



TEXT
JOSHUA 23:1-2

TOPIC
Age enhanced by infirmity combined to compel Joshua to be
reassigned in the Lord's work.

TITLE
"There's A New Shepherd In Town"

Has a Christian said to you, or have you said to someone, *"I've received a Word from the Lord?"*

Let me offer an example of what I mean. In the 19th century, George Müller cared for over 10,000 orphans, founded schools, and supported Christian missions. He accomplished it all through prayer *and without directly asking for money*, trusting God alone to supply every need.

Müller explained that he had been drawn to Psalm 81:10, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

He received that verse personally, as a Word from the Lord to him.

After that devotion he had a new and lasting confidence that God would meet all the needs. *And God did.*

Truth be told, that verse was not written to George Müller about his orphanages. Nevertheless we immediately recognize that the principle behind it is timeless, and thereby God can give it to **any** believer as His Word for *our* particular circumstances.

The same is true of much in the Bible. We are not twisting the context to receive it personally. It is God speaking to us.

I received a Word from the Lord while studying at our kitchen table.

I am excited to share it with you because it affects you as much as it does me. It is Joshua 23:1&2.

Joshua 23:1 Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age. Joshua 23:2 And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: "I am old, advanced in age."

We want to keep in mind two additional verses:

- **Joshua 13:1 "Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him: 'You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.' "**
- **Joshua 24:15 "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."**

Joshua bursts into Israel's history without introduction. Just weeks after leaving Egypt - where he was a slave making bricks - Joshua was tasked by Moses to lead Israel into battle against Amalek.

Not long after, the Hebrews received God's Law, built the Tabernacle, and organized by tribes around it. Arriving at the border of the Promised Land, they waited for a period of 40 days while twelve spies performed recon.

Ten spies returned petrified by fear, spewing about giants and inciting terror. The only members of the spy squad that encouraged faith and obedience were Caleb and Joshua.

For their simple but fearless faith, "All the congregation said to stone them with stones."¹

¹ Numbers 14:10

For refusing to obey God & enter the land, God sentenced them to wander 40 years - one year for each day the spies were in Canaan - until everyone of that generation (except Joshua & Caleb) died in the wilderness.

At the time of the Exodus, Joshua was likely 40 years old. He is 110 years old in our text.

Jos 23:1 Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age.

The Hebrews could “rest.” Joshua had led them on a campaign of shock & awe. The major battles had been fought and won. Although not completely eradicated, the enemy was neutralized.

They could “rest,” but should not slumber. The LORD purposefully left certain enemies in the land, that He might “test Israel by them, *that is*, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan.”²

The Rolling Stones speak for all of us when they sing, *What a Drag it is Getting Old*.

We cannot avoid what the Teacher observed in Ecclesiastes - “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them.”³

- ➡ You know you’re getting old when your back goes out more than you do.
- ➡ You know you’re getting old when happy hour is a nap.
- ➡ You know you’re getting old when you sink your teeth into a steak - and they stay there.

For our anniversary this year, Pam got me an AARP GPS. Not only does it tell me how to get to my destination, *it tells me why I wanted to go there*.

This getting old and advancing in age first appears in chapter 13:1, where we read, **“Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him: a’ You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.’ ”**

Aging appears to have been an endearment between the LORD and Joshua:

² Judges 3:1

³ 12:1

- I wonder how many times God addressed Joshua by saying, "Hey, old man!"
- To which Joshua might reply, "I may be old, but I'm not Ancient of Days!"

Do you suppose the LORD told him old man jokes? I guess it **DEPENDS**.

➡ What is a prize old people can win for aging?

Atrophy.

➡ What's the secret to having a smoking hot body as a senior? **Cremation.**

We have an intimate relationship with the Lord. Why wouldn't He say things to us that are comically endearing?

My idea of old was 100. I had the credentials:

- My dad died at age 94, 95 (somewhere in his 90s). Staph infection while at Redlands Community Hospital got him.
- My mom, 101. I think she could have lived longer, but after a bad fall it was clear she didn't want to.

I'll be 70 this year. I should have two or three decades to go, right? Not with the enhancement of Parkinson's Disease.

If you have a King James Version you'll notice that the word is translated *stricken*. It suggests a decline in overall strength or vitality like that which accompanies certain infirmities.

I'm coming-up on the 7th anniversary of my diagnosis. The disease progression is obvious. Likely you know several people with Parkinson's and have researched it for yourself. It's a very popular neuro-degenerative disease in the Central Valley. I will say this in passing: The mental aspects of it, the part no one tells you about, is way worse than the physical.

As we hit 40 as a fellowship, God has blessed us with many "rests." Our moving into the building was a "rest" compared to our time at the YMCA.

Funny thing about God's "rest." Our home here on Douty & Lorita has been way more work than setting-up & tearing down chairs. But it doesn't seem like work. If it ever does, then we are not trusting God.

God wasn't rebuking Joshua for laziness. After all, God was the one who had given a Joshua and the Hebrews rest.

He was saying, "Joshua, My work goes forward *but you will no longer lead it.*"

Joshua 23:2 And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: "I am old, advanced in age."

Right away we think 'retirement.' There is no crying in baseball, and there is no retirement from serving the Lord. There is only *reassignment*.

Joshua spoke of his reassignment a few verses later when he proclaimed, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."⁴

He would no longer lead the nation. Joshua's calling to serve the Lord would continue in other ways. We don't know what Joshua did next; but he & Mrs. J took it in spiritual stride.⁵

George Müller records in his journal that he came upon Psalm 81:10 during his daily prayer & Bible reading.

He wrote that this verse "struck me" in a remarkable way. It affected everything he did from the day he received it, December 5th 1835.

Joshua 23:1&2 "struck me." I received it immediately as a Word from the Lord. I sensed there would be more to receive from it - the Lord's application.

Sometime later, sitting at our kitchen table studying, it was as if the Lord was seated there as well. Without seeing Him, without hearing Him audibly, He impressed upon me:

⁴ 24:4

⁵ Some believe that Joshua died immediately after this farewell. But his own words were, "We will serve the LORD," indicating some elapsing of time.

"Old man, I've blessed & empowered you to lead Calvary Hanford for a generation. It's time that a new generation takes the lead. When I say it's time, I mean it's now. Don't make them wait any longer on your advancing in age."

The Lord has me in reassignment mode.

One of our bedrock ministry principles, from the Word of God, is to recognize what the Lord is doing and follow His lead. We therefore talk about men & ministries being 'raised-up' by the Lord.

In plain language, the Lord makes men & ministries obvious to those who see and hear what God the Holy Spirit is saying to the church.

In affirming God's will for a transition in ministry you must have at least these three things:

1. You must have Spirit-dependent men in leadership (We do).
2. Those men must be committed to choosing a Spirit-dependent man. (They did).
3. That man must have been made obvious, having been "raised-up" by the Lord. (He has).

Not every church has the blessing of witnessing a man being raised-up for over 40 years, 20 of which were in full-time pastoral ministry.

What I'm announcing is no secret. We've been moving in that direction for a few years. We are simply making 'official' what God is doing.

Let me read to you from the official minutes of our recent Board Meeting:

"Pastor Gene announced he is stepping down as Senior Pastor effective the 40th Anniversary Service to be held May 4th 2025. However, he will continue to teach as he is able, and as assigned **by new Senior Pastor Gene Pensiero, Jr.**"

The Board suggested its unanimous support for the change."