

**REWARD FOR FAITHFULNESS IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP:
THE EXAMPLE OF JOSHUA**

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Abstract

The paper examines the reward for faithfulness in Christian leadership using biblical Joshua as an example. The children of Israel under Joshua's leadership can be likened to the modern-day Church. The methodology used include historical, descriptive, evaluative and comparative analysis, using Commentaries, Journal articles and other published works. The research finds that Joshua was faithful as a military commander under Moses leadership, as a spy and eventually as leader over the twelve tribes. He was also faithful to God in obeying the Torah. And that such commitment to the total obedience of the Scripture as did Joshua is often lacking among contemporary church leaders. For his faithfulness, Joshua was privileged to enter into the Promised Land alongside faithful Caleb, while their contemporaries died in the Wilderness. He was also appointed overall leader of the tribes. He alongside Eleazar the Priest and the tribal leaders had the privilege of allocating the land to the different tribes. The exemplary life of Joshua should stimulate modern day Church leaders to a life of faithfulness irrespective of prevailing circumstances.

Keywords: Joshua, Faithfulness, Church, Leadership, Reward.

Introduction

Leadership is God's given ability /privilege to lead others or to rule over a group of people. God instituted leadership right from creation when he appointed the man he had made in his image to 'rule' over all that he created. When men began to populate the earth, leaders such as Nimrod (Gen 10:7-11) and others (Gen 11:1-4) arose and became the rallying point for others with respect to direction.

Leadership is an essential factor in the development of any given organization or society. Leadership gives direction and set the agenda for a given people bond by a

common interest. Anyone vested with the mantle of leadership has the responsibility of leading people to achieve a set goal. Despite the importance of leadership in the development of any organization or society, James MacGregor Burns cited in Henry and Richard Blackaby (2001), asserts that "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 16). However, a good understanding of leadership and its role is vital for the growth of any society.

Newberry (1893), states that Moses, as led by God, "appointed Joshua a leader who matches Moses' own character of faithfulness to God. He is described as a man of valor and learning, strong and courageous (Joshua 1:6-7), well-informed about and obedient to God's law (Josh. 1:8-9). More importantly, he is a spiritual man." (p. 22). Joshua's faithfulness in obeying the word of God as instructed by Moses the servant of the Lord concerning leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land and dividing the land as an inheritance for the people of God earned him the title Servant of Yahweh (24:29). The title Servant of Yahweh is a favorite Deuteronomistic description of holy men and was applied primarily to kings and prophets in Deuteronomistic literature (Newberry, 1893).

Christian Leadership

Christian Leadership is leadership within the Christian Church. Though many circular leadership principles have their root in the Bible, Christian Leadership is solely built on the tenets of Scriptures. A Christian leader is someone called by God and equipped to lead his chosen people towards the attainment of a set goal. Barna (1997), is of the view that "A Christian leader is someone who is called by God to lead, lead with and through Christ-like character; and demonstrates the functional competencies that permit effective leadership to take place"(p. 18).

Jesus is the perfect model for Christian leadership, although before his advent, great leaders whose leadership style reflected Christ can be found in the pages of Scriptures. Amongst such leaders was Joshua, the son of Nun. Scholars have drawn certain similarities between Joshua and Jesus hence the use of the former in this paper. According to Dillard and Longman 111 (1995):

The name Jesus is but a Greek writing of the Hebrew name Joshua, so it is not surprising to see the New Testament drawing many parallels between Israel under Joshua's leadership and the formation of a new Israel under Jesus. Particularly, the writer of the Book of Hebrews makes frequent use of these connections (Heb 4:8).

According to the New Testament, Jesus is not only Joshua's greater namesake, but he is also the divine warrior (Longman, 1982; Longman & Reid, 1995), the captain of the Lord's army who fights in behalf of his people and achieves victory for them (Jos 5:13-15; Rev 19:11-16). The inheritance he gives is not a stretch of rocky land in the eastern Mediterranean, but rather renewed heavens and earth and a heavenly city (Rev 21:1-2) (p. 116-117)

As a fallout of the Raymond Dillard and Tremper Longman assertion, Joshua can be adjudged a faithful leader who can serve as an example for present day Christian leaders. Christian leadership/leaders are judged/evaluated by whether or not they are able to attain the set goal. Unlike Circular leadership and leaders, Christian leadership is accountable to God (Hebrew 13:17). Christian leaders are spiritual leaders and in the words of Henry and Richard Blackaby (2001), "Spiritual leaders do not try to satisfy the goals and ambition of the people they lead but those of the God they serve. Spiritual leaders must be spiritual statesmen and not merely spiritual politicians" (p. 18).

