

# Recipe for Success



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Deut. 18:15–22; Joshua 1; Heb. 6:17, 18; Eph. 6:10–18; Ps. 1:1–3; Rom. 3:31.*

**Memory Text:** “ ‘Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go’ ” (*Joshua 1:7, NKJV*).

Benjamin Zander, musical director of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, taught a music interpretation class. He observed the students' anxiety as they faced the evaluation of their performance. In order to put the students at ease and to open them up to their full potential, he announced on the first day of the class that everybody would get an “A.” This “A” was not an expectation to live up to “but a possibility to live into.” The only requirement was for the students to write a letter within the first two weeks of the semester but dated at the end of the class. The letter explained why they deserved the high grade.

The book of Joshua is about new possibilities. Moses, who had dominated 40 years of Israel's history, belonged in the past. The Exodus from Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness, tragically marked by rebellion and stubbornness, had ended. A new generation, willing to obey God, was ready to enter the Promised Land, not as an expectation to live up to but as a possibility to live into.

Let's study the way God opened up a new chapter in Israel's life and how He can do the same in ours, as well.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 4.*

## A New Moses

**Read** Deuteronomy 18:15–22 and Joshua 1:1–9. Why is it significant that the book of Joshua starts by echoing a promise related to what would happen after the death of Moses?

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Though Moses had died and a new leader, Joshua, had been appointed by God, there are parallels between them. Both men had been told by God that they would lead their people into the land promised to their fathers. As the Lord said to Joshua: “ ‘Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses’ ” (*Josh. 1:3, NKJV*). Joshua would finish the work that had originally been given to Moses. He was, really, a new Moses.

**Read** Exodus 33:11; Numbers 14:6, 30, 38; Numbers 27:18; Numbers 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:38; Deuteronomy 31:23; and Deuteronomy 34:9. What do these texts tell us about Joshua?

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At this stage, the promise that God would “raise up” a prophet similar to Moses (*Deut. 18:15*) is only a possibility rather than an accomplished reality. The opening words of the book of Joshua remind the reader of this promise and, at the same time, create an expectation to see it fulfilled.

Though dead, Moses still dominates the first chapter. His name is mentioned ten times, Joshua’s only four. Moses is called “the servant of the LORD” while Joshua is referred to as “Moses’ assistant” (*Josh. 1:1, NKJV*). It will take a lifetime of faithful service and obedience for Joshua to receive the title “servant of the LORD” (*Josh. 24:29, NKJV*).

Even if the first chapter of Joshua captures a transition between two great leaders of Israel, the most important character is the Lord Himself, whose words open the book and whose guidance dominates it. There are no questions as to who is the real leader of Israel.

**Throughout the ages, God has called men and women to lead His people. Why is it crucial to remember who the true, invisible leader of the church is?**

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## Cross! Take! Divide! Serve!

**Read** Joshua 1. What can we learn about the structure of the book from this opening chapter?

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The first chapter of Joshua serves as an introduction to the whole book. It comprises four speeches that correspond to the four main sections of the book: crossing (*Josh. 1:2–9*); conquering (*Josh. 1:10, 11*); dividing the land (*Josh. 1:12–15*); and serving by obedience to the law (*Josh. 1:16–18*).

The book of Joshua can be seen as a series of divine initiatives. In each initiative, God gives a specific task to Joshua related to the conquest of Canaan, and each one is acknowledged later in the book after its successful completion.

In the end, the promises of God concerning the occupation of the land would be fulfilled. From then on, the responsibility of keeping the land lay in the hands of the Israelites and could be accomplished only by true faith and by the obedience that such faith always engenders.

God's initiatives, expressed by the three verbs—"cross," "take," and "divide"—receive a proper answer in the people's obedience, which derives from the final initiative: service.

Again, the book of Joshua has four major sections, each characterized by a specific concept expressed through the dominating presence of a Hebrew word:

1. Cross (*Josh. 1:1–5:12*)
2. Take (*Josh. 5:13–12:24*)
3. Divide (*Josh. 13:1–21:45*)
4. Service (*Josh. 22:1–24:33*)

Thus, the structure of the book itself conveys its main message: God's initiatives are not accomplished automatically. Instead, they require the faithful response of His people. That is, with all that God has done for us—including all that He has done for us that we cannot do for ourselves—we are then called to do what we can do for ourselves, which is to obey what God commands us to do. This is how it has always been in all of sacred history, and it remains so today. For example, the depiction of God's end-time people in Revelation 14:12 conveys the same idea: faith in what God has done for us, which leads to obedience.

