

What Is The Secret to Lasting Success?

International Bible Lessons

Joshua 1:7-16

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“Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go” (Joshua 1:7—NRSV).

“Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go” (Joshua 1:7—ESV).

“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:7—KJV).

Joshua achieved great success in the Promised Land because he kept himself mentally and physically strong as much as possible, chose to act courageously, and maintained high moral standards in accordance with God’s law. The Bible also illustrates that people can be strong and courageous, but fail when they disregard God’s law. For example, Samson fought with enormous strength and courage, but because he consistently violated God’s law, he lost his sight and his life. The Bible traces every one of King David’s failures back to one of his moral failures, though he turned back to God after he sinned. On the other hand, we can trace the great achievements of Daniel and Elijah to their strength and courage when they adhered to God’s law as they faced idolatrous rulers, who would have murdered them if God had not been with them.

God said that obeying His law included not turning “from it to the right hand,” which may mean not interpreting God’s law more strictly than God intended and not adding our rules to God’s law. To turn from God’s law “to the left” may involve applying God’s law more leniently than God intended or making exceptions to the enforcement of God’s law. In both these ways, the scribes and Pharisees created traditions that violated God’s law. As the leader who followed Moses, if Joshua had violated either of these principles he could have established traditions that might have misled the generations that followed him.

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Thinking Further

1. Why is making a law or interpreting a law more strictly or less strictly than the lawgiver intended actually a violation of the law? What reasons might be given for interpreting a law more strictly or less strictly? What might be the consequences of interpreting a law more strictly or less strictly?
2. In what ways might traditions of interpretation of a law or laws actually lead to setting aside a law and the lawgiver's intentions? Can you think of any examples when Jesus and the Pharisees discussed traditions and the law of God? Can you think of any examples of doing this where you live today?
3. Why do you think God emphasized more than once that Joshua be both strong and courageous as a leader? Why are both of these qualities needed in someone God calls to be a spiritual leader? What other qualities do leaders need to be successful?
4. What qualities do you think the Israelites might have acquired during forty years in the wilderness that would help them be prepared to enter the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership?
5. What do you think it meant to Joshua for God to assure him that He would be with him wherever he went? How would (or does) knowing that make you feel? What did Joshua need to do to be successful? Today, how important are doing these same things in order to be successful?