

Authenticity will stand the testing and trials

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God looks at the inner man and chooses those who have good strong character to be leaders in the building of his kingdom. The Bible tells us that we will be tested in this life yet God is there to show us the way out of temptation and the Holy Spirit will guide us if we allow him to direct our path. The Word declares that the “steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” I want to discuss commitment, loyalty, courage and strength today. Moses was such a man. God chose him to lead his children out of Egypt and gave him the responsibility of being “God’s voice” to the people.

Moses looked forward to completing the journey that God had set before him so many years before. Because the people wouldn’t listen and obey they were made to wander in the desert for forty years before God allowed them to move forward. This was no small task that Moses had been called to do, yet he persevered. Yet one day the people had complained and murmured and were thirsty and Moses took the matter to the LORD. The LORD told him to speak to a rock to get water for the people to drink and Moses instead smote the rock. Water came gushing out and Moses was told he would not be able to lead the people into the Promised Land. He would be called to train a young man named Joshua to finish the journey. No amount of pleading and begging changed the verdict. God told Moses to stop asking for He was not going to change his mind. Joshua was going to lead the people into the Promised Land. God told Moses to go up the Nebo Mountain and look over Pisgah and view the land that would be inhabited by the children of Israel. Joshua would benefit from being trained by Moses and God would be with him. Moses obeyed, went up the mountain, took in the view and there he died and God buried him.

In Joshua 24, we read an account of Joshua addressing the people with the words of the Lord. This book also gives you a look at the character of Joshua and his love and loyalty to God and his determination to tell the people all the words of the Lord and to lead them in a straight path. Here we see where Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel who were the heads of their tribes, the judges and the officers and they presented themselves to the Lord.

Joshua began to go over the past history of the Jewish people. He began by saying “Thus says the Lord of Israel”. He began the history with Terah, Abraham’s father and reminded them of the generations that followed him up to the present time. He reminded them of how God intervened for them time after time when they cried out to him. Over and over again they ran into barriers and enemies that would have destroyed them had God not stepped in and rescued them. In verse 12 of Joshua chapter 24, we find that God sent an army of hornets to deliver his people from the Amorites. The people didn’t have to fight with swords or bows for they were not needed; the hornets drove the enemy out of

the land. The Israelites had been given land that they didn't labor for, cities that they didn't build and they were allowed to move in and make themselves at home. They had vineyards and olive groves that they didn't plant.

Joshua, after recounting all the wonderful miracles of God towards the people began to get to the heart of his message.

“Fear the Lord. Serve him in sincerity and truth. Put away false gods that your ancestor served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve the LORD only!

If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether it is the gods your father served on the other side of the river or gods of Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”

The people said, **“We won't think of forsaking the Lord to serve other gods.”** But Joshua said, **“You cannot serve the Lord and serve false gods at the same time. You must choose for He is a jealous God and if you forsake the Lord, he will turn on you and consume you after he has done you good.”**

The people said, **“We will serve the Lord.”** However, as history has documented, the Israelites didn't follow through with their verbal claim to be loyal to the Lord God of Israel.

Matthew 6:24 tells us that we cannot serve two masters for we must cling to one and forsake the other.

Luke 14:25-35 is a story of counting the cost. Decide what level of allegiance you will have towards Jesus Christ. We are called upon to forsake all to follow the Lord. In Luke 5:11, it states that the disciples left all to follow him. In Matthew 4:18-22, James and John left his father to finish mending the nets with a hired man and they left and followed Jesus when he called upon them. See Mark 1 20.

James 1:8 declares that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

A person who will not take a stand for what he knows is right is described by Jesus as salt that has lost its savor. Luke 14:34.

I love the story of Billy Graham's test of faith. He attended Bible College with a young man who was a very talented speaker. They became best friends. Billy was attracted to a very pretty girl in that school and eventually she chose Billy's friend to marry because she felt that Billy would never be famous or popular and her future looked brighter with the other guy. Billy watched the man as the tent revivals and popularity of the preacher swelled and everyone seemed to swarm around the preacher as he went from city to city. However, as time went on, the man began to lean towards secular ideas and liberal theology. His popularity fizzled, the crowds dwindled and finally this man tried to persuade Billy that there is no God. Billy struggled with this, but one day he went to a wooded area with his Bible in his hand, bowed his knee before a stump of a tree and cried out to God to show him the way. When he stood up, with assurance in his heart, he heeded the call of God and became one of the best known preachers of the gospel in our time.