**Think about some of the promises of God's Word that are most precious to you. What kind of response do they require on your part in order for them to become reality?**

## Heirs of Promises

In Joshua 1:2, 3, the Lord tells Joshua that He is giving the land to them. On the other hand, He said that He has already given it. What does that mean?

The land was a gift from the Lord, who was the real Owner. In Joshua 1:2, 3, two different forms of the verb “to give” are used, reflecting two significant aspects of inheriting the land. The first form expresses the process of giving the land. Only the Transjordan territories had been occupied by Israel. Most of the Promised Land had yet to be taken.

In Joshua 1:3 the verb is used in its perfect form, giving the impression that the land had already been given to them. When God is the subject of such actions, the form is called “the prophetic perfect.” And that’s because what He promises in His Word is an assured fact that can be trusted as present reality.

The pronouns in verse 3, “you” and “your,” are plurals, so the promise is given not only to Joshua but to the entire people of Israel. The reference to the promise given to Moses conveys the continuity of God’s cause.

Also, the word *kol*, “all,” “every,” is repeated numerous times in the first chapter. The pervasive presence of this noun expresses the totality and integrity that is crucial to attaining the objective set before Joshua. There has to be a perfect alignment between God, Joshua, and the people of Israel in order to assure success in the forthcoming conquest of the Promised Land.

**Read** Joshua 1:4–6 and Hebrews 6:17, 18. At that moment, the Promised Land was exactly that, a promise. Yet, God calls it an inheritance. What does it mean to be the heirs of God’s promises?

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There is nothing magical about the promises of God. They don’t have the power in and of themselves to secure their own fulfillment. The guarantee that they will come true lies in the presence of God, who says: “ ‘I will be with you.’ ” Indeed, the presence of the Lord was crucial for the survival of the Israelites. Without it, they would be only one among many nations, with no special call, identity, or mission (*Exod. 33:12–16*). The presence of the Lord was everything Joshua needed to succeed.

Nothing today has changed, which is why we have the promise of Jesus found in Matthew 28:20.

## Be Strong!

**Read** Joshua 1:7–9. Why did the Lord need to emphasize twice to Joshua that he had to be strong and courageous?

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The task set before Joshua seemed to involve overwhelming challenges. The walls of the Canaanite cities appeared unassailable, and the population of the land was trained for battle. In contrast, the Israelites, simple nomads, did not possess even the most primitive war machines to take on the fortified walls. History tells us that not even Egypt, the superpower of those times, was able to gain a steady foothold in Canaan.

Yet, the summons to be strong and courageous is not related here only to battle morale or to war strategies. Courage and strength are needed to stay faithful to the Torah and its specific requirements, which defined Israel's covenant with Yahweh.

**Read** Ephesians 6:10–18. Although we are not required today to participate in military combat, how can we apply the words of encouragement given to Joshua in our daily spiritual struggles?

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Today, in fulfilling the mission entrusted to them by Christ, Christians face similar challenges to those of Joshua; that is, they are required to wage war against their own sinful tendencies, against the principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this age, and against the hosts of wickedness. Like Joshua, they also have the assuring promise of Christ's presence: " 'I am with you always, even to the end of the age' " (*Matt. 28:20, NKJV*). As the supporting presence of the Lord was enough to expel the fears of Joshua, so it should be sufficient to banish our doubts and anxieties today.

The challenge for us is to know the Lord well enough to trust in Him and His promises to us. And that is why, more than anything else, we need that personal relationship with Him.

**The crucial question for us today is not different from that faced by Joshua. How can we stay true to what the Word of God says, even when it is unpopular or inconvenient to do so?**

## Prosperous and Successful

**Read** Joshua 1:7–9 together with Genesis 24:40, Isaiah 53:10, and Psalm 1:1–3. Based on these texts, what does it mean to be prosperous and successful?

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The Hebrew term *tsalakh*, “prosperous” (*Josh. 1:8*), implies the satisfactory accomplishment of what was planned, or a state of favorable circumstances.

The term *sakal*, “to be wise” (*Josh. 1:8*), can be translated as “prosper” or “be successful.” But it also can mean “to be prudent,” or “to act wisely.” It occurs frequently in Job, Proverbs, and Psalms, where the notion of success is closely tied to acting wisely by fearing God and obeying His Word.

