

## Christian Education/Open House

April 17 & 18, 2016

Joshua 1:1-9

### The Wisdom of Christian Education: "Be Strong & Courageous"

*Where do you start?* Have you ever stood in front of a project, and find yourself thinking those words: *Where do you start?* It might be that toy that looked so great, until you open the box and now have to figure out how it goes together. There seems to be so many pieces. You might have to actually read the instructions. Perhaps, it is that project at home that you think is only going to take an hour or two, instead it takes the entire day, and about 3 trips to Menards or Home Depot. (At our house, it is sometimes called: *Adams time.*) Where do you start?

Imagine how the men felt who were about to jump into the water as they were storming the beach of Normandy in WWII? Where do you start? Hearts racing. Bullets flying. So, much death around them. I can't even imagine what they saw and heard. It must have seemed like the beginning of an impossible task. Where do you start?

As you drive through the Zoo Interchange these days, have you ever wondered "*where do you start?*" in such a large construction project? Where do you dig the first shovel? Where is the first temporary lane placed down? When will it be done? Where do you start?

I imagine that the children of Israel may have been asking that question of Joshua. 40 years earlier, Joshua had tried to give an answer to the question: *Where do you start?* He and 11 other spies had gone into the land of Canaan to scope things out. It really was a land flowing with milk and honey like God had promised. Cluster of grapes so large that it took two men to carry them. The bad news? These warriors that they would have to fight were huge. They were giants. How could they possibly fight them. *Where do you start?* Joshua and Caleb said: *WITH GOD!* The people didn't listen. It would be impossible to conquer them. So, God made them stay on the other side of the Jordan River for 40 years. An entire generation of people would die off.

After those 40 years, God said it was now time to go into Canaan. Yet, not much had changed. Joshua got older; he's probably about 80 years old now. There still was no way to cross the River. No bridge. No boats. So, how do you get 40,000 soldiers across the River. The cities on the other side, probably, were fortified even more over those 40 years. God was still asking them to do what must have seemed like an impossible task. Where do you start? How could you possibly be: "**Strong and Courageous?**"

You start with God. God wanted them to see that there was only way they could be strong and courageous. Their strength would not come from them. Joshua tells them: "**Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors TO GIVE THEM... Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.**" God would show them who was in control!

As the feet of the priest who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant touched the water of the Jordan River, the water stopped flowing. Even though the river was at flood stage, it didn't stop God from acting. God was going to make things seem even more ridiculous to them. After they crossed the river, God told Joshua to have the men circumcised before going into battle. If that didn't make sense, Joshua's military tactics seemed even more crazy: "**March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.**" (Joshua 6:3-5) Nothing about this plan makes sense. Where do you start? You listen to God. The walls of Jericho came tumbling down.

Where do you start? Trust the impossible. Trust the Plan that doesn't seem to make sense to the world. Trust the God who promised to send his Son to die for all of your sins. The Son of God dying on a cross? Really? Yes! That is God's Love for you. Trust the God who gives you the strength to be "**strong and courageous.**" When the children of Israel listened

to God, he blessed them. He kept his promises. Starting in the garden of Eden until today and into eternity, God will keep his promises. He will forgive your sins. He gives you eternal life in Jesus. That is God's Wisdom to this world.

If you think about it, that is what Christian Education is all about. It is about trusting the impossible. It is about believing the impossible. It is about passing down God's impossible seeming Wisdom from one generation to another. That education happens in a place like our school. It happens in all of your homes with your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It happens in many different places in our lives.

Why do we need God's Wisdom? Let me ask you this: *How many of you have junk drawers in your house?* I think everyone has a "junk" drawer. It is that drawer we put something when we don't know what else to do with something. It's the drawer where we hide something so that everything looks neat and organized on the outside. We are "junk drawers." What do I mean? People aren't junk. We are the exact opposite to God. We are valuable to Him. But we are all filled with all kinds of "junk," aren't we? We have those sins that we bury down into our hearts. We say all the "right words" to people around us, and, yet we think the exact opposite things in our hearts. Jesus said it clearly: **"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."** (Mt. 15:19) The solution to clearing out that junk drawer is Jesus and the cross. The solution to keeping it clean is staying connected to Christ.

At the end of our service today, we will sing the words: *"Jesus love me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but He is strong. Yes, Jesus love me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so!"* That's wisdom that lasts an eternity. Amen.