



THE STORY OF
Everything
LUKE 24:27

If you've ever had trouble getting a good night's rest, you know how there are many temptations that come in a sleepless night. Instead of your heart slowing down when you lie your head down on the pillow, nighttime can be filled with terror. We know how important sleep is to our bodies – it refreshes our physical strength, it renews our minds, it helps our metabolism, it strengthens us.

But when you face your pillow with the fear of sleeplessness, night can be distressing. For some people, they turn to medication. Others use home remedies or alcohol with the hopes that it will calm them down.

It takes a lot of courage to find rest. For many people, rest doesn't come naturally to them. They have to plan for it. They have to carve out time in their schedule. They have to be intentional about not checking their email and phone. The battle for rest is very real.

Rest has always been something people have had to fight for. Rest doesn't come naturally nor easily. Rest comes to those who, with courage, can fight the battle of feeling like they have to be in control, have to be always present, and always ready to respond.

This battle for rest was no different for the children of Israel. As Israel was about to enter into the promised land, the Lord had told them that they would have to fight for it. The land they were inheriting wasn't empty – it was filled with other peoples. But there would be rest for the people (1:13, 15).

Joshua 1 marks a new chapter in Israel's history. Moses is dead and Joshua is now leading them. The wilderness lies behind them and the land of promise is across the Jordan River. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, how will the people find rest for their souls? The same way that you and I find rest for our souls today.

1. Trust in the Promises of God (Josh. 1:1-4)

Israel faced a turning point in their history. Their steady leader Moses had died, and now his younger assistant, Joshua, was filling his shoes. Moses had been a great leader: he had defied the leader of a superpower; he had encountered God and lived; he had received the law of God; he had dealt with a whiny, stubborn nation, and he had brought them to the edge of their inheritance. Could Joshua carry on the job?

Standing on the plains of Moab, the land God had promised was just across the Jordan River. There was no time to mourn Moses' death. It was time to go in and inherit the land that the Lord had promised Israel. And what a land! You only have to go to the back of your Bible to the atlas and look at the scope of this land – from the great sea to the great river, every place Israel put their foot would become theirs.

This land was a gift. God was giving it to them. And it was a land promised to them. Since God had appeared to Abraham in Genesis 12, God's promise was that he was

giving Abraham and his descendants a gift of land. Now Israel was about to realize what their ancestor Abraham had been waiting for.

But it had been more than 400 years since God had made this promise to Abraham. And time has a way of making promises seem less reliable. Had God forgotten his promise? No! God had reaffirmed this promise to Moses (v. 3), and God's promise could be counted on.

Joshua needed to hear again the promise of God. As a new leader with this new opportunity to take a new land that was promised so long ago, the promise is now made again. Just as Moses had reminded the people of Israel of God's promises in the covenant, now Joshua hears the promises of God being spoken to him. In order to fight and be courageous, Joshua needed to trust in the very promises of God.

Trusting in God's promises is never a passive thing – it is a very active. Sometimes people wonder if God's promises are reliable when they look at their circumstances. Life gets hard. The pressure is on. And then they hope that a simple prayer will just make the hardship evaporate when they open their eyes. But that's not how trust works. Trust doesn't make hardship go away. Trust roots your strength in the right place – not in the disappearance of trouble, but in the promises of God. Trust is not a magic genie who grants you your three wishes; it is the anchor to your soul to keep you from drifting downstream. It is the action of clinging on to the words of God when the winds of life want to blow you away. God gives Joshua this promise again so he can lead Israel into the battle for the land.

2. Trust in the Presence of God (Josh. 1:5-6, 9)

Three times in Joshua 1 we hear the Lord promise his presence. Joshua probably felt the need for God's presence. He had been Moses' assistant and had seen how difficult this nation could be. After 40 years of difficulties, grumblings, and complaints, Joshua was stepping into a very difficult task. So what does the Lord say to Joshua? "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you" (v. 5). When God had commissioned Moses at the burning bush, Moses wondered how he could lead the people of Israel. He had tried to defend an Israelite man from an Egyptian beating, only to have that used against him (see Exod. 2). So God had spoken to him in Exod. 3:12 that he would be with him to confront Pharaoh and lead Israel.

