



Now faith is
CONFIDENCE

in what we hope for and

ASSURANCE

about what we do not see.

This is what the ancients

were commended for.

HEBREWS 11:1-2 NIV





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THE STORY OF JOSEPH

When I was in the second grade, my teacher at the time was involved in local theater and had been cast as a part of the ensemble for an upcoming production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.


Considering how much I adored her, my parents bought tickets to attend one of the performances. And despite having grown up in the church hearing the story of Joseph and others time and time again, I clearly remember this musical as being one of the first times that Joseph's story truly set in for me.

I watched on in a mix of awe, fear, anger, and joy as the life of Joseph was played out. I knew what was coming next in every scene, yet there was still a part of me that sat in disbelief.

And even now, 16 years later, I find myself amazed all the same when I consider the story of Joseph. In his time on earth, Joseph knew the blessing of favoritism and deep love, the bitter sting of betrayal and family brokenness, the abundant mercy of restoration and healing, and so much more.

Yet despite it all, Joseph's story proclaims one thing over and over: **the incredible, overwhelming love and goodness of God.** God, in His grace, redeemed each of Joseph's situations for good.





Think about it. In his life as recorded in Genesis 37-50, Joseph encountered the following hardships:



- **BETRAYED BY HIS BROTHERS**
- **SOLD INTO SLAVERY**
- **FALSELY ACCUSED OF ADULTERY**
- **IMPRISONED FOR SEVERAL YEARS**

Any of these challenges *on their own* would have been difficult to navigate, but all of them together certainly brought nothing short of heartbreak. From a life of high favor from his father to one of complete dismissal from all around him, it would have been easy for Joseph to fall into dejection and depression.


But he refused.

Instead, Joseph chose to remain faithful and devoted to the Lord. In spite of everything that had happened, all that had been ripped away from him or done to him with harmful intentions, Joseph maintained a heart that sought the Lord everything he had.

Joseph faced each moment of adversity with a spirit that fully trusted God to bring good. Joseph didn't question, scream, or give up--but he was steadfast in his conviction, believing in his heart of hearts that the Lord was not yet finished writing his story because it was not yet redeemed for God's glory.

And in His incomprehensible goodness, God honored Joseph's faith in Him, bringing not only redemption, but also blessing beyond anything Joseph could have asked for.





In place of the broken things, God blessed Joseph with each of the following:



- FAVOR AMONG HIS LEADERS
- GIFT OF INTERPRETING DREAMS
- HIGH AUTHORITY IN EGYPT
- FAMILIAL RECONCILIATION

Throughout his life, Joseph was unswerving in his decision to continue praising the Lord through everything. He trusted God to write a good story and turn all that had been meant for evil into blessing beyond compare. And it's because of this unshakeable faith that Joseph's story is not only remembered, but *proclaimed*.

Thousands of years later, we still tell Joseph's story because of all that it shows us about life with the Lord. It's not always easy, and it's certainly likely to get messy at times, but God will *always* work to bring goodness from it.

God will not stop until all has been redeemed.




THINK ON IT!

Take a moment to read through Genesis 37:1-11 and 50:15-26. These passages end cap Joseph's story - what is the shared theme between them?

Why might the author of Genesis chosen to start and end Joseph's story with moments showing his authority over his brothers? How does this idea relate to the theme of redemption in Joseph's life?

Where in your story might you need God's redemption? Take a moment to pray and invite Him into it.





THE STORY OF MOSES

On December 16th, 1998, Dreamworks released their incredible adaptation of the story of Moses, *The Prince of Egypt*. From its music and story to the voice acting and art style, the film captivated audiences around the world, even receiving high scores from critics.

But despite how the musical score and design choices helped to embellish the narrative, peoples' fascination with the film ultimately derived from the incredible story at the center of it all: the life and ministry of Moses.

The movie, while still a taking a few liberties in its storytelling, remained pretty faithful to the biblical account of Moses' life as given in Exodus. *The Prince of Egypt* follows Moses from his birth and upbringing in the Egyptian palace through the parting of the Red Sea, capturing several incredible moments of faith and ministry in the moments in between.

In fact, it's in one of these "in between moments" that one of the top quotes in the film is found. Following Moses' first command for Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery, Aaron (Moses' brother) speaks up in a moment of discouragement.

Aaron says, "But Moses, didn't you see what happened? [Pharaoh's] priests did the same [miracle].* Pharaoh still has the power over our lives."


