

# Life: Accept your leadership role

May 22, 2015

• *The Bible Studies for Life lesson for June 7 focuses on Joshua 1:1-9.*

When my grandson, Jax, was about 3 years old, he often said, “that scares me” when faced with a challenge or a new situation. As he has grown older—he’s now 7—and become more independent, he uses that phrase less often, although, like the rest of us, Jax still experiences a degree of fear when his “comfort zone” is stretched or violated.

What are your fears? I am embarrassed to admit that I am afraid of birds, especially dive-bombing blue jays and boisterous mockingbirds. More seriously, I am afraid of losing, being out of control, making mistakes and disappointing people. Like my grandson, when faced with a situation in which I am unsure of the outcome, I experience fear.

## **Big sandals to fill**

I can imagine the fear that must have gripped Joshua when he heard these words from the Lord: “Moses my servant is dead” (Joshua 1:2). Not only was Joshua’s leader and mentor dead, but God chose Joshua to be the next leader of the Israelites. God told Joshua, “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” (Joshua 1:2).

Joshua had a much-deserved reputation as a fearless warrior. He and Caleb were the only two of the 12 scouts who advised Moses, Aaron and the Israelite people to fight for the Promised Land. But take Moses’ place as the leader of God’s chosen people? That’s some really big sandals to fill.

In Joshua 1:1-9, God acknowledges Joshua's fear by commanding him to be "strong and courageous" three times. In addition, God offers comfort to Joshua by saying he will be with him, just like he was with Moses. In Joshua 1:5, God says, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you." God ends his commission of Joshua by repeating, "for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (v. 9). The presence of the Lord with Joshua is what enables him to have strength and courage as Israel's new leader.

### **The secret to success**

God did not give Joshua *carte blanche* to lead the people in whatever direction seemed best in his own mind. Neither had God done so with Moses. In fact, Moses was not able to enter the Promised Land because he struck the rock, rather than speaking to it, to obtain water for the Israelites at Kadesh in the Desert of Zin (Numbers 20:1-11). Accordingly, God warns Joshua, "Do not turn from (the law) to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go," God says. "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; 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" (7-9).

### **Submitting to God**

Joshua was a successful leader because he subordinated himself to God's authority. After crossing the Jordan River, God instructed Joshua to lead the priests and his army in a march around the walls of Jericho seven times. After the seventh circumambulation, the army shouted, the priests blew their horns, and the walls of the city came down (see Joshua 6: 1-24). This seems to be a strange way to conquer a city. But Joshua obeyed God, and the Israelite army successfully defeated their enemy. They took the territory God had promised.

Joshua might have been concerned he could not live up to Moses' legacy. Scripture tells us: "No prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. ... For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel" (Deuteronomy 34: 10-12). However, God did not ask Joshua to be Moses. Rather, God filled Joshua with his Spirit (v. 9) and told him he would be with him in the same way he was with Moses. Because God was with Joshua, he could be a strong and courageous leader. Consequently, the people responded to Joshua in the same way they had obeyed Moses: "Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you" (Joshua 1:16).

Those of us in leadership positions within our families, work or community life can be confident, like Joshua, the Lord is with us when we are obedient to God. By submitting ourselves to God's authority, he will give us the courage we need to lead others through challenging circumstances we are powerless to conquer in our own wisdom or strength.