

What's Gotten Into You...A Step of Hope!

Joshua 1:1-9

March 24, 2019

Anyone here ever played the game called, "Mother May I?" or "Captain May I?"

It is a game that involves steps.

One person is the "Mother" or the "Captain."

They stand with their back to the players. The players are about 30 feet away. The goal is to be the first person to touch the "Mother" or "Captain."

Each player takes turns asking the "Mother" or "Captain" if they can take a certain number of steps and a certain kind of step. The "Mother" or "Captain" will either give them permission or adjust the request. If the player forgets to preface their request with a "Mother may I..." or "Captain may I..." they are denied their request for steps and have to take steps backwards to the beginning line.

There are also different kinds of steps a player can ask of the "Mother" or "Captain." Some of the more popular steps are: giant steps, leap frog steps, baby steps, somersault steps. The player may ask for 4 giant steps. The "Mother" or "Captain" can grant permission or modify the number or even the kind of step.

Again, the player who touches the "Mother" or "Captain" first is declared the winner and they become the "Mother" or "Captain" for the next game.

The game of life involves steps.

The game of life involves someone we make requests of as we go forward in life.

The game of life involves different kinds of steps.

In the game of life we take steps each day of our journey in life. We begin with the **first steps** of a toddler. They are short and unstable. One or two steps of momentum until the little legs can't keep up with the pace and we fall down. Mom or dad picks us up with such elation and celebration and encourages us to try again.

Soon we are taking **big steps**! These steps are exciting because we are certain on our feet and can even run, skip and jump! Now and then we may stumble and scrape a knee.

But as we mature we discover the **steps of hesitancy**. These steps of uncertainty can be seen when a child has to let go of their parent's hand and walk into the classroom of their first day of pre-school or kindergarten. They are also seen the first day of college, but this time it is the parent taking the steps of hesitancy as they leave their little baby alone in a dorm room.

Steps of the unknown are taken by the bride as she walks down the aisle holding on to her father's arm for assurance and support.

The **steps of excitement** and hesitancy come along when we walk through the doors to a new job or a new place to live. The **steps of brokenness** and hurt are a part of life's steps. The **steps of healing** are given to those who are willing to take them.

Today we are going to look at a guy who was called to take a step in life. It was a **step of hope**. The One who asked him to take this step of hope was not his mother or the captain. It was God who called Joshua to take that step of hope.

As we take this step of hope, as we see what got into Joshua to be able to take this step, I hope we will be willing to hear God call us to take that step of hope towards Him. My prayer is that what will have gotten into us is "a step of hope."

Moses, the one who led the people of God out of their bondage in Egypt, led them for 40 years in the wilderness as God led them to the edge of the Promised Land. Moses died. Joshua was the next in line to lead the people into the promised land.

God challenged Joshua to take the next step. It was a huge step. It was a step to a place he had never been before. It was a step that would challenge his faith and trust in God. God promised to give Joshua the land where he stepped to. (vs. 3)

Joshua's next step consisted of leading more than two million people into a strange new land and to conquer the people living in that land. What a step of challenge! God promised He would be with him, would not give up on Joshua and would not abandon him. (vs. 5)

Steps of challenge in our lives are steps we don't often ask for. Without God it could be frightening. With God it can be a great adventure.

Just as God was with Joshua, He is with us as we face the steps of challenge. We most likely will not be called to conquer a nation of godless people, but we will face tough situations, difficult people and tests of temptations.

The step of challenge offers to us the **step of hope**. God promises to never abandon us, to give up on us or let us fall and not be there to pick us up. The step of hope in the challenges of life call us to call on God.

God encouraged Joshua to take the step! What was Joshua's part in the taking of the step of hope? It was certainly more than a "God may I?"

God was very clear about the kind of steps He was asking of Joshua to take as he took that step of hope.

"Strength! Courage! Give it everything you have, heart and soul. Make sure you carry out The Revelation that Moses commanded you, every bit of it. Don't get off track, either left or right, so as to make sure you get to where you're going. And don't for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind. Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it. Then you'll get where you're going;" (Joshua 1:6-8 Message bible)

Did you pick up on the three steps Joshua was to take?

1. He was to have a spirit of strength and courage because the step of hope would not be easy.
2. He was to obey God's law. It was God's will and direction and commands that he was to follow as he took the next step.
3. He was to constantly read and meditate on God's Law...God's Word.

When God calls us to take that step of hope He is asking us to do so with a strong and courageous heart. We will obey His direction and not society's. We are to keep our hearts and minds in the bible...God's word to guide us in the steps HE is calling us to take each new day.

