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# Influencing Those Around Us

## JOSHUA 24:29-31

### Introduction

1. Over my years as a preacher, I have spent a good bit of time in cemeteries.
2. During that time, I have wandered through some of those cemeteries and encountered a number of epitaphs — inscriptions on various tombstones in memory of the person buried there.

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3. One of the finest epitaphs is found in God's Word, at the end of the book of Joshua.

“It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mount Gaash. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the Lord which He had done for Israel.” (Joshua 24:29–31, NASB95)

- a. Did you notice it? It is found in verse 29.
  - b. The writer refers to Joshua simply as “the servant of the Lord.”
  - c. No greater tribute could be paid to him.
  - d. He aspired to no greater rank than this.
4. There is one other thing I would like for you to notice in the passage. It is found in the last verse in our text, verse 31.

“Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the Lord which He had done

for Israel.” (Joshua 24:29–31, NASB95)

5. It is the fact that Joshua wielded great influence while he was alive and even over the generation that survived him.
6. Of course, much of that influence was due to God being with him and doing many “great works” such as . . .
  - a. The parting of the Jordan River
  - b. The fall of Jericho
  - c. The day the sun and moon stood still when Joshua and the Israelites were fighting against the Amorites (Joshua 10:1-15).

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7. We must also give credit to Joshua, who received God’s support because of His faithful obedience to God and His Word:

“No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. “Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. “Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:5–7, NASB95)

8. Like Joshua, each of us here tonight will influence those around us either for good or ill during our lifetime and possibly for the generation beyond.
9. The kind of influence we wield will depend upon the choices we make.
10. Tonight, I would like for us to look at those qualities which made Joshua the great leader that he was and seek to emulate them in our own lives.

[The first quality I would like for you to consider is that Joshua as . . . ]

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#### **A. A MAN OF HUMILITY**

1. Before Joshua was ever a leader, he was willing to serve.
2. For forty years he served under Moses in the Wilderness.

3. He was known as Moses “assistant,” “his servant” (Exodus 24:13; 33:11).
4. Before any of us can lead, we must first learn how to serve.
5. You may remember that Jesus taught His disciples, “the greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11).
6. Later, after Joshua took up the mantle of leadership, he still maintained his humility.
7. On the day, the Israelites prepared to cross the Jordan River into the land of promise, the Lord spoke to Joshua and said,

“This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you” (Joshua 3:7, NASB95).

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8. After they crossed the Jordan and Joshua had set up the memorial stones in the middle of the Jordan we find this comment,

“On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life” (Joshua 4:14).

9. Some might become very prideful over such attention, but not Joshua.
10. Later, as Joshua is planning the battle against Jericho, a man suddenly appears opposite Joshua with his sword drawn.
11. When Joshua learns that it is “the captain of the host of the Lord,” he immediately “fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?”” (Joshua 5:13-15).
  - No matter what positions we may hold in our lifetime, we wield the greatest influence as we continue to remember that we are servants of the Lord our God.

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### **B. A MAN WHO TRUSTED IN GOD**

1. During the days that the Israelites were still being led by Moses, Joshua was one of the twelve spies sent to spy out the land that God had promised.
2. Ten of those twelve spies demonstrated their lack of faith by their negative report (Numbers 13:25-28).
  - a. Though they confirmed that the land flowed “with milk and honey” and even presented some of its fruit.
  - b. They added, “the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and . . . we saw the descendants of Anak there” (Numbers 13:27, 28).
3. Despite the “peer pressure” he must have felt, Joshua, along with Caleb, demonstrated his faith in God by his report.

“If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. “Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.”” (Numbers 14:8–9, NASB95)

4. Many years later when Joshua was leading Israel, God gave him instructions as to how he was to take the city (cf. Joshua 6:1-5).
5. Only Joshua’s full trust in the Lord could have led him to follow such instructions, but he did!

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.” (Hebrews 11:30, NASB95)

- ❑ You and I will encounter many obstacles throughout our lifetime. Let’s make it our goal to always be remembered as those who trusted in the Lord with all our heart and did not lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).

