

# “BE STRONG AND OF A GOOD COURAGE”

OT LESSON #18

by Ted Gibbons

**INTRODUCTION:** [This lesson will not follow the outline suggested in the Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Manual. However, the points covered in that lesson will be mentioned here]

When the Lord announced that Israel would cross the Jordan and that they had crossed the Red Sea 40 years earlier, he gave special instructions about what was to happen during the crossing:

Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night (Josh. 4:2,3)

That lodging place was Gilgal (4:20). What was the purpose of making a heap of 12 stones from the midst of Jordan?

That this may be a sign among you, [that] when your children ask [their fathers] in time to come, saying, What [mean] ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever (Josh. 4:6,7)

The stones were to be a monument and a memorial, providing an opportunity for Israelites to teach their children what great things God had done for them at the Red Sea and at Jordan (4:7,23)

We ought to all leave such a memorial—a record of some kind that will encourage our children to ask us about the great things the Lord has done for us in our lives.

Sometimes those memorials might be something like the pile of stones. But the clearest way to leave such an invitation is to leave a record. We ought to have a history in our journals of what God has done for us, one that our children can review and cherish, one that will bring them to us in their longing to hear the stories and feel the power of our testimonies.

Those who keep a book of remembrance are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives. Journals are a way of counting our blessings and of leaving an inventory of these blessings for our posterity (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 349).

Oliver B. Huntington wrote:

Many times have I wished that my father had kept an account of his life, that I might look over it, and see his by-gone days, deed and fortune; and never did he make the scratch of a pen towards it, until he had seen sixty cold winters; and as yet I know but very little of his life, not enough to make any record of, although I have a very short account written, but which is beyond my reach at present, if not forever. Like men in general I presume to suppose, that I shall have a posterity; and that may; like me; wish to know of their father's life, that they might view it, and perhaps profit thereby, or at least, have the satisfaction of knowing it. This is one object that induces me to write; that my nearest kindred, might know of their kinsman. I write also for a satisfaction to myself, to look over my past life, dates and events, and to comply with a requirement, oft repeated by the prophet Joseph Smith, "That every man should keep a daily journal (Oliver Huntington Autobiography, BYU-S, p.26).

As we review the stories of Joshua, I will suggest 12 things (one for each stone) that might be worthy of an entry in the inventory of blessings that we ought to leave for our posterity.

**ROCK #1--Be strong and courageous.** Turn to Deuteronomy 30 and read verses

6,7, and 23. What did the Lord command Joshua to do? Now turn to Joshua 1:6,7,18. Then look at Joshua 10:25e same instruction is given here. Why do you suppose the Lord said this thing to Joshua so many times? What need have we of courage and strength as we confront the challenges of life? Joshua had nearly impossible things to do. God advised him:

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God [is] with thee whithersoever thou goest (Joshua 1:9)

What a blessing you will be to your children as you tell them of the times when you went forward with nothing but your faith in God to sustain you.

**ROCK #2--God will qualify you:** How many prophets had the Israelites known personally before Joshua? For 40 years they had followed him and marveled at his power. Now he was going and Joshua was to take his place. How would the people respond? Would they follow him? Brigham Young might have had such concerns as he stepped forward to take the place Joseph had held. You will remember that he was transfigured before the saints, and appeared to them and spoke to them as though he were the prophet Joseph Smith.

A similar thing happened with President Kimball:

The story really begins on the 26th of December, 1973. President Harold B. Lee passed away suddenly on that day. His death was completely unexpected. It is necessary to remember that over a period of twenty-five years, members of the Church had awaited the time when Harold B. Lee would become the president. There had been every reason to think that this would eventually happen, due to his relative youthfulness and because he occupied a position in seniority following Joseph Fielding Smith and David O. McKay, both of whom were of advanced age. In addition, Harold B. Lee had gained more than average prominence. His leadership in the welfare and priesthood programs of the Church, his forceful nature, and his sound judgment had made him one of the apostles most listened to and one

whose influence and advice were most respected. He had an evident spiritual stature which commended him to the members of the Church as one of the great men of our time. He possessed an unusual ability to relate as a personal friend to countless people. It was expected that when he became president he would preside for twenty years or more.

Suddenly he was gone!—called elsewhere after only 1 1/2 years. It was the first time since the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith when the president had died before it was time for him to die. In deep sorrow and concern the surging questions arose in the minds of the people, much as they did at the time when Joseph Smith was killed in Carthage, Illinois. “What will we do now? How can we carry on without the prophet? Our great leader has gone. Can the Church survive this emergency?”

