

Sunday 3 January 2016  
Otumoetai Baptist Church  
Joshua 1:1-9

***God commissioning a new beginning***

**(BLACK).**

I wonder what you think about when you hear the phrase 'New beginning'. Maybe you think of a new-born child. Maybe a new relationship in your life. Or a new job. Or maybe a new year, which we've just celebrated.

**(SLIDE 1)**

For some of you, a 'new beginning' may be an incredible thing. A chance for a fresh start, to do things differently, to have your slate wiped clean.

For others, it might be a stressful thing. The unknown. What's going to happen? What am I going to do? What's coming around the corner?

For me, there's always been a mix between apprehension and excitement in new beginnings.

**(SLIDE 2)**

For instance, I went into University straight after school and for me it was about parties, freedom, a license to try different

things, and yes there was a little bit of study in there as well.

When I left Uni to go to my first job in Auckland I was thinking 'What have I got myself in for?' I had just become a committed Christian and I was going up to work a Christian radio station.

It was a completely new beginning for me and I was pretty nervous about it. I thought that I was going to end up with some 'weirdo' Christians who were going to try change me and make me do some 'weird' Christian stuff.

Fortunately I was wrong! God knew what He was doing and surrounded me with some really amazing people who accepted me for who I was, and didn't try change me.

The new beginning ended up being a great experience for me and a really shaping time in my life. And I found out that Christians too liked to party. Just that the parties were a bit different to Uni parties. But still good.

So that was a great new beginning for me. There are others too that are not as easier to talk about. But we'll leave those for another day.

Maybe you're in a new beginning now. A new season.

Maybe there are some things happening in your life that you're feeling equally excited and apprehensive about.

If that's the case then this message is for you.

**(SLIDE 3)**

One of my heroes of the Bible is a guy called Joshua. Joshua was a mighty warrior: a fearless, brilliant and capable leader. Over a fifty year period, Joshua led the nation of Israel into the Promised Land and died at the ripe old age of 110 years old, having been faithful to his God and to his people.

**(SLIDE 4)**

As for his legacy, this is what his tombstone might have said:

"Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel." (Joshua 24:31)

You know that you've definitely lived a good life and succeeded as a leader when the people continue to follow your leadership once you're gone. And that was the case for Joshua. The people loved him, adored him, and submitted to his leadership. They saw God at work in him and through him.

So that's the ending of the book of Joshua and this capable leader's life, but what about the beginning? What happened at the start of that fifty year period?

Well, you might recall that Joshua became the leader of Israel after the death of one of their great leaders. A man named Moses.

**(SLIDE 5)**

Moses was the one God spoke to from a burning bush and charged with freeing His people, the Israelites. He performed the ten plagues in front of Pharaoh. He divided the Red Sea so the Israelites could safely cross over it. He received the Ten Commandments from God. The Bible says He spoke to God face to face. And that he was a humble leader.

This was the guy that Joshua was replacing. Talk about big shoes to fill! Think of the next captain stepping in to replace King Richie McCaw. That's what this was like!

Joshua had been following Moses all his life. He had been his assistant and seen all the great things that Moses did. He had been witness to his dynamic leadership style. He had glimpsed God's power at work through him. Moses was not only his leader, he was his friend.

But for all his capable leadership ability, Moses was not without faults.

Moses argued with God several times before he took on the task. I can't do it. Who am I to lead these people? I can't speak properly. I'm not capable. Me, me, me. He forgot about the ONE who was commissioning Him. He forgot that it was the LORD who was sending him on this new beginning.

So eventually Moses decides to listen to God's command and God frees the Israelites from their captivity. Then they wander in the desert and again Moses slips up. But this time it costs him dearly.

In the book of Numbers chapter 20 we read that the Israelites are grumbling against Moses and his brother Aaron saying that there is no water to drink and they should have left them in Egypt where they had water and food.

**(SLIDE 6)**

Moses and Aaron consult the Lord and the Lord speaks to Moses telling him, "Take the rod (which was the source of God's power for Moses); you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock and give drink to the congregation and their animals."

This was a direct command from God. So Moses and Aaron gather the congregation together before the rock and then we

see Moses' costly blunder.

**(SLIDE 7)**

Verse 10 says, "And Moses said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank."

