

Wait... what?! Switching on our curiosity

Until we train ourselves out of it, most of us approach the Bible differently to how we'd study any other book. We pick out a chapter here or a story there, read them, maybe pick up some spiritual truths, and move on. We rarely stop to ask questions about people, places and events that crop up, just taking them at face value as good stand-alone stories or important bits of teaching.

Joshua is a great example of this. It is easy to open his book and get caught up in the exciting story, but who is this Joshua? Did he just spring up from thin air? How did he come to be leading Israel? Let's start to ask those questions.

Read Joshua 1:1-2.

Joshua: the back story

What do we know about Joshua before his book opens? Use your brain first. Can you think of any times we have encountered Joshua earlier in Israel's story?

Once you've noted down everything you can remember, have a look at the list below. These are almost all the mentions of Joshua in the story so far. How many of them were you aware of?

- **Exodus 17 – first mention. He's a warrior, and chosen by Moses to lead.** Note especially v.14 'Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua..."' **Why do you think God specifically wanted Joshua to hear that?**
- Exodus 24 – What is Joshua's role here?
- Exodus 32:17 – He's alert to what is happening among the people.
- Exodus 33:7-11 – What do we learn about Joshua in this passage? How did this experience contribute to Joshua's formation as a man and a leader? Can you imagine what it might have been like in that tent? What did Joshua see and experience?

- Numbers 11 – zeal for truth and righteousness, for things to be done right
- Numbers 13 and 14 – if you’ve been in church for a while, this is the part of the story you’re likely to know. Read these chapters and note anything that stands out.

Look up the meanings of Joshua’s former name and his new name (13:16). Why do you think Moses changed his name?

- Numbers 27:12-23 – What happens in this passage?

What do we learn about Joshua’s character and role?

- Numbers 32:12 – Joshua and Caleb have ‘wholly followed the Lord’
- Numbers 32:28, 34:17 – Joshua and Eleazar to divide up the land – why those two, do you think?
- Deuteronomy 1:38, 3:28 – **Moses commanded to encourage Joshua** – that’s an unusual command. Why do you think God gave it? What does it suggest about Joshua?
- Deuteronomy 3:21 – Joshua had seen God defeat Israel’s enemies
- Deuteronomy 31 – Joshua will lead the people into the land

What did you notice? There are far more mentions of him than I ever realised. He doesn’t just appear at the end of Deuteronomy; Moses doesn’t pluck him at random to be Israel’s next leader. How might remembering his ‘back story’ help you as you go into a study about him?