According to this insight, success is not necessarily defined as material prosperity, though it does not exclude it. Success has to be seen as a state of harmony with the spiritual values and principles that lie at the foundation of God’s created world and that are expressed in His law.

Indeed, trust in God’s promises, especially the promise of salvation by faith alone and obedience to His law, are not opposed to each other. They represent two sides of the same coin.

**Read** Romans 3:31. What does this text say about the relationship between law and faith?

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To pit faith in the atoning and sacrificial death of Jesus in our behalf against obedience to God’s law is to set up a false and dangerous dichotomy. Law and grace always go together. Only a superficial understanding of the role of the law can lead to perceiving “law” and “grace” as opposites.

The writers of the Old Testament had a high regard for the law and considered it a source of delight (*Ps. 1:2; Ps. 119:70, 77, 174*). Rightly regarded and used, the law will lead to a deeper understanding of one’s own sinfulness (*Rom. 7:7*) and the need for Christ’s righteousness (*Gal. 3:24*).

**However much by God’s grace you seek to keep His law, how has your own experience shown you your need for Christ’s covering righteousness?**

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “Crossing the Jordan,” pp. 481, 482, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “Entering the Promised Land,” p. 175, in *The Story of Redemption*.

“In His promises and warnings, Jesus means me. God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that I by believing in Him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. The experiences related in God’s word are to be my experiences. Prayer and promise, precept and warning, are mine. . . . As faith thus receives and assimilates the principles of truth, they become a part of the being and the motive power of the life. The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 390, 391.

“There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.”—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 19.

## Discussion Questions:

- ① However different the circumstances of Joshua’s life and experiences are from ours, what spiritual principles can we take away from his life that we can apply to our own? Why, though, must we always keep context in mind when seeking to draw analogies?
- ② Discuss the relationship between God’s promises and our obedience to Him. How do they complement one another? What are the dangers of overemphasizing one at the expense of the other? That is, what danger comes from pushing the law at the expense of eclipsing grace? Or of pushing grace at the expense of eclipsing the law?
- ③ Based on this week’s lesson, how would you define success from a biblical perspective? What place does prosperity have in a Christian definition of success?
- ④ Imagine how Joshua might have felt, following Moses. What promise did God give to him that surely sustained him (see *Josh. 1:5*) in his great responsibilities?

## Worshipping a Tree

Sudhakar immediately noticed the tree when he arrived on the Bangkok Noi campus to work as a Global Mission pioneer in Thailand. Colorful ribbons were tied to the tree. Small images of stone and wood encircled it. Bananas, apples, and burning incense sticks were placed in its trunk. Sudhakar learned that townspeople believed that an ancestral spirit lived in the tree. So, they worshiped the tree according to their traditions.

Sudhakar was confused because the spirit tree stood on land that a kind-hearted woman had donated to a Seventh-day Adventist mission hospital. He asked the pastor why the community people came onto the campus to worship the spirit tree. The pastor explained that townspeople had been worshipping the spirit tree long before the land was donated to the church.

Sudhakar understood the cultural sensitivities, and he thought, "If the ribbons and other objects suddenly disappeared, townspeople might overreact."

But he was determined to do something. With much prayer to the God of heaven, he befriended the community leader and other townspeople. He invited them to cooking courses, English classes, and worship services in a new center of influence that he was organizing in a building near the spirit tree. Then, slowly, he started cleaning up the tree, removing the ribbons, the images, the bananas, the apples, and the incense sticks. It took about a week.

No one in the community said a word to him about the spirit tree.

Then one day, Sudhakar had an unexpected encounter. As he passed by the tree after a class in the center of influence, a voice called out to him by name. The voice offered wealth if Sudhakar would only obey.

But Sudhakar was not tempted. He didn't want anything from the spirit. He wanted the spirit to go. "I command you in Jesus' name to leave this campus and never come back," he said.

Three days later, Sudhakar noticed that the tree was dying. All of its leaves fell to the ground. Four weeks later, only a dry, dead tree remained. Sudhakar took an ax and chopped it down.

Townspeople were astounded as word spread around town about what had happened. Large numbers flocked to the center of influence. Sudhakar

taught the townspeople to pray to the only true God. Seven people began to attend Sabbath worship services in the center of influence and later were baptized.