**Aaron's Staff into a Serpent - Exodus 7:8-13*





Unshaken in his faith, Moses compassionately replies to his brother:

Yes, Aaron, it's true. Pharaoh has the power. He can take away your food, your home, your freedom. He can take away your sons and daughters. With one word, Pharaoh can take away your very lives. But there is one thing he cannot take away from you: your faith. Believe, for we will see God's wonders.




Although this quote comes from a movie script and not the Bible itself, it certainly holds true to the heart of Moses' ministry as he led Israel! Despite moments of doubt, anger, or outright disobedience of Israel towards the Lord, Moses continually reminded them of God's power and promise.

One example of this can be found as Moses and all of Israel stood before the Red Sea. As far as the Israelites could see, their demise was imminent as they were caught between an uncrossable sea in front and an undefeatable army behind them.

But it was in this moment that Moses spoke one of Scripture's most well-known verses.


Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."



EXODUS 14:13-14

Even in the midst of what felt like an impossible situation, **Moses trusted God.**





This is not to say that Moses never had moments of doubt, be it about himself or about God's plan. But it *is* to say that in the moments where it mattered most, Moses refused to be swayed to believe in anyone or anything other than *Yahweh*, the undefeated Lord of Israel.

Moses' story is one that, like Joseph's, proclaims the goodness of God and all that He can do. From the very beginning of Moses' story, God was working in Moses to prepare his heart and faith for leading Israel. God equipped Moses in areas where he felt insecure, developed his ministry in places where he felt unworthy, and deepened his faith in moments where he questioned or stumbled.

Moses' faith and devotion to the Lord has inspired generation after generation to seek God with the same fervor and desire. His relationship with the Lord was not perfect, but it was sincere, overflowing with authentic desire to pursue the Lord with complete abandon. Moses wanted nothing more than to serve God with all he had, even when it was uncomfortable or inconvenient - and the Lord blessed him *abundantly* because of it.




THINK ON IT!

Take a moment to read Exodus 14:5-15:21. What does this passage demonstrate about having faith in the Lord to act, and how we can respond when He does?

Consider the interaction between Moses and Aaron in "The Prince of Egypt." What might currently feel like the "Pharaoh" in your life? How so?

Where in your life might you need God to equip, develop, or deepen you as He did Moses? Take some time to pray on and invite God into it.





THE STORY OF JOSHUA

Despite having gone to Bible college and taken *multiple* Old Testament classes, I somehow made it through without ever reading through the book of Joshua in its entirety (oops 🤦).

So funny enough, the first time I ever read through the book of Joshua was a couple of months ago. And while I had heard countless sermons on Joshua himself, his ministry, or the book recounting it all, I still found myself absolutely amazed in reading through the actual Scripture itself.

In fact, the margins of my Bible are *filled to the brim* in the book of Joshua with notes, word studies on the Hebrew, references to allusions of other biblical passages, and so much more. But among all of those things, here's what stuck with me the most: how many times Joshua's ministry mirrored that of his mentor, Moses.

Joshua's ministry repeatedly included miracles that called back to ones performed by Moses in his own time leading the Israelites.

At first, I thought it was pure coincidence (silly, right?), but then as I continued to read and study the text, I realized there was so much more to it than just blind chance.

The author of Joshua was intending to draw parallels between Moses and his successor, hoping readers would compare the two.



So, let's take a moment to do that.

MOSES

Protection at Passover
(EXODUS 12:1-30)

Parting the Red Sea
(EXODUS 14:15-31)

The Burning Bush
(EXODUS 3:1-22)

JOSHUA

Protection of Rahab
(JOSHUA 2:17-24)

Parting the Jordan
(JOSHUA 3:7-17)

The Lord's Commander
(JOSHUA 5:13-15)

In each of the instances above, as well as several other times throughout the rest of Joshua's story, there are callbacks to Moses' ministry as Joshua himself leads Israel following Moses' death. At first glance, you may think exactly what I did: "Hm, weird coincidence."

However, the author includes a promise the Lord made to Joshua to show us that it's *much* more than that.

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.


JOSHUA 1:5



At the very beginning of Joshua's journey as Israel's leader, the Lord affirms his calling and authority by reminding him of that which filled his predecessor. Just as the Lord empowered and worked mightily in Moses, He promises to do the same in and through Joshua.

And sure enough, the Lord held true to His promise.





As Joshua remained faithful to following the Lord and His instruction, God remained faithful to Joshua and Israel.