Joshua had a choice. God warned him of getting side tracked...of going to the left or right of the direction God was asking him to take. Moses had given the people this same warning of not getting off the trail God had set before him. Moses gave the choice of the **"step of a curse" or "step of blessing."** The step of curse is a step made without God. A step of blessing is a step made with God's guiding presence. (Deuteronomy 11:22-32)

It is amazing that God gave the people a free will choice between blessing or curse.

It is even more amazing that the people chose to take the step of a curse over a step of blessing. The step of curse was one of disobedience, self-willed and ignoring of God's word.

We have been given that same free will of choice today. We can live for ourselves and go off to the left or right of our own choosing. Or we can choose the step of blessing and serve God. To choose our own way is to travel on a dead end road. But, to choose the step of blessing, God's way, is to receive the hope of eternal life. (John 5:24)

Joshua was facing a road he had never been down before. He was asked to take a **step of the unknown**. God called him to step into the water of the Jordan River. (Joshua 3:4) The river was at flood level. It was not a gentle flowing stream. It was flowing strong and dangerously.

The people of God were eager to take the steps into the Promised Land, conquer the people and live peacefully. But first they had to take the step into the flowing flood level river. God gave them specific directions that would get them safely across. What if the priests had been afraid to take that first step?

What if we are afraid to take that first step of uncertainty, that step of faith, that God directs us to take? Often God provides no solution to our problems or uncertainties, or flood of fear, until we trust Him and take that first step of hope. He calls us to take the step of hope. Often we may only see far enough for one step... even a baby step. Will we trust and obey and take the step that God allows and calls us to take?

God calls us to take the step forward towards His love and will. He doesn't call us to take a step backwards in guilt and worry. (Philippians 3:13-14)

He doesn't call us to a fear of giving up when facing the flood waters of life. Take the step of hope. Pray!

David the psalmist cried out to God in prayer when he found the waters up to his neck and about to drown him. He called out to God in prayer. He called on God's love and sure salvation to save him. (Psalm 69:1-16)

When the flood waters of life are overcoming us, we are to cry out to God in prayer from the depths of our hearts. A situation is never hopeless when we call on God. God hears our prayer and will let us take the step of hope towards Him.

God has promised to His people who have walked through the wilderness of exile that He has a future for them; and it is a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11-12)

God does not walk out on or forget His people.

His plan is to give us a new beginning with a new purpose when we take that step of hope towards Him. God knows the future. His plans for us are good and full of hope.

This doesn't mean we will not face raging rivers of pain, suffering or hardship. But what it does mean is that when we trust God and take that step of hope...He will be there to see us through what seems to be a hopeless situation.

We are to know that the hope He calls us to is founded in Jesus, the solid Rock! (Ephesians 1:18)

We are to hold on to the hope which is found only in Christ Jesus. (Hebrews 3:6) His hope does not and will never disappoint us. (Romans 5:5) No matter what steps we are called by God to take, He will guide us and be with us as we take the step of hope.

The older I get, the more steps I have taken in life, the more I realize that God has been there to guide me all the way. I can see those steps that went to the left or right that were not God's will and got me struggling more and often seemingly hopeless in life.

I would imagine most of us can look back on the steps we have taken in life, and when we asked, "God may I?" He guided and gave us the hope we needed to take the next step.

As we continue to ask God for the next steps of hope we take we are assured also that He will guide us in our **final step of hope**. For however many years we are asked to take steps of life here on earth, we will one day take the final step of hope where we can reach out and touch our Heavenly Father. He will not have His back to us but will look at us face to face!

We have that promise of that final step of hope into life eternal. (II Corinthians 5:6-8; Romans 8:21, Colossians 1:5)

This past Monday I pulled up a chair next to Bob who was drawing close to taking his final breath, his final step of his journey of life here on earth. I thanked him for who he was to so many in the AA community and to his church family. I assured him of the hope and encouragement he had been to so many who leaned on him and his words of wisdom. I assured him that his final step of hope was before him and not to be fearful. I reminded him of his faith in Jesus and that when he took that step of hope he would be greeted by His Heavenly Father.

How assuring, how hopeful to be able to claim that call of God to take that final step of hope!

What's gotten into you? A step of hope!

Each new day God calls out to us to take that step of hope! It may be a baby step or a huge step of hope. Take the step of hope! Be strong and courageous. Keep obedient to God's will and keep His word in your heart and mind daily.

What's gotten into you? A step of hope!

Keep taking the steps of hope until that day God calls out to you to take that final step of hope!