

WISE COUNSEL FOR TROUBLED TIMES

STUDY ONE

Sustaining Enthusiasm

Joshua 1:1–9

Overexposure to religious activities can lead to spiritual monotony. You can become weary in doing good. You can lose heart for spiritual things. You can lose your awe of God.

—Charles R. Swindoll

HOW precious is wise counsel when we need it most, during times of trouble! When the heat is on and the stakes are high, we so appreciate words of wisdom that correct our perspective, give us vital insight, and point us in the right direction. Anyone can see clearer in hindsight after the consequences of our actions are set in motion. But foresight—wisdom in advance—who can measure its value?

Joshua needed wise counsel when he and the vast nation he was leading came to the edge of the Promised Land at the banks of the Jordan River. His mentor and friend Moses had recently died. Absent on his shoulder was the weathered hand of the old prophet who had guided him all those years. In its place was the heavy burden of sole leadership and weighty concerns for his people.

Enemies awaited just ahead. And an even greater, invisible enemy lurked just behind: the mistakes of Israel's past. The danger of people repeating the sins of the wilderness must have weighed on Joshua's mind. He needed God's wise counsel more than ever, and so do we. The same invisible enemy that haunted the tents of the Hebrews stalks us as well. Let's find out what this enemy is and, using God's wise counsel to Joshua, learn how to put this enemy out of our lives.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Sustaining Enthusiasm

Joshua 1:1–9



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Are there any enemies lurking in the shadows of your life? Your adversary may be a person who wishes you harm. Or, perhaps, the enemy is regret which attacks you sometimes. Maybe your enemy is spiritual in nature. Perhaps apathy has settled into your soul and deadened your spiritual senses toward the Lord.

As you begin your study, take a moment to acknowledge your foe and seek the Lord's help by offering this prayer for rescue:

*O LORD, hear my plea for justice.
Listen to my cry for help. . . .
Show me your unfailing love in wonderful ways.
By your mighty power you rescue
those who seek refuge from their enemies. (Psalm 17:1, 7)*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we begin by reading the passage carefully and slowly, absorbing every word. For helpful instruction from Chuck Swindoll, consult our online instructional web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)." On this page, you can link to purchase a copy of *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.

Now read *Joshua 1–9*. Notice who is speaking: *the Lord!*



Observation: A History *Not* Worth Repeating

The Lord gave wise counsel to Joshua just as Joshua was preparing to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River. From where had God's people traveled and where were they going? Before observing the specifics of the Lord's counsel in Joshua 1:1–9, let's review the Israelites' journey on a map of Egypt and Palestine.



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Searching the Scriptures Tip

Bible maps illustrate the regions where Bible characters lived, the topography, and the routes they took during their travels. Studying a Bible map helps you step into the world in which the people lived and imagine yourself traveling alongside them. You might wish to add an atlas to your Bible study library. A Bible atlas contains hundreds of detailed maps as well as fascinating historical background information. We recommend *Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible*, which can be ordered through the Insight for Living Ministries online store.

If you don't have a Bible atlas, find Israel's wilderness journey on a map in the back of your Bible. Locate the starting point of Israel's exodus and the location where the people camped before crossing the Jordan. Does your map indicate possible sites where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai? Try to find these locations.

Then notice the region where the people wandered for forty years. Using the scale of miles on the map, estimate the distance between the starting point by the Nile and ending point by the Jordan.

In *Joshua 1:1–5*, God issued His mission for the Israelites to take the land that was promised to Moses. Look up the boundary locations on your Bible map for the sites mentioned in Joshua 1:1–5. What do you observe about these boundaries?

So much land to conquer! What a daunting task! No wonder the Lord reassured Joshua, “No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you” (Joshua 1:5).



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Showers of Blessings in the Wilderness

Israel’s journey through the wilderness was a checkerboard of good and bad experiences. The apostle Paul traced the good and the bad in 1 Corinthians 10:1–12—which is an excellent background passage to Joshua’s story.

Read Paul’s summary of the wilderness journey and the lessons he teaches.

I don’t want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. All of them ate the same spiritual food, and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:1–5)

Notice the phrase, “all of them,” repeated five times. Use the select tool to highlight these phrases. Then, find the contrasting phrase, “most of them,” and highlight it as well. You can right-click on this phrase and change the color, if you wish, to make it stand out.

In the chart below, write down the blessings experienced by the Israelites as Paul listed them. Read the Old Testament account to understand the background of Paul’s reference. In the last row, write down what “most of them” experienced.

Phrase	Experience	Backstory
<i>All of them</i>		<i>Exodus 13:21–22</i>
<i>All of them</i>		<i>Exodus 14:21–29</i>
<i>All of them</i>		<i>Exodus 14:31</i>
<i>All of them</i>		<i>Exodus 16:2–31</i>
<i>All of them</i>		<i>Exodus 17:1–7</i>
<i>Most of them</i>		<i>Numbers 14:20–23</i>



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Like a cool spring rain, the Lord showered blessings upon His needy people: guidance from the cloud, protection through the sea, sustenance through daily manna, and water from the rock. And yet God was not pleased with them. Why?

