

Keep your eyes on the road!
Rodolfo Rodriguez September 7, 2008
Joshua 1:8-9

Good morning my friends. As usual, I'm going to start with a little story, an anecdote actually. Before moving to La Paz and having no clue of God's plans for us, I went back to school in order to become a Qualified English Teacher.

To get in the school, you need a good level of English, both in speaking and writing, as they teach how to become a teacher more than they teach English.

Also you must be completely dedicated to this small degree as you go to school for 2 months, 6 days a week, 6 hours a day, plus 3 to 5 hour homework.

The school was full of teachers and teachers to be. Of course we went through various books in grammar psychology, group handling, geography, science, etc, so we, the future teachers would prepare and give the lessons to the rest of the group, sometimes in group and sometimes alone. We were told the lesson, the time we had and group's age. We would prepare the visual aids accordingly. Sometimes maps, sometimes power point presentations, flash cards, scale models, games, etc. many options but you could not repeat. And yes, you had to make the materials yourself, not buy or have them made...well maybe helped by a more artistically gifted wife once in a while.

As weeks went by, we started preparing and giving the lessons to other groups in the school, for longer periods of time and reduced time to prepare. Induced stress.

In all cases, before the person or people giving the lesson came in, the rest of the group would receive instructions on how old they were and how to behave, misbehave, play, ask, laugh, etc. Also, every student gave feedback afterwards, in public and about the lesson and the handling of the group and the situation and the posture, and the tone and the voice and the body language etc, pretty much like being in court without a lawyer...as you can clearly see today, I didn't learn much...I'm joking I did learn a lot, I just can't remember.

“Of all the things I've lost, I miss my mind the most”

I was one of the oldest students and the only one that had never been a teacher. Most were already teaching but needed the certificate to comply with the new regulations to teach in private schools.

In spite of my lack of experience I got very good grades because the most critical 2 things were to follow the instructions carefully and to keep a positive attitude in impossible situations, both of which I did better than actual teachers by being older. I also made many young friends.

Anyway, one day after school I left and my very young classmates knew I was going to the highway through the mountains. A few minutes after I left I received a text message in the cell phone from one of them. Being a message and not a call, I would have normally waited until I arrived, but I guessed it was either a last minute homework change or that I had left something at school, both of which could be catastrophic for preparing a decent lesson, so I grabbed the phone while driving at 90 miles an hour and managed to read the message:

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD!!!

The irony made me laugh loudly, which is very uncommon in me but you know what? I've kept my eyes on the road ever after. That joke message was profoundly and loudly recorded in my mind, and every time the phone rings while I'm driving, the message pops out, clear and loud in my mind, so I use a hands free cable when I go to the road, or stop to answer a call or answer very carefully and without taking my eyes from the road. And if it's a message I will definitely be parked when I read it.

A powerful 6 word statement was recorded in my mind forever, not only for answering the phone or not. It applies to every aspect of life; it reminds me to stay focused in what's important, it helps me not to get distracted by smaller things.

If a young teacher's ironic text message can make such a difference, what can God's Word do?

We'll read our scripture text twice, now and after understanding the content and the context.

Joshua 1:8-9

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Joshua received this message from God himself, loud and clear some 3400 years ago. Joshua was taking Moses place as the leader of the people of God and as the deliverer of the Promised Land after exiting Egypt and wandering in the desert 40 years. I'm sure that, coming directly from God, these words were permanently recorded in Joshua's mind and heart.

Let us understand this text by parts:

The Book of The Law consisted of five books then. 5 books of a total of 66 that we have today. 5 books that were all written by Moses in the last 40 years, Only one of them describes things that happened before Moses and Joshua so they are new books. These 5 books are called the Pentateuch.

We can't go into the detail of each book, but let's briefly remember some key contents:

Genesis

The Creation, Adam & Eve, fall of men.

Noah, the Judgment Flood, the covenant.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Fathers of the Chosen Nation, Covenants.

Beginning of the exile in Egypt.

Genesis describes the creation of everything and is the chronicle of mankind since its creation and until the exile in Egypt, we can point out the fall of men by Adam and Eve, the evil that led to the judgment flood, Noah's arch, the fathers of the Chosen Nation, the covenants with Noah, Abraham and Isaac as well as the beginning of the 430 year exile in Egypt.

But in short, for Joshua, Genesis contained the whole history of the world and mankind in one book and with lots of examples of obedience, disobedience, consequences, covenants, etc.

Exodus

Israel's suffering in Egypt.

Moses history, 40/40/40 years.

Delivery of Israel from Egypt.

Miracles of God vs. rebellion and unfaithfulness of men

40 year wilderness wandering.

10 Commandments, more laws and instructions.

First Tabernacle was built.

The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

So first we have some history of Israel's exile in Egypt and later slavery and suffering.

Then Moses history, how he was born and raised in Egypt, educated as the Pharaoh's grandson until he was 40 years old.

