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SERMON TITLE: Follow the Leader: God Goes Before You!

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 31:1-8

DATE: May 26, 2019

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Celebration of FPCD Graduates

Graduates, I want you to imagine yourselves in Joshua's shoes. Do you remember Joshua? Joshua was a young, upcoming leader. Joshua was Moses' assistant. Moses mentored him. He went everywhere with Moses, even up the mountain with him when Moses received the Ten Commandments.

Today there are young upcoming leaders who need mentoring.

When Moses appointed twelve scouts to spy out the land, Joshua was one of them. He returned with great enthusiasm, saying, "The land is really good! If we please the Lord, he will bring us into it and give it to us!" (Numbers 14:7-8)

That's a positive, adventuresome attitude. His mentor's faith had rubbed off on him!

Young people, are you looking for someone to learn from?

Moses had taken Israel out of Egypt, out of slavery and led them to the edge of the Jordan River. Joshua was beside him all the way. They had arrived at the coveted Promised Land.

On the way, they had many stumbling blocks. The people were weak in learning to live by faith and so daily God taught them, tested them, taught them some more until God through Moses established a lifestyle of listening and leaning on God.

The people did not have any idea of the principles necessary to live successfully in relationship with God. So at Mt. Sinai God gave them the law. They had to learn to follow the law in order to gain the Promised Land and it would take time.

Following God takes persistent faith and obedience.

This seems to be an understatement, but there's no way around it. To gain God's promises takes faith and obedience.

We do not automatically come under either of these principles, for this world is Satan's territory, just like the territory

God's people were to settle was occupied by lawless people. They were enemies to Israel becoming established as a nation.

Israel would have to fight for this land. They would have to uproot the enemy and take possession. How would they do it? Let's hear the story. Deuteronomy 31:1-8:

When Moses had finished giving these instructions to all the people of Israel, he said, "I am now 120 years old, and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has told me, 'You will not cross the Jordan River.' But the LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy the nations living there, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua will lead you across the river, just as the LORD promised. "The LORD will destroy the nations living in the land, just as he destroyed Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites. The LORD will hand over to you the people who live there, and you must deal with them as I have commanded you. So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you." Then Moses called for Joshua, and as all Israel watched, he said to him, "Be strong and courageous! For you will lead these people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors he would give them. You are the one who will divide it among them as their grants of land. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you."

What do you need to establish a nation?

It was very important to God in order to eventually bless all peoples and all nations, that God establish Israel whom God had chosen to work through. Syncretism must not happen. Their unique faith which God was shaping would be lost if they only half lived in faith and half lived the way the world lives without God, like these people lived. They would be sucked up by the surrounding peoples.

God's efforts would be lost.

They needed a place to live, to establish community worship, to develop material prosperity through the land, and to learn to treat each other properly through living out the commands of God.

This is God's will that you have these things. **You have a part in establishing them.**

When the children of Israel moved forward to gain the promise of land, the land would serve as a gift and a responsibility. They had to live by the commandments:

Love the Lord your God and no other. He is the only God. Do not worship any idol. Honor the Sabbath. Respect your parents. Be faithful to your wife. Treat your neighbor as yourself by not murdering, not coveting his property or his wife, not lying about him, stealing from him, or being greedy.

If they would follow these commands, they would have provision of a place to live, prosperity produced from the land, and protection from their enemies in the land.

When you center yourself in God's promises and ways, you have provision and protection.

God was ready to bless them with the land. The people were ready to enter. Moses would step aside. You, upcoming young person, are taking his place. You are the new commander who gets to take the people in to gain the gift.

Just like today you are graduating and facing this rite of passage which leads into a new role for you. You will take the baton from Moses and move forward on the foundation that has been laid. The foundation is Faith and Obedience.

Joshua would build on that foundation established by God and on the example set by Moses. We are building on that foundation too. The Bible defines Joshua: "He unreservedly followed the Lord." (Numbers 32:12)

Hear who God is:

"the go-ahead-of-you God."

"the fight-for-you God."

"the win-the-battle God."

"the never-fail-you God."

"the never-forsake-you God."

These are amazing commitments! Do you see God in that powerful way? Are you operating in the kind of faith which believes God is on your side in a big way? That kind of faith affects your life. That kind of faithful God makes all the difference.

If you are going to syncretize with the culture, you will have weak faith. You will not see God in all God's fullness. You will limp along always wondering where the promise is. You will always wonder why God doesn't come through for you. If you determine your own path, you will not experience the power of God because you will think God needs "help" through cultural values. You will believe that it does not matter if you compromise with cultural mores.

Satan works through culture to break down your faith.

If you are going to syncretize with the culture around you, you will not submit to the authority of your leader. You must follow the "go-ahead-of-you, fight for you" God. You must accept the Commander God.

Here's the reassurance. You are not in it alone.

Young people, take out your gift you received from your fellow believers at FPCD. What does it say? (It is a key chain that says "Fear not.")

Fear not because the Lord your God himself will go out ahead of you. In addition, you also have each other in the Lord. So, be strong and bold! Have no fear or dread of the people you must conquer.

You may not lead an army or have people to conquer in the sense that the people of Israel would have to go to battle, but you will encounter faithless people to stand strong against. You do have to approach them not with worldly wisdom or political strategies. You will have to let God lead you. Jesus said he would give you the words.

You will have major opportunities to influence your future company, your school, and the neighborhood you live in, influencing them with faith and courage to bring God to people who have forgotten all about living by faith, worshiping God, following God's commands, and walking in the hope and protection of Jesus Christ.

Look around you. Find an older person and say to them, "I need you to mentor me." Will you show me how to follow God?

You enter into the promises of God at God's invitation. God willingly goes before you. Are you following the leader?

That is your job. You are not in it alone. You have been given authority by a higher Commander. This Commander is perfectly capable of directing you. This Commander has set the command in your hands. Your God is giving you the Promise. Allow Him to lead you as you gain it.

AMEN