Tragic Story of Spiritual Apathy

God intended the Israelites' exodus, sojourn, and arrival at Canaan to illustrate His plan of *redemption*, which is God through Christ paying the price to rescue sinners and lead them to eternal life with Him. God wanted His people to respond with trust and worship. Yet instead of a bouquet of devotion, a weedy infestation of grumbling grew in the people's hearts. Worse still, they shunned God and embraced idols.

Read [1 Corinthians 10:6–10](#). Note Paul's explanation of what the Israelite's did in each sin category, and then read the backstory in Exodus and Numbers.

Sin Category	Explanation	Backstory
<i>Idolatry</i>		<i>Exodus 32:1–6</i>
<i>Immorality</i>		<i>Numbers 25:1–9</i>
<i>Testing the Lord</i>		<i>Numbers 21:4–6</i>
<i>Grumbling</i>		<i>Numbers 16:41–50</i>

This is quite a list of sins! No wonder “God was not pleased” (1 Corinthians 10:5). Paul sums up the Israelites' sin issue with a warning for his readers in verse 6: “Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did” (NIV).

Paul was concerned that the Israelites' shift of devotion from God to evil would take root in the Corinthian believers as well. What is Paul's wise counsel? Don't set your heart on evil things! Positively stated, *sustain your enthusiasm for God*. In fact, the Lord had given this same counsel to Joshua centuries earlier! Let's take a closer look at the Lord's words to Joshua in the interpretation phase of our study.



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Interpretation: Understanding the Renewal Process

Standing on the waters' edge of the Jordan River, Joshua must have wondered, *Would history repeat itself now that this new generation of Israelites had arrived at the Promised Land?* God's wise counsel in the following four commands to Joshua helped the nation sustain enthusiasm and stay engaged with His calling.

To accomplish the Lord's command to take the land that was promised to Moses, Joshua had to obey four commands. So vital was the first command that God repeated it four times! Read it in Joshua 1:6–7, 9, and 18. What is it?

Find the second command in verse 7 and write it in the space below.

The third command is in verse 8. What is God exhorting in this verse?



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And what do you find as God's final command in verse 9?

*When you give it your all, there's maximum reward that comes. Give it your best.
Hold nothing back. Set your enthusiasm free; leave the results with God. —Chuck Swindoll*



Correlation: The Source of All Lies

Of all the enemies we face as Christians, perhaps the most insidious is the apathy that comes from overexposure to religious activities. Overexposure to religious activities can harden our once-lush spiritual life, and we become bored, even cynical. So involved in the work of God, we lose our awe of God. This was the invisible enemy that attacked the Israelites: *spiritual monotony*. Boredom with God's blessings led the Israelites into a spiritual wilderness more barren than any desert landscape.

What did the Berean believers do to stay enthusiastic about their walk with God (*Acts 17:10–12*)?



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Application: Four Pathways to Enthusiasm

How does obeying the four commands that the Lord gave Joshua pump enthusiasm into our spiritual life? Each command connects us to God through faith.

- *Be strong and courageous, not weak and waffling.* We can only be strong and courageous when we trust in God's promises.
- *Be careful to obey all God's instructions.* We can only obey when we truly believe that God's way is best.
- *Study daily and meditate on God's Word.* We will only study His Word when we long to hear God's voice.
- *Do not be afraid or become discouraged.* We will only refrain from fear and discouragement when we are certain that God is with us.

If you're experiencing spiritual blahs, perhaps one of these areas of faith needs addressing. Search your soul, and ask yourself: *Am I trusting in God's promises? Do I believe God's way is best? Do I long to hear His voice through His Word? Am I certain that He is with me?*

Pick one of these questions to prompt reflection in the space below. Address this issue before God and see Him boost your enthusiasm for spiritual things.

The Lord assured Joshua as he was about to cross the Jordan River and battle his enemies, "I will not fail you or abandon you" (Joshua 1:5). Claim His promise for yourself today as you step into your future with enthusiasm and faith!



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, may I live my spiritual life by giving it my all, engaging my spiritual muscles, and acting with the strength and courage that only You can provide. Draw me closer to the fire of Your presence and kindle in me a heart that is set on You.



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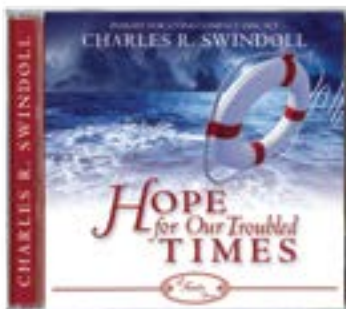
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