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*Pray for Global Mission pioneers who, like Sudhakar, have accepted the challenge of proclaiming the gospel to unreached people groups around the world. Learn more about Global Mission pioneers: [bit.ly/GMPioneers](http://bit.ly/GMPioneers)*



## ***Part I: Overview***

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**Key Text:** *Joshua 1:7*

**Study Focus:** *Deut. 18:15–22; Joshua 1; Heb. 6:17, 18; Eph. 6:10–18; Ps. 1:1–3; Rom. 3:31.*

Even though Moses has passed away, the influence of his leadership still lingers as a new era dawns. In the opening of the book that bears his name, Joshua is encouraged by God to trust Him. God urges the new leader to follow in Moses' footsteps. Times are new, but the commandments and promises remain the same: cross, take, divide, and serve! The condition is the same: obedience as a response to God's merciful acts of deliverance in the past, based on a trustful relationship with Him. The only difference is the individuals: another generation has arisen. In a certain sense, the book of Joshua offers a fresh opportunity for God's people today, as they stand on the shores of the Promised Land.

At the beginning of the book, the main questions are: Will Israel seize this new opportunity? Will they follow the recipe for success that the previous generation did not?

History repeats itself today. The church, under the leadership of Christ, the new Joshua, is summoned to advance toward the fulfillment of God's promises. The pattern of the covenant remains unaltered: God gives us what we cannot obtain for ourselves, and He waits for our obedience, which expresses our confidence in His love, wisdom, and power. The question remains: Will our generation trust in the ability of the Divine to bring His plan "to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (*Phil. 1:6, NIV*)? As the present generation stands at the border of the heavenly Canaan, the divine appeal still resounds powerfully: "Only be strong and very courageous" (*Josh. 1:7, NKJV*).

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Spiritual Leadership**

The commissioning of Joshua as Moses' substitute occurs immediately after the painful memory of Moses' failure in the desert of Sin, which prevented the great leader from entering Canaan (*Num. 20:9–12*). In the larger context, this event is closely connected to the request of the daughters of Zelophehad (*Num. 27:1–12*). As part of the first generation, Zelophehad was doomed to die in the desert because of unbelief and rebellion. With Aaron already deceased and Moses nearing his end, the aged leader prays for a successor. His prayer, and God's response, define Joshua's future leadership role. His

role would be predominantly military, as implied in the expression “ ‘go out before us’ ” (1 Sam. 8:20). Indeed, his military prowess is already evident in Exodus 17:9–14, wherein he leads the Israelites against the forces of Amalek. This campaign demonstrates how Joshua was being prepared by the Lord, long before his actual commission.

In God’s response to Moses, Joshua is described as a man filled with the Spirit (*ruah*) (Num. 27:18). Such an evaluation from the One who knows the heart is significant. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *ruah* can denote an impersonal wind, human breath, disposition, or mind, among other things. It can also refer to the divine Agent who has been actively involved in worldly affairs since Creation (Gen. 1:2). The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Pentateuch is revealed through three manifestations: wisdom, prophecy, and leadership. Joseph is the first person identified as having the Spirit of God (Gen. 41:38). All three aspects are evident in his life: as a prophet, he receives dreams; as a wise man, he interprets Pharaoh’s dream; and as a leader, he devises a plan to save not only his people but also other nations affected by the famine.

In Joshua’s ministry, wisdom, prophecy, and leadership also will converge. He is filled with “the spirit of wisdom” (*ruah hokhmah*) (Deut. 34:9). Moreover, he is among the 70 elders who receive the Spirit to prophesy (Num. 11:16–30). Finally, in Numbers 27:18, he is appointed by God as a leader in whom the Spirit dwells.

Despite the notable abilities Joshua developed throughout the years serving Moses, his leadership is defined in spiritual terms. Only spiritual leadership makes sense in the context of spiritual warfare. Ultimately, the battles Joshua was called to wage belonged to God, not to him or to Israel.

### **The Pattern of the Covenant: Blessing, Promise, and Obedience**

From the first dialogue of God with humanity, the pattern of the covenant is evident: God blesses before giving commands (Gen. 1:28). In various subsequent covenants, divine blessing is manifested through God’s promises of deliverance, offspring, and land. For example, when God called Noah to build the ark, it showcased His commitment to providing a means of salvation to humanity. Noah received more specific commandments only after the great deliverance of those in the ark. Similarly, Abraham obeyed God’s instruction to leave his homeland only after hearing God’s promised blessings (Gen. 12:1–3). The Mosaic covenant follows a similar pattern, as God reminded the people of what He had done for Israel before giving the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. Finally, in David’s desire to build a house for the Lord in Jerusalem, God promised to build a house for David instead (2 Sam. 7:27). In the new covenant, God places His law in the hearts of His people so that they can freely obey Him (Jer. 31:33).