Faithfulness in Christian Leadership

Faithfulness is adhering firmly and devotedly, as to a person, a cause, or an idea. The faithful person is one who can be counted on to carry out his or her responsibilities and promises to the best of his or her ability through thick and thin no matter how bad the situation. A faithful Christian leader is one who focuses on God continually in fulfillment of his/her mandate. He/ She seeks to know the will of God at all times in order to move men on to God's agenda. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews noted that Moses was a faithful servant (leader) in God's house (Hebrews 3:5) as also was Jesus. Joshua is yet another leader who was faithful to his calling.

Emergence of Joshua as a Leader.

Our first introduction to Joshua *Ben Nun* in Scriptures was in Exodus 17:8-16 when as the commander of Israel army, he led the army of Israel against the Amalekites in Rephidim. In that battle Moses the leader of the people, Aaron the high priest and Hur went up a hill to pray lifting up the rod of Moses while Joshua commands the troop below. It is recorded that "Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword" (Exo 17:13). Thus began the journey of Joshua to greatness. His name which was originally Hoshea, meaning 'help,' was changed to Jehoshua, (Joshua) 'Jehovah is help' by Moses (Num 13:16). According to the Easton's Bible Dictionary

(2006), the change of name must have been occasioned by the great victory over the Amalekites in Rephidim.

Joshua was a prince of Ephraim (Num 13:8,16). He became Moses' minister or servant and accompanied him to the point when he ascended Mount Sinai to receive the two tables of the commandments of Yahweh for his people (Exo 32:17). He was also one of the twelve who were sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan (Num 13:16-17), and only he and Caleb gave an encouraging report. God rewarded them for their fidelity and trust in him by keeping them alive to enter the Promised Land (Num 14:30). Under the direction of God, Moses, before his death, invested Joshua in a public and solemn manner with authority over the people as his successor (Deut. 31:23).

Joshua's Faithfulness as a Leader

As a Military Commander

Joshua as military commander was faithful and loyal to Moses as the leader of the whole Israelite tribes. Even though God gave Israel victory through his command of the army, he was never proud. He did not fall into the trap of rebellion as did Korah and Abiram who challenged the leadership of Moses (Num 16:1-35). Even Miriam the prophetess and sister to Moses and Aaron the high priest both ganged up against their brother but not Joshua. He was loyal to the very end of his life. He was never associated with any rebellion throughout the wilderness journey. He must have been a humble and faithful soldier whose loyalty to Moses as the commander-in-chief of Israel's troop was never in doubt. Joshua's humility is most demonstrated when after successfully leading the people into the Promised Land, and allotting land to the different tribes, he chose Timnath-serah, a rather obscure place as his inheritance. Chaffart (2014), assert that Joshua was a great leader. But not because he was strong or clever. He was a great leader because of his humble, obedient, and submissive spirit.

As a spy

The Military act of spying is a delicate task that requires not only experience and tact but also trust. Thus, Joshua was chosen to embark on this mission based on his faithfulness to his master over the past years as observed by Zav (2017). The Talmud suggests that Moses had an inkling that something terrible is about to happen with the behavior of the scout themselves. This may even be why he chooses Joshua for this mission in the first place-he needs at least one person whom he trusts on this

mission. According to the Talmud, of the twelve men, who unfortunately were leaders of their individual tribes, only Joshua and Caleb came back with a good report. The other ten came with an evil report that weakened the entire congregation. The report of the ten men led to a general rebellion among the people. This rebellion led Israel to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Thus, the unfaithfulness of ten men jeopardized the destiny of a whole nation of people. This can be likened in recent happenings to the five Supreme Court judges who sat in the United States of America to legislate on the legality of homosexuality on Friday June 26, 2015. Through the action of these few men, America is now known as a nation that encourages homosexual relationship. A nation which no longer have regard for the tenants of the Bible.