Did you catch what Moses did there? He didn't obey the Lord's leading. He took the situation into his own hands and rather than speaking to the rock to reveal God's power to bring the water out, He struck the rock ... twice.

This might seem like a little offence, but to God it was a huge mistake. Verse twelve shows us the consequences:

**(SLIDE 8)**

"Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Moses was denied access to lead the people into the Promised Land. He was stripped of that privilege and responsibility, because he did not obey the Lord's command.

That privilege and responsibility would be given to somebody else.

Let's read from the start of the book of Joshua, chapter 1 verses 1-9. When we get to the end, I'm going to pause and in your tables I want you to talk about what stands out to you in these verses and how do you think Joshua is feeling at this time.

**(SLIDE 9)**

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: <sup>2</sup>“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. <sup>3</sup>I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

**(SLIDE 10)**

<sup>4</sup>Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. <sup>5</sup>No one will 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 never leave you nor forsake you. <sup>6</sup>Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

**(SLIDE 11)**

<sup>7</sup>“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. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

So what stands out to you from this passage? How do you think Joshua was feeling at this point in his life?

**(SLIDE 12)**

Take a couple of minutes to talk about this at your tables or with those around you.

(BREAK)

This was a completely new beginning for Joshua and for Israel. Their great leader Moses was dead and now it was time for change.

While it was a huge responsibility for Joshua, it wouldn't have completely caught him off guard. He knew that Moses was equipping and training him to be the new leader of Israel.

Before God commissioned Joshua for the role, Moses too was preparing him. We read the following in Deuteronomy chapter 31, verses 1 to 8:

**(SLIDE 13)**

Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: <sup>2</sup>“I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The Lord has said to me, ‘You shall not cross the Jordan.’ <sup>3</sup>The Lord your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the Lord said. <sup>4</sup>And the Lord will do to them what he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, whom he destroyed along with their land.

**(SLIDE 14)**

<sup>5</sup>The Lord will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. <sup>6</sup>Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

<sup>7</sup>Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. <sup>8</sup>The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do

not be discouraged.”

So Joshua knew beforehand what was happening. Moses tells Joshua in front of all the Israelites to be strong and courageous and that the Lord himself is with him, he will never leave him nor forsake him.

**(SLIDE 15)**

When we come back to God commissioning Joshua, this is the same language used. ‘Be strong and courageous. The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.’

I think this is important and essential for Joshua to hear. His friend and trusted leader has died. Now it’s his time to lead. I’d say he is feeling a little anxious about the whole thing!

Joshua is reassured by God that the mantle has been passed to the right person. But more than that, God promises to be with him. Joshua can trust God to keep His promise to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land.

This new beginning is commissioned by God, governed by God and ordained by God.

So let’s look closer into this moment in Joshua’s life as he receives the mantle of leadership from God.

And as we do this, let's see what God might be saying to us about the new beginnings in our lives at the moment.

I think that in these nine verses we see four things from God for Joshua, and for us too. These are His Promise. His Purposes. His principles. And His presence.

As we think about the road ahead for us this year, let's look at each of these, starting with God's Promise.

**(SLIDE 16)**

Reading from chapter 1, verse 1 to 5:

*After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: <sup>2</sup> "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. <sup>3</sup> I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. <sup>4</sup> Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. <sup>5</sup> No one will 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 never leave you nor forsake you.*

God's Promise for His people. This goes back to Genesis the first book of the Bible, when Israel was born as a nation in the call

and promises of God to Abraham. God promised to make Israel a great nation and lead them into the Promised Land.

So the promise from God goes back to the very beginning with Abraham. God is saying to Joshua, What I have promised back then to Abraham, and then through Moses, I will make good on. Moses is dead, but his legacy lives on now through you and the Israelites. Get ready to cross the Jordan into the land I have promised for Israel. I will give you every place that I have promised through Moses.

And no one will be able to stand against you. I will make sure of it. It will not be by the might or strength of your army, but instead it will be by my might and power. As I delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians, I will bring you into the Promised Land and all your enemies will fall by my power.

