

ISSUE

21.44

BULLETIN OF  
THE OLSEN  
PARK CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

November 3,  
2019

## Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

### Elders:

Pat Ledbetter  
Brady McAlister  
Jeff Nunn

### Deacons:

Steve Dixon  
Ryan Ferguson  
Ben Hight  
Blake McAlister  
Walker McAnear  
Sam Nunn  
Lance Purcell  
Justin Smiley  
Kevin Wise  
Trevor Yontz

### Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



## A Leader's Priorities – Joshua

By Kyle Pope

When people approach the end of life, sometimes like never before, it becomes clear what their priorities really are. They may seek out more time with family. They may try to find the words that were hard to say before. That task that remains undone they may work hard to accomplish. In the sunset of life the value spiritual things truly held during life is often fully revealed.

When Joshua, the faithful assistant of Moses, who became the bold commander of Israel in the conquest of Canaan approached the end of his life the priorities of this great leader became clear. Let's notice a few:

**1. A Good Leader Knows His Time Will End.** Near the end of Joshua's life he called Israel and all its leaders together and began with the words, "I am old, advanced in age" (Josh. 23:2). He then reminded them of God's faithfulness, yet warned them of His wrath if they should forsake Him (Josh. 23:3-13). He declared, "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed" (Josh. 23:14, NKJV).

It is hard pass the torch of leadership. While the responsibility of leading others can be a burden, it also brings with it a measure of respect and validation that's hard to surrender. Like the athlete that retires, only to come back again and again with diminishing ability, some leaders can't envision a role of service beyond the leadership they once enjoyed. Joshua did not imagine that his leadership would continue indefinitely. He recognized that the way of all life on earth is finite. A good leader will serve as long as he can, but will also resolve himself to help prepare others to lead when he cannot. Sometimes this

means a different type of leadership out of the spotlight, but that too is a noble role that a good leader will accept with grace and dignity.

**2. God's Word Holds Priority to Him.** After the meeting described above, Joshua called another assembly of the tribes and leaders to Shechem (Josh. 24:1). As he came before them he declared, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel" (Josh. 24:2a), and then proceeded to reveal the Lord's recounting of their history and His care and blessings towards them (Josh. 24:2b-13). In his earlier admonition he had urged them to "be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 23:6). God's word was a priority to Joshua.

An experienced leader has faced many challenges. He has stored up a treasury of knowledge, wisdom, and experience that holds great value. Yet, in this accumulation of wise counsel it can be easy to forget that it is God's word, and not our own, that is "living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). Joshua served with Moses! He was faithful when most others were timid and faithless. How easy it would have been for him to allow his own words to dominate his final messages to Israel. Yet, to the very end he elevated the word of God. The good leader, even in old age will do the same.

**3. The Future Faithfulness of Those He Leads Matters to Him.** In some of the most memorable words of these closing chapters, after speaking the Lord's words, Joshua charged them, "Now therefore, fear the LORD, **serve Him in sincerity and in truth**" (Josh. 24:14:a). His faith could not be counted as theirs. They had to make it their own. He urged them,



“choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Josh. 24:15b).

Joshua’s life had been dedicated to the service of God and the leadership of Israel. His time on earth was coming to an end, but he recognized that it wasn’t about the role he had played but the impact he hoped it could have upon those he would leave behind. Leaders are examples. He charged them to follow God, but in the life he had lived and in the days that remained to him he determined, **“as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”** (15d). Good leaders set good examples of faithfulness during their time of service and after it has come to an end.

**4. He Is Not So Absorbed in His End That He Fails to Consider Others.** A curious exchange happens following this charge to the tribes and leaders. The people respond with what most of us would consider the perfect response to the message he just preached. They declare, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods” (Josh. 24:16b). They declare their thankfulness for God’s care for them (Josh. 24:17-18a), and affirm, “We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God” (Josh. 24:18b). Yet, rather than simply accepting their initial response, Joshua retorts, “You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions **nor your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good**” (Josh. 24:19b-20). Why did he do this?

Joshua had seen how fickle the people could be. In the face of God’s remarkable deliverance he had seen

God’s people worship the gold calf and fall to the seduction of the Moabites! As he spoke to them had some, like Rachel literally held onto the false gods of the peoples they had just conquered? Perhaps. Was his concern for a disposition he had seen within them that was already showing idolatry in the heart that could lead them away from God? Sadly, the next generation would forsake the Lord to worship the Baals (Judg. 2:10-11). Either way, how amazing it is that at a time when Joshua could have easily focused on himself, his concern was for others.

**5. The Good Leader Doesn’t Neglect the Sharing of Future Responsibility.** After this blunt response to the people, they affirmed more passionately, “No, but we will serve the LORD!” (Josh. 24:21b). This time Joshua replied, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him” (Josh. 24:22a).



Without hesitation they declared, “We are witnesses!” (Josh. 24:22b).

Like a good parent reading carefully the temperament, personality, and disposition of different children, Joshua seemed to read the needs and reactions of the people to motivate them to a greater zeal in serving the Lord. Yet beyond this, he also moved them to take the responsi-

bility for themselves. He charged them, “put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel” (Josh. 24:23). No idolatry of the heart or the body could be retained! He made a covenant with them, wrote the words of the law before them, and set up a stone (Josh. 24:25-26), pronouncing, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God” (Josh. 24:27). Now the responsibility was theirs!

For Joshua, leadership was not about glory, honor, and status. It was a stewardship that was governed throughout his life by the priorities of spiritual values he demonstrated to the very end. May those who serve as leaders in the Lord’s kingdom today live lives characterized by the same priorities.



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4700 Andrews Ave.  
Amarillo TX 79106  
806-352-2809  
[www.olsenpark.com](http://www.olsenpark.com)

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Please come again.**

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