Thus, any legalistic view of the law of God is not aligned with the

biblical view of obedience. Obedience is always a human response to the divine initiative to bless the people of God. Salvation was never, and is not, reliant on human accomplishments, nor will it ever rely on human accomplishments. Such a legalistic view of the Old Testament law distorts its true purpose. Roy Gane aptly affirms: “If we overcome our neglect of biblical law, won’t this lead to legalism? Not if we understand the purpose of God’s law. It is a standard of acting and thinking in harmony with God’s character of love. It is not, cannot be, and never was intended to be a means to salvation. Doing right can never redeem us from our mortality or past sins. Only God’s grace through Christ’s sacrifice, received by faith, can do that. God’s commandments are for people who are already delivered.” —Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), p. 310.

### Law and Wisdom

The wisdom literature in the Old Testament, which comprises the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, plus some psalms, explores two prominent themes: Creation and law. These books demonstrate how Creation and law should impact the way that believers relate to God and to one another. There is, in fact, a close relationship between law and wisdom. This relationship is already apparent in Deuteronomy 4:6: “ ‘Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” ’ ” (NKJV). The greatness of Israel would not be found in wealth and military power but in wisdom resulting from the faithful observance of God’s commandments. Naturally, success and prosperity would follow. Such success and prosperity can be seen in the results of Solomon’s request for wisdom (*1 Kings 3:13*).

Wisdom, which is God-directed knowledge, imparts to us the ability to live well in the context of the fear of Yahweh by being obedient to His will and by living in harmony with fellow human beings and nature. The fool, in rebellion against God’s created order, disobeys Him, while the wise reject chaos and embrace God’s will in a life of obedience. The results of this choice are spelled out throughout the wisdom literature of the Bible, which also deals with the exceptions and the absurdities that frequently mark our existence under the sun (see Job and Ecclesiastes).

The same principle is found in Joshua 1, in which the leader, who embodies the whole nation, is called to obey the entire law diligently. Israel can choose the way of wisdom and experience its benefits. However, to do that, Joshua and the Israelites should “be strong and

very courageous” (*Josh. 1:7, NKJV*). The same pair of imperatives had already been used by Moses to encourage both the Israelites and his successor (*Deut. 31:6, 7*). Later, Joshua would address the people with the same words (*Josh. 10:25*). But why? Obedience requires trust, and in the context of our human nature, trust often demands strength and courage. Again, obedience is not a transaction in which we gain or lose, based on what we offer. Obedience is an expression of human trust in God’s way. It is rooted in a relationship with the living God. It involves denying self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus’ sacrificial steps (*Luke 9:23*). This commitment is not for the faint of heart.

## ***Part III: Life Application***

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### **Leadership**

- 1. There are several leadership models, such as the charismatic model, the transformational model, and the servant-leader model, among others. All these leadership profiles may be found in the Bible. However, the distinct mark of successful leaders in biblical terms is their spiritual competence. Starting with Joshua, discuss the qualities of a spiritual leader in the life of the following characters:**

**A. Joshua** \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Abraham** \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Deborah** \_\_\_\_\_

**D. David** \_\_\_\_\_

**E. Esther** \_\_\_\_\_

**F. Peter** \_\_\_\_\_

**G. Paul** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How would you characterize a spiritual leader today?**

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**3. The leaders listed in question 1 of this section also exercised responsibility outside the religious realm. Is it possible to be a spiritual leader as a “secular” administrator? Why or why not? If yes, how?**

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**Resting in God’s Promises**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged as a movement based on the promise of Jesus’ second coming, as indicated by its denominational name. The divine rest promised to Israel in the book of Joshua was achieved only in Solomon’s time, centuries after the initial conquest. However, even this rest was temporary. In Hebrews 11:13, we read that the examples of the faithful did not receive what was promised. Despite questions about the apparent delay of Jesus, the experience of God’s people throughout history has been one of an ongoing march toward the promises.

**Consider This:** How can the examples of faith found in Hebrews 11 encourage you as you continue moving toward the consummation of the blessed hope?

**Called to Be Strong and Courageous**

Discuss in your class how, as Seventh-day Adventists, we are required to be strong and courageous in the different environments in which we are called to live our faith today:

A. Family\_\_\_\_\_

B. Neighborhood\_\_\_\_\_

C. School \_\_\_\_\_

D. Work\_\_\_\_\_