**(SLIDE 17)**

And then the key verse comes at the end of this passage, verse five: *As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.*

What a promise! And it's personal too! God says "Yes I am taking care of the Israelites and my promise way back then, but also Joshua I am making a personal promise to you. I will always be with you, I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Imagine what comfort, hope and inspiration they brought to Joshua? Following in Moses' footsteps and embarking on a new beginning was a big ask and God knew Joshua needed to hear his reassurance.

Moses had to pass from the scene before Joshua could be commissioned and given orders to take the people into the Promised Land. It was a fresh start. A new beginning. For Joshua and the people of Israel.

Joshua's name symbolises this: It means 'Yahweh (or the Lord) is salvation'. As the Hebrew equivalent of Jesus, Joshua typifies the Lord Jesus and His saving life for us all. Jesus came to fulfil God's Promise and to bring grace and salvation to His people.

This is God's promise. For Joshua and for us.

Let's move on, to God's Purposes.

### **(SLIDE 18)**

Verse 6:

*<sup>6</sup> Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.*

*<sup>7</sup> "Be strong and very courageous.*

This is God's purpose for Joshua. He charges him to be strong

and courageous and tells him that he will lead the people into the Promised Land.

I think the crux of this verse is one little word: "will"

### **(SLIDE 19)**

It's not a maybe, or a possibly, but a definitive will. God's will is perfect and complete. There is no swaying or changing it. It **will** happen.

God will lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

God will enable Joshua to be a strong and courageous leader.

God will fulfil his purposes for you and me.

Maybe you feel like you are in God's waiting room at the moment. Waiting for a result, waiting for a relationship to be repaired, waiting for the next step to be revealed, or waiting for finances to come in.

God's purpose for you in this waiting room is to bring you closer to Him and to depend on Him more. He will come through for you. He will make things happen.

Be strong and courageous. God will see His purposes prevail for you.

I have seen this in my own life time and time again. Whether it be in my finances, or in my relationships, or in my health or my family. God has been there and His purposes have prevailed.

He has said to me: Matthew, I will lead you and look after you in all areas of life. Be strong and courageous.

He says the same to you today. I will lead and look after you. Be strong and courageous.

**(SLIDE 20)**

I came across a quote from Jessica Hagy that I love: “If you don’t live courageously, you will stand by the water cooler and talk about those who do.”

Blogger Frank Powell writes: “Every day, you have a choice. Live courageously or talk about those who do. The water cooler includes cynics, fearmongers, skeptics, manipulators, and the like. They will talk trash about you. They might even attack your family. But the water cooler crowd isn’t upset with you. They’re upset with themselves because they wasted their lives.

The world has enough commentators. Remove the headset. Get on the field. Take a stand. Jump in the mess and vow to make an impact on the world.”

Just like Joshua, God has a plan for you, and there’s a zero

percent chance it includes water cooler conversations.

Be strong and courageous.

**(SLIDE 21)**

Let’s move onto God’s Principles. Verse 7:

*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. <sup>8</sup> 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.*

God is quick to remind Joshua about the law.

**(SLIDE 22)**

It was still important and still something to be obeyed.

And it’s the same for us today. Just because Jesus came and fulfilled the law, does not make it irrelevant to how we live. It doesn’t give us an excuse to live in sin and rely on His grace to cover everything for us.

Sure, His grace and love will forgive our sinful ways, but that’s not a reason to throw caution to the wind and live like the prodigal son, engaging in sinful living.

I lived like the prodigal son in my Uni days and it didn't bring me peace or happiness. It brought emptiness and pain. Then I became a Christian and something changed in me. If I carried on living the way I had been living before that would have been like God had given me a gift and my response was slapping him in the face.

**(SLIDE 23)**

Jesus simplified the law for us in two commandments: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength. And love your neighbour as you love yourself.

That's the entire law of the Old Testament summed up for us how to live as followers of Christ.

Joshua is told to live according to the Law and meditate on it day and night, and then he will be prosperous and successful.

This is not the prosperity gospel that pervades a lot of Western Christianity today. The type of teaching that says if you bless God, God will bless you. You will be exempt from ill health. You will be rich. You will have all that you want.

I think we only need to look to those who suffer persecution for their faith to see that this kind of teaching is not in line with the Bible. Sure, God can bless us and protect us from certain things,

but to hang our faith on this kind of teaching is very dangerous.