Of course we knew that the Church would survive, but it could not possibly be the same. We had never expected Spencer W. Kimball to become the president, and we had not looked to him for the same leadership evident in the life of Harold B. Lee. We knew, of course, that he would manage somehow, until the next great leader arose, but it would not be easy for him, and things would not be the same. “O Lord,” we prayed, “please bless President Kimball. He needs all the help you can give him.” Such seemed to be the attitude in the hearts of the Latter-day Saints during those days of mourning.

We return to the 4th of April, 1974. There were gathered that morning in the Church Office Building, all of the General Authorities as well as the Regional Representatives and other leaders from around the world. We were to be instructed once again, as we had been periodically during the past seven years. On each preceding occasion Harold B. Lee had given us our direction and sounded the trump of leadership. Now he was no longer there, and we all felt his absence deeply. Again came the questions: “How can we proceed without our great leader?” “How can President Kimball fill the empty space?” And

again the prayers went forth: "Please bless President Kimball."

The moment came when President Kimball arose to address the assembled leadership. He noted that he also had never expected to occupy this position and that he missed President Lee equally with the rest of us. Then he reviewed much of the instruction which President Lee had given over the past years, and our prayers in behalf of President Kimball continued.

As he proceeded with his address, however, he had not spoken very long when a new awareness seemed suddenly to fall on the congregation. We became alert to an astonishing spiritual presence, and we realized that we were listening to something unusual, powerful, different from any of our previous meetings. It was as if, spiritually speaking, our hair began to stand on end. Our minds were suddenly vibrant and marveling at the transcendent message that was coming to our ears. With a new perceptiveness we realized that President Kimball was opening spiritual windows and beckoning to us to come and gaze with him on the plans of eternity. It was as if he were drawing back the curtains which covered the purpose of the Almighty and inviting us to view with him the destiny of the gospel and the vision of its ministry.

I doubt that any person present that day will ever forget the occasion. I, myself, have scarcely reread President Kimball's address since, but the substance of what he said was so vividly impressed upon my mind that I could repeat most of it at this moment from memory.

The Spirit of the Lord was upon President Kimball and it proceeded from him to us as a tangible presence, which was at once both moving and shocking. He unrolled to our view a glorious vision (W. Grant Bangerter, " Special Moment in Church History," *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, pp. 26,27).

What promise did the Lord make to Joshua?

And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee (Josh. 3:7).

How did he keep that promise?

And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho (Joshua 3:15,16)

How did Israel respond?

On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life (Josh. 4:14).

When Joshua led the Israelites against Jericho, God once again showed his support for his prophet and his people. Joshua's battle plan was bizarre. But in those seven days of marching around the city, the people had ample time to reflect on just how they felt about this new leader. And when the trumpets sounded and the people shouted and the walls fell down flat, their testimonies of divine leadership must have multiplied a hundred fold.

**ROCK #3--***Walk to the edge of the light:* God had promised to divide the Jordan, but when did he do it?

And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall

rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap . . . And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan (Josh. 3:13, 15-17).

I wonder if there were any who stood beside the river thinking, "I'm not moving till I see the dry land where now I am seeing a river at flood stage." Sometimes we must move forward when the end is invisible and all that we can see is the next step.

Shortly after I was called to be a General Authority, I went to see Elder Harold B. Lee for counsel. He listened very carefully to my problem and suggested that I see President David O. McKay. President McKay counseled me as to the direction I should go. I was very willing to be obedient but saw no way possible for me to do as he had counseled me.

I returned to Elder Lee and told hi that I saw no way to move in the direction I was counseled to go. He said, "The trouble with you is that you want to see the end from the beginning." I replied that I would like to see a least a step or two ahead. Then came the lesson of a lifetime. "You must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness, then the light will appear and show you the way before you."

. . . During the next 29 years following that experience, I have learned

over and over again that all of us must walk by faith—near the edge of the light” (*BYU Today*, March 1991, pp. 22,23).

Your journal should contain stories of the times you moved forward in faith, waiting for the waters to part before you.

**ROCK #4– *Blessings come as needed:*** What happened after Israel crossed the Jordan and ate the food of the Promised Land?

And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh 5:12).

