

Sermon Series: Be Strong and Courageous
To be used with: Session Six: Call Others to Step Forward
Sermon Title Possibilities: Leaving a Legacy
 Okay to be Forgotten
Scripture: Joshua 24:14-18, 24-26

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Be Strong & Courageous: Everyday Leadership from Joshua*, these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

As Joshua closes out his life he passes the torch of leadership to the next generation. He has been an influencer all the days of his life and it doesn't stop here. Joshua uses the history of God's work with him to inspire the Israelites to renew their commitment to God. Faithful leaders will call their followers to be committed to God in the present, and future.

Introduction:

You've likely heard the leadership maxim, "If you think you are leading, but nobody is following, you are just taking a walk." This is also true when you are in the position of leader and when you hand the torch to someone else. You can judge the effectiveness of a leader not only by what things look like when the leader is in charge but also what things look when the leader leaves.

I had only been gone a couple of months from my first position as a youth pastor at a Baptist church. My wife and I decided to come back and see how things were going. I must confess that part of me had hoped things would be struggling a bit. Not that I wanted things to be going poorly, but I had wrongly gathered that I must have been a terrible leader who was unnecessary at best—or a hindrance at worse. While that might have been true, one of my mentors pointed out another option. Perhaps I had actually been a good leader who rightly led himself out of a job.

Now that I have matured as a leader I've made this one of my goals—to lead in such a way that when I'm gone there are plenty of leaders in place. In Joshua 24, I think Joshua had a similar goal. He reminded the people of all that they had accomplished and encouraged them to continue their commitment. We see from this passage that faithful leaders leave a legacy of commitment to God.

I. Faithful leaders will leave a legacy of present commitment to God

I heard an illustration one time about teenagers and a dental problem called bifurcation. Apparently your roots can bifurcate, which means that they can split off from one another. The illustration I heard likened the mental process of teachers to bifurcation; namely, they assume that the things they do today won't have an impact on who they will become tomorrow. It's true of teenagers but I also believe it is true of leaders.

Every leader would like to leave a positive legacy. But you won't do this unless you begin calling people to a commitment to the Lord in the present. Joshua's call for the people of Israel to have a present commitment to the Lord was not groundless. He could point to everything that God had done in the past—that is why we read *therefore* in verse 14. He is essentially saying, "Because of everything we have seen God do in our time together...now *today* continue to be committed to the Lord." Joshua had been calling people to such a commitment all the days of his life—so why should he stop now? There is a lesson for us in this.

If you want to leave a legacy of faithfulness you'll be calling people to commit to the Lord many years before your swan song. Joshua was able to stand forward and say, "This is what me and my household have done and are doing."

Application: Are you thinking about the day of your departure even now? What type of legacy do you want to leave?

II. Faithful leaders will leave a legacy of past commitment to God

There aren't many joys at a funeral, but one of them is when families gather around and tell stories of their dearly departed. As a pastor I get the unique privilege of listening in on these conversations. While I find joy in hearing these stories it saddens me to think that gathering around and telling stories as a family is likely such a rarity. Growing up I loved the times when my family would gather around the living room and they'd all share stories of the past. Stories are powerful. They can unite and they can even motivate to future action.

A faithful leader will wisely celebrate the past. And if he is wise he'll do it before his closing days. When God gives you success, celebrate it. This is what Joshua is doing in 24:16-18. Notice how their commitment to God is grounded in God's past work with them. Because they remember God's history with them they also realize that it would be foolish to forsake him in the present.

Application: What stories should you tell with those you are leading? What stories do you need to listen to?

III. Faithful leaders will leave a legacy of future commitment to God

Joshua liked leaving monuments. He and the people of Israel had left a monument in chapter 4, 7, 8, 10, 22, and here in 24. These are often at deciding points in Israel's history—both good and bad. He left one for the defeat of Ai and also for the terrible situation with Achan. Why does he do this? He does this because he hopes to encourage even people in their future to be committed to God.

Conclusion: All this talk of legacy could lead to confusion. The Scottish minister, Robert Murray McCheyne, once wrote "I need to be made willing to be forgotten". I had always appreciated that quote but I read it in a prideful way. I read it as if it was saying, "If I'm humble and don't care about my name or my honor then I'll likely leave a legacy

and be remembered.” I’m confident that McCheyne really does mean that it is okay if he is forgotten so long as Jesus is remembered. The idol of greatness needs to topple not just be pursued through godly means. If I’m still pursuing my name being great—even if I’m trying to do it through sneaking in the back door of humility—all I will ever muster is mock humility.¹

Joshua and other great leaders after him understood that their chief aim, which is already the possession of believers, is to be remembered by God and to make their life ambition to make sure that He is the remembered one and not me. As Zack Eswine reminds us that is a good thing. “Being remembered by him means we no longer fear being forgotten by the world” ([Sensing Jesus](#), 19).

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¹ David Murray has written a helpful article on *not* leaving a legacy.
<http://headhearhand.org/blog/2012/06/18/dont-live-for-a-legacy/>