Moses may have died, but the Lord has not. He is the Lord, the unchanging God, present with his people in power to deliver them from evil and deliver to them his promises. So it is in this assurance that Joshua can be strong and courageous (v. 9). And this assurance continues to be seen throughout the book of Joshua (3:7, 10; 4:14; 6:27; 10:14, 42; 13:6; 14:12; 21:44; 23:3, 10) – the Lord is with Joshua.

The battle to secure the land would require more than fighting the enemies in the land. Joshua would have to fight the enemies of the mind. Fear of the giants had kept Israel

from moving forward a generation ago. Now Joshua had to fight the fears in order to receive the promised rest. And the way that he could be strong and courageous was by trusting in the presence of God.

Hardships are no evidence of God's absence. In fact, it is often in the face of hardship that the Lord is most present. Israel had forgotten this lesson in her history. Yet it was true. In Psalm 77, a psalm recounting Israel's deliverance from Egypt when the armies of Pharaoh were coming to get them and they were pinned against the Red Sea with no escape route, the Lord had opened the sea for them to pass through. The psalmist Asaph says that when the waters saw the Lord, they were afraid and trembled. The clouds let their rain go, thunder and lightning lit up the sky, the wind howled, the earth trembled and shook. Israel went across the Red Sea on dry ground, but the Lord's footprints were unseen (Ps. 77:16-19). The Lord was their very present help in a time of trouble – but his presence didn't look like what any Israelite had expected.

Trusting God in the hard times means that we remember his presence is with us – and often in surprising ways. Hardship is no evidence of God's absence, but a call to trust that he will never leave you nor forsake you. The way to find rest in the face of trouble is not to flee from the hardship, but to trust that the ever-present God is with you and whatever may happen, he will remain with you.

3. Trust in the Word of God (Josh. 1:7-8)

With the promises of God given to his people and the presence of God with his people, Joshua was reminded that he would have to be strong and courageous to find the rest that they had longed for by trusting in the Word of God. How were the people to be strong and courageous in the face of giants? How could the people conquer the land and receive rest? They were to be careful to do all that Moses had commanded them and all that was written. Constant, careful meditation – taking in the word of God and meditating on it would fuel their obedience. By knowing God's word, by muttering it over and over, by chewing on it and absorbing it, God's word would shape the nation and lead them into obedience. They would have to follow every command with great care – and this required them to know God's word.

This command was specifically given to Joshua. He was to recall what God had said to Moses. He was to find strength in the words of God so that he would not stray to the right or the left, but that he would stay focused on the Lord. By having God's promises, presence, and word, Joshua would be able to be strong and courageous, leading the people into the rest that they had been waiting for (v. 15).

And all of these things are intended for us to...

4. See the glory of Christ



THE STORY OF
Everything
LUKE 24:27

Everyone gets tired when hardship comes. We want things to go back to normal. We want things easier. Hardship is no fun. Like Israel, we are tempted to grumble and complain when things are challenging. Israel grumbled when they could not get water, and their disobedience meant that they could not enter the land of promise and find rest for their souls. Hebrews 4 tells us that as much as the people wanted rest from their troubles, they did not find it. Even Joshua was not able to lead them into the perfect rest that they had wanted. (READ Heb. 4:8-13).

The way that we find rest is by being strong and courageous. Hebrews was written to Christians who were struggling – wanting to give up their pursuit of the Lord. Some were finding it too hard to gather together with the saints. Some were forgetting God’s word and his promises. If the promise of rest still is held out to us, how will we obtain it? Can we buy rest? Can we purchase ease and comfort?

No. Hebrews 13:5ff tells us to keep our lives free from the love of money, and be content with what we have, for God has said, “Never will I leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’ (Heb. 13:5-6). Because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (13:8). The God who led Moses and Joshua, the God who promised rest offers his very own Son. He is the rest our souls need. We have to fight fear. We have to be strong and courageous. The Lord is with us! We need his word – which is sharper than a two-edged sword for battle. It is our weapon to fight when we feel weary and want to find the easy way to have rest. His promise is that when we gather together, there is encouragement (Heb. 10:25). His promise is that his Word spoken to one another will spur us on with encouragement (Heb. 10:24). Christ gives his people courage in the face of hardship by his promise, presence, and Word so that we could have rest for our souls.

A holiday at a sunny and warm destination might give you temporary rest. Leaving your troubles behind will give you temporary rest. But you will still have to return to your life, because you can’t get away from you. But you can come to Jesus and find that he will strengthen you and remind you that no matter what happens, you do not have to fear, for he will never leave you nor forsake you.