers in each village. Will you begin like Joshua? Will you begin by cleansing your course coaches and then your students? Will you go and meet with your God? Be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the land. Then you will be prosperous and successful!

Let's close with the prayer of a man who changed his country:

“God grant me the serenity,  
To **accept the things I cannot change**,  
Courage to **change the things I can**,  
And wisdom to know the difference. Amen.”

“And oh, Lord, one more thing. Lord, make **me** like that. Amen.”

Now let us all stand and repeat this prayer in unison. Thank you! Amen!

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by **New Life for Churches**. You have the privilege *upon completion of your practical assignment* to use this lecture with others.

## *Practical assignment*

	Completed
➤ Make a list of Changes that you expect to happen in your province.	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Which one these changes may be the Lord's first assignment for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Is there a promise from the Lord or a leader that is attached to that assignment? List some Bible verses to support that victory is assured.	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ What gives you encouragement in this assignment?	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Name some elements that will be guaranteed to give you success.	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ At the next Workshop report the first Initiatives you have already taken.	<input type="checkbox"/>

## *Answer Key*

II. personal

III. successful

IV. leader

V. discipling

Conclusion

committed