As Moses Successor

The people were encamped at Shittim when he assumed leadership (Josh 1:1). On assumption of office the Lord spoke to him and commanded him to devote himself to the study and meditation of the Torah (Jos 1:8). The purpose of this devotion according to Yahweh was for Joshua to be careful to obey all that was commanded him. This according to the LORD will bring about good success in carrying out his assignment of leading Israel into the Promised Land. Events that followed this divine command suggest to us that Joshua heeded the command. After crossing the Jordan, Joshua first of all in accordance to the word of Yahweh, circumcised all the males who had not been circumcised in the wilderness (Jos 5:2-3). This act was a demonstration of covenant faithfulness to Yahweh (Burge & Hill, 2012). He thereafter proceeded to celebrate the Passover as commanded in the Torah (Jos 5:10). It is worth mentioning that this would be the first Passover that will be celebrated in about 40 years. The celebration of the Passover in accordance with God's command is another proof of Joshua's faithfulness to keeping Yahweh's instructions (Exo 13:5). The Passover was meant to be a yearly event but probably because of the disobedience and unfaithfulness of the multitude who left Egypt for the land of Canaan but who later were cut off because of unbelief, all through the wilderness year this yearly event was neglected.

Another instance where Joshua demonstrated his commitment to knowing Yahweh's mind and faithfulness in keeping to Yahweh's instructions was when he encountered the captain of the Lord's host (Jos 5:13-15).

During this encounter, Joshua asked, “what message does my Lord have for his servant?” (Jos 5:14). The question reveals the intentions of one who is willing to take instructions from the Lord with a view to keeping them. The next chapter detailed the instructions of God to Joshua as regards taking over Jericho. Joshua followed wholly the instruction of Yahweh as given and Jericho fell. As an experienced General, Joshua never let his knowledge stand in the way of obedience to God’s command, for it would have sounded unreasonable to ‘just march around and shout’ and a wall of the dimension of Jericho at that time will fall (Jos 2:15). Faithfulness in heeding Yahweh’s instructions brought the victory. This is a lesson that runs through the book of Joshua which contemporary church leaders must never forget. King Jehoshaphat would in later years adopt this same principle when the armies of Moab, Ammon and Edom came against him (2 Chron 20:1-24). He decided to seek the Lord and having heard from God, he went into the battle with a band of singers instead of fighters, but because he obeyed, he gained victory over the enemy.

While on the war of conquest, Joshua took time off to gather the entire congregation to a solemn assembly where all the laws were read and Israel renewed her covenant with Yahweh. The significance of this break from war to worship and offer of sacrifices to God is first in recognition of the role of Yahweh in the conquest and secondly to obey the word of God as instructed by Moses the servant of the Lord. It shows the faithfulness of Joshua to keeping the law as instructed by God. (cf. Joshua 1:8). Joshua recognized that it is only total obedience to Yahweh that will ensure future victory as it has been for previous ones. It was more important for the nation to hear the Word than to fight any more battles (Warren, 2004). Even when Joshua grew so old that he could no longer go to war and despite his seemingly accomplishment, Joshua still devoted his time to listening to God. No wonder God spoke to him to remind him of lands yet to be possessed. (Jos 13:1-2). Joshua sprang into action again and went ahead to divide the yet to be conquered land to the nine and half tribes remaining (Jos 13:7). Joshua did and went beyond that to stir up the tribes to go up in battle and take over the land allotted to them. He also appointed cities of refuge for the Israelite according to the word of the Lord (Jos 20).

Joshua’s farewell address to the Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh (Jos 22:1-6) and the farewell address to the entire nation (Jos 24:1-28) further reveal his faithful commitment to Yahweh and his word. In the farewell address to the whole tribes, Joshua recounted their history as a reminder of God’s faithfulness to his people throughout their pilgrimage.