Take a quick look at Deut 8:4. What other miraculous things did the Lord do for Israel in the wilderness? Can you imagine wearing the same clothing for 40 years? But once other options were available, those miracles ceased. Hyrum M. Smith told a wonderful story about this principle. Here it is

[Gerald Quinn told the following story]

I was raised in San Bernardino . . . during the depression. I was taught a marvelous lesson in faith when I was about nine years old. We were living in what could best be described as a converted chicken coop. We owned a piece of ground that bordered a very busy highway. On one occasion our father called us together and said, “I have been impressed that we should spend a day fasting and praying to see if the Lord can’t direct us in a path that will help us have enough money to build a home.”

His father had a job and all that job paid during the depression was enough for food and clothing for the family and that was all. At the end of this day of fasting, Bro. Quinn approached his children again. Remember Gerald Quinn at this point was about nine. And he said, “I have been impressed that if we will go out in front of our house on this busy street, that we’ll be able to find enough change dropped from



passing motorists to feed our family." And he said, "then I can take the money I get at work, buy the materials for the house and we can build the house ourselves." Sister Quinn was very supportive and she said, "if that's what you think is right, we'll do it."

Gerald and his young sister were assigned the task of going out and searching the highway. The next morning they went out and spent about 45 minutes walking up and down this highway about 600 yards on either side of the house. They came back with \$.75 that they had found. Those of you that remember the depression, \$.75 was a lot of money. It bought food for the day. The next day they went out and did the same thing and brought back about \$1.23. This was in nickels, dimes and pennies. Brothers and sisters, this went on for four years. Every day they would come back with anywhere from \$.25 to \$1.50 in change.

Bro. Quinn did exactly what he committed to the Lord he would do; took his money from work, bought the materials and they built a home. It was not a palatial place, but it was home. Bro. Quinn said, "I'll never forget the day we finished the home. We had a ceremonial burning of the chicken coop out back. Mom fixed a really neat meal and we all had just kind of a special day.

He said, "the next day, because it had become our habit, my sister and I went out to the street to collect our "daily manna". We spent an hour and didn't find one penny. We came back to the house frantic, approached our mother and said, "Mother, there is no money out there today."

Mom sat them down and taught them a powerful lesson and said, "You didn't expect there to be any money today, did you?" And Jerry, not really understanding this whole process, said, "well, it's been there for four years, why not today?" And then his gracious mother said, "Because we don't need it anymore. And there won't be any money anymore. The Lord provided that while we were building our home. Our home is completed. There won't be any money anymore."

Jerry Quinn had to prove that. For the next three weeks he went out every day and never found another dime.

[From an audio recording by Hyrum M. Smith, "A Testimony of the Principles of Faith"]

**ROCK #5**– *One man matters*: What did Achan do that caused such difficulty for Israel?

BUT the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel (Josh. 7:1).

Notice the language of this verse and verse 11. "Israel committed a trespass . . . the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." Even though Achan was the only one who sinned, the judgements fell on his family and his fellow-Israelites. They were defeated at the city of Ai (7:2-5), and "the hearts of the people melted, and became as water" (7:5).

This matter came up again later, with some interesting observations.

Seeing ye rebel to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel . . . Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity (Josh 22:18,20).

Can you think of modern illustrations of this principle. Why couldn't a transgressor say "I'm only hurting myself"? Even if there are no literal consequences, what kind of pain do you feel when someone you know and love commits sin? How much difference did it make to the Nephites when Amalickiah rebelled and joined the Nephites? (see Alma 46-52).

And this principle works with the principles of righteousness as well. Just how many is *one* when that one is a Moses or a Jeremiah or a Nephi or a Gordon B.

Hinckley?

**ROCK #6**—*We can learn lessons from our enemies*: Israel was unstoppable. Cities and kings fell before them like grain before the reaper. The people of Gibeon were terrified. They took old sacks and old clothes and old food and made the short journey to Gilgal. What did they say to Joshua? (9:6-13).

The Lord had commanded Israel, "And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land." What mistake did Joshua and his leaders make?

And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them (Josh. 9:14,15).

This is the first lesson. It is the lesson of Alma: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good . . ." (Alma 37:37).

But there is a second lesson. What did the Israelites do when they learned that they had been induced to make an agreement under false pretenses?

And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes. But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them (Josh. 9:19,20).

This second lesson—*keep your word*—is one that must be highlighted by the first one. Seek the counsel of the Lord before you make important promises. But when you make them, keep them!