Joshua's story follows his leading of Israel into the Promised Land after years of wandering in the wilderness, and it's where we *finally* see the fulfillment of the covenantal blessing handed down through generations.

The book of Joshua is where we see the fruit of obedience and the blessing of believing in the Lord. God is always good on His promise!

The good work that the Lord had begun in Moses' ministry fully blossomed when Joshua stepped up. Moses modeled a deep faith and personal relationship with God, which taught Joshua how to pursue and develop the same.

Joshua's faith and obedience as the Lord's appointed leader allowed him to lead Israel into victory over their enemies and divine favor, and it shows us the importance of not simply *believing* in the Lord, but truly *following* Him.

For when we have been changed in faith, our lives can't help but reflect it.




THINK ON IT!

Take a moment to read Joshua 1:1-18. What parallels does this passage draw between Moses and Joshua?

Consider the mentoring relationship between Moses and Joshua and how it shaped Joshua's ministry. Who in your life do you consider to be your "Moses?"

Where in your life may you need help living out in obedience and faith as Joshua did? Spend some time in prayer and ask God what specific steps you can take to do so.





THE STORY OF samuel

While in school for my Masters degree, one of the requirements to graduate was to take two semester long classes focused on reading, parsing, translating, and interpreting texts from the Hebrew Bible. While I wasn't thrilled to partake in this sort of class (Hebrew was *much* harder for me than Greek), I decided to take a course translating 1 and 2 Samuel with one of my favorite professors.


I was immediately uninterested in the class and the amount of work required each week.

We translated at least one chapter each week, parsing every single verb, even if it appeared multiple times. This typically resulted in a three or four page assignment full of parsing, translation, and personal interpretation with grammatical support for my translation decisions. In short, it was *brutal*.

Yet to my surprise, the more I translated and worked through the story of Samuel, the more intrigued I became with his ministry.

Samuel was a true powerhouse of a prophet, acting as a judge over Israel and eventually helping it to transition into a monarchy. He led with adamant faith and conviction, and he was unafraid to do the hard things God required of him as he anointed King Saul, revoked that same anointing, and then appointed David as king.





Yet Samuel was not *just* a prophet. Samuel was a priest, warrior, kingmaker, judge, *and* prophet all in one. And it was the combination of all these skills that helped Samuel become such an absolute force in his ministry.

However, despite all of these incredibly impressive titles Samuel carried, one of my favorite stories of Samuel comes far before he was ever any of those things.

In 1 Samuel 3, we find the story of 12 year-old Samuel hearing the Lord's voice for the first time. Yet Samuel, not having yet learned about God and just beginning to study with Eli (his priest and mentor), did not recognize God when He called and mistook Him for Eli.

The Lord called Samuel three times, and each time Samuel rose and went to Eli. After the third time, Eli told Samuel that it was God who was calling him, and directed him to answer by saying, "Speak, for your servant is listening."


Samuel obediently returned to bed and waited for the Lord to call again; and when He did, Samuel did exactly as Eli told him. And to his surprise, God began speaking to him!

And from then on, God *continued* to talk to Samuel for the rest of his life.

The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.

1 SAMUEL 3:19-20





That story stands as one of my favorites because of how it humanizes Samuel, one of the giants of the faith. The narrative of 1 Samuel 3 demonstrates that it takes practice for us to learn how to hear and discern God's voice - it doesn't just happen!

Even Samuel, the prophet who anointed and led King David, had to learn how to discern God's voice from the others around him. It took time listening and intentionally leaning in, waiting for God to speak when He was ready.

As seen in the verses above, God used Samuel's ability to lean in and listen to deepen his faith and jumpstart his ministry. Samuel had to know the Lord well in order to recognize Him when He spoke, and it was this deep, intimate relationship that solidified Samuel's faith and trust in God.

As the guide for King Saul, King David, and many others in Israel, Samuel's belief in the Lord was a vital piece to leading others well. As Samuel believed in and followed God, the Lord brought great power to his ministry - **for there's no stronger asset than to wholly trust in the Lord.**



THINK ON IT!

Take a moment to read through 1 Samuel 3:1-21. What does this passage demonstrate about how the Lord speaks to us?

Like Joshua, Samuel needed someone (Eli) to show him how to hear and follow the Lord. What does this teach us about the importance of mentorship?

Is there anywhere in your life where God may be calling out to you, but you've yet to listen? Take some time to pray and ask the Lord to speak again.