When we go through hard times, or when people we know are going through hard times, we can get the wrong thought that there is something wrong with us or them, and that if we fix this, everything will go back to normal. Back to good again.

As we know, this is not always the case. We live in a fallen world. People get sick and die. Car crashes claim innocent victims. Civilians are killed in war. One phone call can change everything.

So what is God saying here to Joshua? Well reading this in its context, I believe that God is saying to Joshua if you keep me and my law first in your life, if you set your life on following me and meditating on my Words, then I will come through for you. I will lead you and guide you in leading my people into the Promised Land.

Put me and my principles first in your life, and I will make you prosperous and successful in *this* endeavour.

So we've seen God's Promise. His Purposes. His Principles. And finally we come to His Presence.

**(SLIDE 24)**

Verse 9 says:

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

God is saying My Presence will be with you, Joshua. There is no need to fear or be discouraged. Be bold and courageous. For I will be with you wherever you go.

Does this promise to Joshua apply to us as well?

Well in one sense this promise was specific to Joshua's role as leading an entire nation into a new land. For this new beginning, God's words of comfort, boldness and encouragement served as an important message to strengthen Joshua as the leader of God's people.

Even though it's specific to Joshua, the principle extends to us today.

**(SLIDE 25)**

Throughout the New Testament believers are reminded of God being with us - Hebrews 13:5 quotes Joshua 1:5 in that God has said, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

**(SLIDE 26)**

So God's call to Joshua and to us is to live courageously, without fear, knowing that He is with us at all times.

Let me say that again: God's call to Joshua and to us is to live courageously, without fear, knowing that He is with us at all times.

**(SLIDE 27)**

God's Promise. God's Purposes. God's principles. God's presence.

Joshua received them all in his new beginning.

I believe that today God would say to us that we can receive them all in our new beginnings.

This is not just for leaders and ministers in the church. This is for all of God's people.

We are **all** given the promise of God in our lives.

God will come through in His purposes for **all** of us.

We are **all** called to adhere to God's principles.

And we are **all** empowered by God's presence with us.

In our new beginning let's learn from Joshua's example of leading God's people and being led by God in his new beginning.

## **CONFESSION AND COMMUNION (Prayer of Confession PPT)**

Communion is all about a new beginning between God and us. Before we enter into communion we're going to move into a time of confession before God.

New beginnings are a chance to start over. For Joshua, it was the chance to step out from Moses' shadow and rely on God's faithfulness.

For us, it will be different. But let's start it the best way possible by getting ourselves right before God.

I'm going to read something and then give you a chance to respond by reading the words on the screen in yellow. After I'm going to play a reflective song and during this time feel free to come and take communion. Visitors, you are welcome to participate in communion. Parents, it is up to you to decide whether your children are ready to partake or not.

**Me:** God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

If we claim to have fellowship with him,  
yet walk in the darkness,  
we lie and do not live by the truth.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,  
we have fellowship with one another,

and the blood of Jesus, his Son,  
purifies us from sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we  
deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**All:** Most holy and merciful Father,  
We confess to you and to one another,  
that we have sinned against you  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our  
whole heart and mind and strength.  
We have not fully loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
We have not always had in us the mind of Christ.  
You alone know how often we have grieved you  
by wasting your gifts, by wandering from your ways.  
Forgive us, we pray you, most merciful Father;  
And free us from our sin.  
Renew in us the grace and strength of your Holy Spirit,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Saviour. Amen.

Take this time to spend with God and confess before him and then when you are ready come and partake of the bread, symbolising Jesus' body, and the juice, symbolising his blood and God's new covenant for us.

**Order of Service – 3 January 2016**

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First Welcome

2 Songs - God of Wonders

Ten Thousand Reasons

Second Welcome

Notices – not many!

Offering

Video – Star Wars ‘New Beginning’

Message

Time of Confession (Song – Lord I Need You)

Communion

Song -You’re Not Alone

Farewell – Joshua’s Commissioning Words

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Time of Confession (Song – Lord I Need You)

Communion

Song -You’re Not Alone

Farewell – Joshua’s Commissioning Words

## **Benediction**

Stay and have a cuppa ...

### **In the words of the Lord to Joshua:**

“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.

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.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Go in His name, Amen.