**ROCK #7**— *I will fight your battles*:

I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for, as I said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfil--I will fight your battles (D&C 105:14).

A confederation of five kings undertook to destroy Gibeon because the city had made peace with Israel (see Josh. 10:2-5). The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua for help and he came, leading his army in forced march that lasted all night (10:9). What happened as these armies and their kings fled from the army of Israel?

And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, [and] were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: [they were] more which died with hailstones than [they] whom the children of Israel slew with the sword (Josh. 10:11)

These great hailstones make me think of a prophecy in Revelation 16:21: "And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, [every stone] about the weight of a talent . . ." A talent is probably about 75 pounds according to the Bible Dictionary. We do not know how large the stones were in Joshua ten, but if they were at all like the ones mentioned in Revelation, they were great stones indeed!

And the story reminds me of this promise:

Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed (D&C 123:17).

Have you made a record of those times in your life when, after you have done all that you could do, God has stepped in and made up the difference?

**ROCK 8--Nothing is too hard for the Lord:**

There is a miracle recorded in Joshua 10 that in scope and implication eclipses nearly every other miracle in the scriptures.

Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies . . . So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel (Josh, 10:12-14).

The messenger of Isaac's birth said, when Sarah laughed, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:13, JST). To Mary, Gabriel said, "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:27). We need to have greater faith in this reality.

**ROCK #9 – *characteristics of a faithful servant*:** When enough of the conquest of the Promised Land was completed, Joshua sent the tribes to their inheritances. But first he praised them for their faithfulness. Note the things he said they had done and should do:

(Josh 22:2) "Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you"  
(22:3) "Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day"  
(22:3) "[Ye] have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God."  
(22:5) "But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law"  
(22:5) "love the LORD your God"  
(22:5) "walk in all his ways"  
(22:5) "keep his commandments"  
(22:5) "cleave unto him"  
(22:5) "serve him"

**ROCK #10– Ed:** When the three tribes who had received an inheritance on the other side of Jordan returned to their homes, , they "built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to." (22:10). The other Israelites assumed that this altar was evidence of apostasy, "the whole congregation of the children of Israel

gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them" (22:12). The only authorized altar for priesthood service was at the tabernacle. But those who had build the altar explained that they had not built the altar in rebellion nor to offer burnt offerings thereon. Their purpose was to provide a reminder for their children and the children of the Israelites across the river, "But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD " (22:27) In fact, the altar was much like the pile of stones mentioned in Joshua 4.

Even the pattern was different from the temple altar. "Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made . . . it is a witness between us and you" (22:28). Notice what name they gave the altar in Joshua 22:34. The word in this context actually means *witness*. Are your home life and your work ethic and your interpersonal relationships witnesses of your love for the Lord?

**ROCK #11--Remember.** As Joshua dismisses Israel from the battlefields, he also charges them to remember how the Lord has blessed them:

(24:3) Remember what I did for Abraham

(24:5) Remember that I sent you Moses and Aaron

(24:5) Remember that I freed you from Egypt

(24:7) Remember that I save you and destroyed your enemies in the Red Sea

(24:8) I gave you victory over the Amorites

(24:11) Remember how you crossed Jordan

(24:11) Remember how I delivered the people of this land to your hand

(24:12) I sent the hornet before you (nature fought for you)

(24:13) I gave you a land and cities and crops for which you did not have to labor

Poor memories are a major problem in the standard works, where the word *Remember* appears 12,899 times! One of the blessings of a journal is that it helps us and our children to remember what the Lord has done for us.

**ROCK #12** Choose you this day: Joshua invited Israel to "Incline [their] heart unto

the Lord God of Israel" (24:23). It was time to make a choice.

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that [were] on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods (Josh. 24:14-16)

**CONCLUSION:** This matter of writing a journal (making a memorial) has received a great deal of emphasis. I have always been intrigued by the things which are included in the scriptural history. I believe the book of Joshua gives us a wonderful patter for the kinds of things we ought to record.

We hope you will begin as of this date. If you have not already commenced this important duty in your lives, get a good notebook, a good book that will last through time and into eternity for the angels to look upon. Begin today and write in it your goings and your comings, your deeper thoughts, your achievements, and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies. We hope you will do this, our brothers and sisters, for this is what the Lord has commanded, and those who keep a personal journal are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives (Spencer W. Kimball, "President Kimball Speaks Out on Personal Journals," *Ensign*, Dec. 1980, 61)

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