Joshua faithfully obeyed the laws of the Torah because he meditated on them as instructed by God himself. He was also faithful in teaching Israel the laws, hence all through his years, Israel obeyed (served) the Lord (Jos 24:31). That the people were faithful 'throughout the life time of Joshua' is eloquent testimony to the power of Joshua's influence. (Barker & Kohlemberger 111, 1994).

Contextualizing Joshua's Faithfulness as a Leader

Joshua after his commissioning as the leader of the children of Israel, received a charge from God concerning the way to success in the task assigned to him. Having received the command to meditate on the book of the law, and be diligent to keep everything written therein, Joshua set about his mission of leading Israel into the promise land with a careful resolve to obey all that is commanded him in the book of the law. Contemporary Church workers have likewise received a similar instruction from their Lord. Then Jesus came to them and said,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matt 28:18-20).

For the Modern-day Church Leader to be able to effectively carry out his assignment of disciple making, as commanded, he/she must be devoted to the study of Jesus' word and prayers. As the Apostle Peter rightly said "we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" Acts 6:4. Joshua was faithful in meditating on the Torah and prayer, likewise Contemporary Church leaders ought to give themselves to meditating on the Bible and Prayer.

It was through prayerful meditation that Joshua *Ben Nun* came to meet the captain of the host of the Lord's army as he was preparing to take over Jericho (Jos 5:13-15). Joshua was also faithful in prayer as a leader. It was in the place of prayer that he was able to find out the reason for the defeat of Israel by the men of Ai (Jos 7:6-15). Through communion with Yahweh, Joshua became successful in overcoming all the Canaanite kings that came against him in battle. The 21st Century Christian leader needs to learn the disciplines of prayer, study and meditation on God's word to

be able to overcome the numerous challenges that are confronting the church of today. Joshua did not only give himself to prayer and meditation on the Torah, he taught the whole nation to fear and reverence the Lord. Through the renewal of the covenant at Shechem, the reading of the words of the law to them and by the command he gave to them to be faithful in his farewell speech, Joshua made the children of Israel to be faithful to God throughout his lifetime and the lifetime of the Elders who outlived him (Jos 24:31).

21st Century Christian leaders should besides be faithful in prayer and the study of the Bible, should devote time to teach their congregation the word of God. The level of the knowledge of the word of God by Contemporary Christian is so low that the church is fast losing her power of holiness and moral living. Immorality is on the increase even amongst church leaders that the church has almost lost her voice in society today. According to Farrar (1995),

A number of years ago, a national conference for church youth directors was held at a major hotel in a city in the Midwest. Youth Pastors by the hundreds flooded into the hotel and took nearly every room. At the conclusion of the conference, the hotel manager told the conference administrator that the number of guests who turned into the adult movie channel (Porn stations) broke the previous record, far and away outdoing any other convention in the history of the hotel (p.72).

Reward for Joshua's Faithfulness as a Leader

As a faithful servant to his master Moses, Joshua was rewarded by God as the leader to lead Israel into the Promise Land after the demise of the great leader. For his faithfulness in trusting Jehovah to give Israel the Land of Canaan despite the presence of the giants and the voice of the majority of the spies, he secured his entrance into Canaan alongside Caleb while all others of his contemporaries were destroyed. And for his faithfulness in holding on to the book of the law as commanded by Yahweh, he secured victory in all the battles he engaged in, in the bid to take over the land from its initial inhabitants, who proved unworthy of being inhabitant of Canaan due to their evil practices. Despite the initial setback in Ai, he eventually overran the people and destroyed the city. More so, Joshua's faithfulness to serving the Lord even after retirement from active service as leader of the people influenced the entire nation to keep faith with Jehovah till his death and the death of the elders who outlived him.

Conclusion

Christian Leadership requires faithfulness in every area of the life of the leader. To be faithful in service, one is required to consistently give himself/herself to the study and meditation on God's word. The fear of failure or the fear of man and the urge to trust on self are some factors that can lead to failure in Christian leadership. Leaders in contemporary times have much to gain if they follow the example of Joshua Faithful leaders are often rewarded by God. And such reward should serve as catalyst to spur up all contemporary leaders to faithfulness whether they are acknowledged by man or not.

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