

God's Key to Spiritual Success Joshua 22:4-5

Introduction:

In school, we want(ed) an answer key.

On a map, we want a map key.

Hotkeys on a keyboard are used for quick navigation or execution of commands.

A doctor may try to diagnose a disease or condition using a symptom key.

We want keys that will help us achieve success.

When learning new things, we often look for tips, tricks, and hacks to help us.

Authors sell a library's worth of books every year about keys to success in areas of life, work, home, and family.

The Bible is full of life instructions that are practical not only for the situation they are found in but also for life in general.

After the Promised Land was divided among the tribes, Joshua praised the 2 tribes of Reuben and Gad and the ½ tribe of Manasseh for their obedience to God in helping their fellow Israelites on the west side of the Jordan and encouraged them to continue their obedience upon returning to their land on the east side of the Jordan.

He gave them a challenge which was read for us this morning, Joshua 22:1-8, listen to verses 4 and 5 again, ““And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan. Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.””

Herein is God's key to spiritual success.

I. Be very careful to observe the commandment and the law.

“[Only be very careful] translates a Hebrew expression which emphasizes the absolute urgency of obedience.”¹

Keep, watch over, and guard yourself to carry out or perform the commandment and the law.

Observe or heed, depending on the translation, directs us to obedience.

Obedience in doing the right thing, at the right time, with the right attitude.

The timing we should keep is expressed in Psalm 119:60 “I hastened and did not delay To keep Your commandments.”

The way to prevent delayed obedience, partial obedience, or disobedience is to “emphasize the absolute urgency of obedience”—be very careful.

Joshua told the men; keep everything Moses commanded you to do.

The commandment refers to single-act instructions.

The law refers to moral precepts that govern broader, ongoing instructions.

Moses, identified as “the servant of the LORD,” told the Israelites that observing or keeping the immediate commands and the long-term law comes from the heart.

¹ Robert G. Bratcher and Barclay Moon Newman, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Joshua*, UBS Handbook Series (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1983), 273.

Deuteronomy 4:29 “But from there (from captivity) you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him **with all your heart** and all your soul.”

Deuteronomy 6:5-6 “You shall love the LORD your God **with all your heart** and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, **shall be on your heart.**”

Deuteronomy 10:12 and 13 “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God **with all your heart** and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD’S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?”

Deuteronomy 11:13-16 “It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him **with all your heart** and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. **Beware that your hearts are not deceived**, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them.”

II. Love the LORD your God.

Complete, wholehearted, love without any reservations comes from a heart devoted and committed to God.

Love is the beginning of our choice of conduct.

We choose to obey those we love.

We involve emotion, intellect, and will for what we love.

Little children soak up what they see and hear like sponges.

Followers soak up the conduct of their leaders like little children.

Moses lived his love for God from the heart and Joshua had been soaking it up like a sponge.

Just as Moses had charged (demanded) Joshua, he was now wringing his sponge full of knowledge of God and love for Him on the people he was leading.

Loving God is equated with keeping God’s Word and doing His will.

In this, Joshua was leading the way, so the Israelites followed Him.

III. Walk in all [God’s] ways.

The people had a great example to follow because Joshua walked in all the ways of God.

“Walk” refers to behavior or conduct of living.

A great deal of attention and effort is required to “walk in all [God’s] ways.”

Therefore, Joshua is directing the people to live as God requires, obeying the commandments, statutes, and ordinances as given through Moses and now Joshua.

Life is a journey; following the pathway God has laid out ensures a godly lifestyle that avoids drifting to either the right or the left (Deuteronomy 5:32).

IV. Keep [God’s] commandments.

Keeping the commandments of God involves keeping His Word and doing His will.

Commandments are all the terms of God’s covenant.

Keeping them is the responsibility of those who agree to the covenant and enter it.

Parties that enter a bilateral covenant express their mutual commitment by pledging their loyalty, an unflinching kind of love, kindness, or goodness.

Keeping God's commandments shows that loyalty and unfailing love continue, on the part of people.

V. Hold fast to [God].

Like a friend we cannot spend enough time with, the more we do with God and for Him, the more we love God, conduct our lives in His pathway and remain loyal to Him, we long to be close to Him.

Cleaving or holding fast to God depicts being rooted and grounded in Him.

The verb means to maintain a close relationship with someone, to stay close to them.

We are to be united with God as a branch is to its root, a husband is to his wife, and be faithful.

Holding fast to God expresses covenant faithfulness to Him as all these instructions do.

VI. Serve [God] with all your heart and soul.

Serving God is the best proof of our love.

Serving the LORD with unreserved and unqualified devotion was a mark that set Israel as God's peculiar people who had been made His servant nation in achieving His redemptive purposes.

Genuine love produces diligent service, punctual obedience, faithful attachment, and devotion of the heart and soul.

"With all your heart and soul" refers to the whole person.

In Hebrew, the noun "heart" generally refers to activities of the mind.

The term "soul" translates a Hebrew noun referring to the part of a person that thinks, feels, wills, and desires.

Thus, anyone seeking spiritual success should serve God in all they think and feel.

Application:

Be sure to remember what Moses and Joshua commanded when they said, "Love the LORD your God and obey all of his commandments. Serve him faithfully in all you think and feel."

Being loyal to God is God's key to spiritual success.

God had urged Joshua in 1:7 and 8 "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. This book of the law shall not depart (be removed) 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 now urged the people to do what he was doing.

Joshua's short, passionate charge called for obedience, love, fellowship, and service.

Spiritual commitment to these disciplines trained the Israelites to obey, and now that 2 ½ tribes would be separated from the rest, they might drift away from worshiping the LORD and embrace idolatry.

“Like an anxious parent who sees a son or daughter leave home for a place where the young person would be separated from spiritual influences, Joshua delivered his earnest charge to the departing warriors.”²

If the Israelites would follow these six imperatives they would be well pleasing to God and be spiritually successful.

Conclusion:

Joshua’s good influence lived on after his death.

Joshua 24:31 says, “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived (or lived past) Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.”

Joshua was careful to keep the authoritative directions and instructions given to him.

He loved God, walked in God’s ways, obeyed God’s commands, held fast to God, and served God with all his thinking and feeling—heart and soul.

Israel’s later failure to heed the warnings given by God through Moses and Joshua led to their downfall.

God desires to save you from sin so heed this warning from Acts 17:30 and 31, “God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man who He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

The resurrection the world celebrated last Sunday is proof that judgment is coming.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 instructs, “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

Do you know God? Are you obeying God?

Have you obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus?

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, “Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you...For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that **He was buried**, and that **He was raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Romans 6:3 asks, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus **have been baptized into His death**? Therefore **we have been buried with Him through baptism into death**, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so **we too might walk in newness of life**.”

God wants us to be successful when we are judged, so He has given us the key to spiritual success.

God has given us the symptom key to show that “all have sinned,” the hotkey to quickly navigate to forgiveness, the map key to lead us heavenward, and the answer key to tell us Jesus is the way.

If you need assistance in being a disciple—a student follower of Jesus—come to the front as we stand and sing.

² Donald K. Campbell, “Joshua,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 365.