

“President Truman’s First Press Conference”

Joshua 1:1-9

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Vice President Harry Truman sat in the Capitol office of House Speaker Sam Rayburn when he received a call summoning him to the White House. He was immediately ushered to Eleanor Roosevelt’s second floor study where the first lady waited. “Harry, the President is dead,” she declared as he entered the room. Stunned, Truman responded, “Is there anything we can do for you?” She replied, “Is there anything we can do for *you*? You’re the one in trouble now.”

At 7:09 on the evening of April 12, 1945, Truman was sworn in as the thirty-third President of the United States. The next day, he met with reporters and concluded by saying, “Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now. I don’t know if you fellows ever had a load of hay to fall on you, but when they told me yesterday what had happened, I felt like the moon, the stars and all the planets had fallen on me.”

I wonder if this is how Joshua felt when he learned of Moses’ death. Moses was revered and trusted by the Israelites. He led them out of slavery in Egypt to the edge of the Promise Land. They did not know life without him and did not want to. However, Moses died leaving his aide, Joshua, in charge. Do you think he felt the weight of the world on his shoulders like Truman did? I do.

When did you first realize that you were on your own and others were depending upon you to lead? What challenge did you face that could not be transferred to another? How did you handle it? How did you feel?

If you had been by Joshua’s side the day Moses died, what advice would you have given him? What advice would you have given Truman or would you give someone today facing a daunting, overwhelming, intimidating challenge?

Occasionally, I find myself in that position. So what do I tell them? Among many things, I encourage them to lean upon the Lord for wisdom, guidance, confidence and direction. Why would I do that? Look at the words of the Lord to Joshua after the death of Moses. These verses reveal many things about God that are insightful and helpful. Let me share them with you.

First of all, they reveal that God is eternal. “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 them” Joshua 1:2.

Surely you sense the contrast between man’s mortality and God’s immortality. Moses was dead. God was not. Nor was He paralyzed by Moses’ death. He was as strong and vibrant after Moses’ death as He was before his passing. He still had plans for the Israelites and was eager to help them achieve them.

People come and go, even leaders. God remains with us through all of life’s gains and losses. He will be here after those in whom we place our confidence are gone. He will be here after we have moved on, too.

The Psalmist said it best. “Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God” Psalm 90:1-2.

Why should you turn to God for help when you face a challenge? The challenge you are facing may be the result of losing someone upon whom you depended heavily. You always had them to lean upon and look to for strength and guidance but now they are gone. What are you to do? Where can you turn for help and not be disappointed? Read Psalm 90:1-2 again.

Secondly, this passage reveals that God is faithful. “I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, from the great river, the Euphrates, all the Hittite country to the Great Sea on the west. 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” Joshua 1:3-5.

Notice the direction these verses forced them to look, backward and forward. As God was with Moses, so He would be with them. Always. Forever. The promises made to Moses were still valid even though Moses was gone. They would be valid for their dependents after they were gone, too.

There was no direction they could look and not see God. They would never be without Him. Never.

Why turn to God when you need help facing a challenge? You can depend upon Him to be there.

Thirdly, these verses reveal that God is aware of what we are experiencing and feeling when we face a daunting task. He certainly knew what the Israelites were feeling. Three times in these verses and once more at the end of the chapter, God said, “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land that I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous” Joshua 1:6-7, 9,18.

Do you think God knew that Joshua felt overwhelmed and the Israelites uncertain? I have no doubt.

When you headed out of the house to play a big ball game, take a crucial test, go for a job interview or head off to war, what did your parents say to you? Do these words to Joshua sound familiar? Did they repeat them three or four times, too? Why? You know the reason.

Why should you look to God for help when you face a challenge? He knows what you are facing, feeling and need.

Finally, these words to Joshua reveal that God is for us. He wants us to succeed. Listen again to these words to Joshua.

“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. 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” Joshua 1:7-8.

I have no doubt that God wanted Joshua and his people to succeed. So important was this to God that He used Moses to teach them what they needed to know about life and how to live it the right way, the fulfilling way.

We have no bigger cheerleader than our Lord. He wants us to overcome adversity, challenges, temptation and fear in order to achieve our potential. Such a priority was this with Him that He sent His own Son to teach and show us how to live the abundant life that leads to eternal life. Why would we not trust someone that loves us so much?

Was Joshua encouraged by God's words? Did he accept the challenge to be Moses' successor? Did he become the leader that the people needed?

“So Joshua ordered the officers of the people, ‘Go through the camp and tell the people to get their 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.’ Then they answered Joshua, ‘Whatever you have commanded us we will do and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. May the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses’ ” Joshua 1:10-11, 16-17.

It is obvious that Joshua rose to the occasion with God's help. He faced this overwhelming challenge with confidence and faith and became a great leader.

Many believe that Truman became a great leader, too. Evidently those reporters must have prayed for him and many others did also.

I hope you have some people praying for you, too, as you face heavy responsibilities and unpredictable challenges. Most of all, I hope you are praying and leaning upon God to empower you just as He did Joshua. What a difference it will make. Ask President Truman.