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### **C. A MAN OF GOD'S WORD**

1. One thing is certain throughout Joshua's lifetime — his success was directly related to his adherence to God's Word.
2. As Joshua was stepping into the role as the leader of God's people, the Lord told him, "be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go." (Joshua 1:7, NASB95)

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3. To be sure that Joshua did this, God added this instruction:

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." (Joshua 1:8, NASB95)

4. Time and again, we see that Joshua was true to God's Word:

- a. In reminding the two and a half tribes [Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh] of their responsibility (Joshua 1:12-15)

"Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you" (Joshua 1:13a, NASB95).

- b. In renewing the covenant at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim (Joshua 8:30-35).

- 1) "Joshua built an altar to the Lord . . . just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the sons of Israel" (v. 30, 31).

- 2) "He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses" (v. 32a).

- 3) "He read all the words of the law" (v. 34).

- 4) "There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel" (v. 35a).

- c. In Joshua 11:15, we find this summary of Joshua's devotion:

“Just as the Lord had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.” (Joshua 11:15, NASB95)

- d. Even in his farewell address at the end of his life, Joshua encouraged the nation to heed God’s Word (Joshua 23:6).

“Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,” (Joshua 23:6, NASB95)

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## D. A MAN OF PRAYER

1. Joshua prayed in the midst of Israel’s failure.
  - a. The Israelites experienced an overwhelming victory with the fall of Jericho.
  - b. However, in their following battle against the city of Ai, they suffered a humiliating defeat (Joshua 7:1-5).
  - c. As a result, Joshua “tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening” (Joshua 7:6).
  - d. He cried out to God apologizing for Israel’s failure and seeking answers.
    - ❑ God revealed to him that sin in the camp by one of the soldiers during the battle of Jericho had prevented them from achieving victory against Ai.
2. He prayed in the midst of battle.
  - a. In Joshua 10, we find the Israelites routing the kings of the south at Gibeon.
  - b. Joshua did not trust in the strength of the Israelites alone, but turned to God for help, asking Him to make the sun and moon stand still.
  - c. God responded to Joshua’s prayer and the Israelites were able to achieve a great victory that day.
3. It is vitally important that our children and our grandchildren see us as

people who believe in the power of prayer.

4. Let's teach them by our own example the power of effective prayer when prayed by righteous people (James 5:16).

“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” (James 5:16, NASB95)

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### E. A MAN WHO PUT GOD FIRST

1. Even before the business at hand.
2. Verses 30-35 in Joshua 8 are very conspicuous.
3. Verse 29 is the conclusion of the battle against Ai and relates the death of the king.
4. Two major campaigns are about to take place, one to the south, the other to the north.
5. However, Joshua first built an altar to the Lord on Mt. Ebal, just as Moses had commanded before his death.
6. Then he instructed half the people to “in front of Mount Gerizim” and the other half “in front of Mount Ebal” (v. 33).
7. Joshua then “read all the words of the law” in the hearing of the people (v. 34).
8. Though this gave his enemies time to join forces in opposition against the Israelites, Joshua still put God first.

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9. As Joshua would later tell the people in his farewell address, regardless of what others might do, he and his family would serve the Lord (Joshua 24:14-15).

“Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. “If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord,

choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”” (Joshua 24:14–15, NASB95)

**10. His strong stand influenced others for good (Joshua 24:16).**

“The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods;” (Joshua 24:16, NASB95)

## **Conclusion**

1. If you go back to the passage with which we started our lesson this evening, you will recognize that Joshua was not alone in influencing the nation.
2. Verse 31, of Joshua chapter 24, tells us that not only did Israel serve “the Lord all the days of Joshua,” but also throughout “all the days of the elders who survived Joshua.”
3. The question I have for each of us here tonight is this : “What kind of influence will those of us in this room have upon the generations coming up behind us?”
4. Do they see us as people . . .
  - a. who are humble servants of our Lord?
  - b. who trust in Him with all our heart?
  - c. who study and meditate upon His word?
  - d. who believe in and rely upon the power of prayer?
  - e. who always put the Lord first in our lives?
5. If these things describe us then the future of this church is strong.
6. If these things do not describe us, then a generation is coming who will no longer know the God we serve.
7. As Joshua said, it is all about whom we choose to serve.