Then his self-imposed Midianite exile for other 40 years.

How he was appointed by God to deliver his people from Egypt and lead them into the Promised Land.

Description of said delivery and the Exodus, including the most impressive miracles of God, constant proof of His power, faithfulness and support of His people and the most shameful examples of disbelief, rebellion and unfaithfulness of men.

The corresponding consequences which include a 40 year wilderness wandering and grumbling in order for one generation, including Moses, to pass away before Israel entered the Promised Land...

Very importantly we have the 10 Commandments and other laws and instructions that God gave to Moses directly.

The Tabernacle was built with God's precise instructions. And last but not least, the glory of the Lord formally resided among Israelites for the first time.

Leviticus

Leviticus = Levitikon = “matters of the Levites”

Levites responsibilities.

Instructs priests in how to assist people in worship.

Tells people how to live a holy life.

The name Leviticus comes from the Greek word Levitikon meaning “matters of the Levites”. Leviticus addresses issues of the Levites but even more so, the priests are instructed in how to assist people in worship and the people is informed about how to live a holy life.

Numbers

39 years, 2 Generations:

- **The one that left Egypt, refused to conquer the Promised Land, condemned to die in the wilderness.**
- **The second generation came into adulthood in the wilderness, renewed obedience, and preparation for the conquest of the Promised Land.**

Numbers chronicles the experiences of two generations during almost 39 years of wandering in the wilderness:

The first generation is the one that left Egypt lead by Moses, The generation was numbered at the beginning of this book, for the war of conquest in Canaan. However they rebelled against the Lord and refused to enter and conquer the Promised Land in Canaan and therefore the Lord condemned everybody who was 20 years or older at the time, to die in the wilderness, including Moses and Aaron who rebelled to the Lord at a later time and excluding Caleb and Joshua, the only 2 spies that wanted to obey and trust God.

The second generation is the one that came into adulthood during the 40 years of wandering in the dessert, their renewed obedience and the events taking place prior to and in preparation for the conquest of the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy

Explanation concerning the law.

Completion of Pentateuch.

Divine revelation from Moses to Israel.

The recording of the law in a book.

Commissioning of Joshua as the new leader.

Moses viewing the land from afar and his death.

Deuteronomy is the record of Moses’ words of explanation concerning the law. Deuteronomy completes the five books called the Pentateuch. It concentrates on events that took place in the final weeks of Moses’ life.

The mayor event is the verbal communication of divine revelation from Moses to Israel. The others were Moses’ recording the law in a book, Moses’ commissioning of Joshua as the new leader, Moses viewing the land from afar and his death.

So now we know what “book” means and what Joshua needed to know, talk, meditate and observe 24/7 ever after.

As for the context, Joshua was to lead the people into the Promised Land, which implied wars and conquests of cities and kingdoms. Then distribute the land among the people of Israel and oversee the settlement of Israel observing all the instructions recorded by Moses.

God is telling Joshua: you just need to speak, meditate and do my law and you’ll succeed. No more, no less.

So here is Joshua, just commissioned by Moses and now being instructed directly by God, leading a new generation, against a probably stronger and larger enemy than the one he and the other spies saw 40 years earlier, with improved cities and armies.

My guess is that Joshua had two worries:

1. First, keeping the people faithful before, during and after the conquest. He had seen the many rebellions, disbelief, etc. and the consequences. He witnessed how Moses who was able to deliver Israel from Egypt, who was able to open the sea, who received the commandments and the law directly from God, who wrote the 5 books and who taught him everything, had not been able to lead the previous generation into the Promised Land. A permanent worry.
2. The second worry was the conquest, the wars. Although he was convinced from the beginning that God would fight for them as promised and that no one would stand before them, he was 40 years older now. An immediate worry.

Now that we know the contents of the book of the law, that we know the context and that we know the magnitude of the events that Joshua is about to lead Israel into, let’s read our passage again:

Joshua 1:8-9

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Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Like in my very humble teacher example, the most critical 2 things were to follow the instructions carefully and to keep a positive attitude in impossible situations, both of which Joshua could do better than the young generation he was leading.

As my classmates gave me a valuable message to remember, God gave Joshua one that evidently helped him succeed in his enormous tasks.

Today these are living commandments and promises, follow God's instructions and keep a positive attitude.

God is with you wherever you go!

And going back to the road concept, in John 14:6 we read:

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"

Jesus is the only road to the Father, to eternal life, so...

KEEP YOU EYES ON THE ROAD!!!

God bless you all

Let's pray. God we thank you for reminding us to trust in you, even in difficult circumstances, especially in difficult circumstances. Thank you for reminding us that you are always with us. Lord, help us seek, understand and obey your word, your instructions. Deliver us from our many worries, negative thoughts and feelings, help us be positive and generous in everything, let us not be afraid but trusting you. Lead our steps in the path you have for each of us and let us walk undistracted. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.