

You might think Moses would have responded differently after all that happened during his time as Israel's leader. Time after time, God showed his power and timed after time, Israel grumbled, disobeyed God, and hated Moses for telling them what God said. You'd think Moses would maybe say something else when God showed him Canaan, the land he'd never enter. Why not? Because he lost his cool on Israel.

Timeline: Red Sea, Sinai, Commandments, Golden Calf, Second Set of Commandments, all manner of instances of God's miraculous care in providing water and food followed by brief moments of delight which were then replaced with disdain. Even though Moses stuck to repeating what God said word for word, Miriam and Aaron opposed him. Others rebelled against him and were eaten by the earth. 10 out of 12 spies turned the hearts of the people to mush resulting in God sentencing them to death after 40 years wandering in the desert. Then Miriam died. Grieving, frustrated, and angry again at dealing with a whiny, complaining people, Moses lashed out and smacked a rock with his staff to create a surge of water instead of simply speaking to it. No Promised Land for Moses because of this. Aaron died. One thing after another!

A while later, God lead Moses up a mountain to show him the Promised Land he'd never enter because of his disobedience. No lashing out from Moses. No accusing God. No blaming the people. Only care for the people, "*May the LORD, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community.*" (**Numbers 27:16**) Who will lead these people? Who will gather them up when they stray and keep them from getting lost? Who will be patient and gentle, but firm enough to deal these people because God couldn't let them be as sheep without a shepherd? Moses has the heart of Jesus almost, doesn't he? So much compassion from Moses and he wants to see it in the next leader of Israel, someone who'll do what it takes no matter how unappreciated and un-glorious, for the benefit of the flock. And consider the scale! A whole nation!

Moses didn't wait long for an answer. "*So the LORD said to Moses, 'Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him.'*" (**Numbers 27:18 NIV84**) Joshua is described here how we all want to be, right? Don't we want to be called this way? People in

whom is the Spirit of the LORD?! I would love for that to be the first thing people say about us! “You hung out with MO folks, you say? And they were what? People of the Spirit? Wonderful!” **Isaiah 11:2-3** lists the qualities of the Spirit of the LORD, “*The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – ³ and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.*” These qualities lead to these fruits of the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23**, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control.*” This was the leader Moses wanted. This was Joshua.

God would have Joshua formally instated as the leader when Moses laid his hands on him before the priest in sight of all the people so they’d know authority from God through Moses had been given to Joshua. God told Moses, “*Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him.*” (**Numbers 27:20**) Joshua would also be given the aid of the of the priesthood as his support system to know and act on God’s will for him because the branches of leadership were now split between Joshua’s kingship and the priesthood when they were both recently found in Moses. God explained Moses, “*He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the LORD.*” (**Numbers 27:21**) Then Joshua would command the people according to the will of God and they would do it.

Moses did as God commanded. In sight of all the people, Moses did as God said and laid his hands on Joshua giving him some of his authority. The Hebrew word is also like splendor or majestic influence. Moses totally had this and is able to give some of this splendor to Joshua. He does. Do you think Moses felt relieved after he installed Joshua? I hope he was at peace. He could be at peace knowing that a capable yet tender and forward in the Lord thinking leader, one who’d many times witnessed God’s glory, would lead God’s people in God’s ways had taken his place. Here’s a cool layer of compassion that God gave Joshua, when Joshua began his leadership, the books of Moses are complete, Joshua knows they’re God’s words of life and he’s able to lead people in them. That had to give Moses, this father and shepherd over Israel, great peace.

What do you think gives your spiritual parents peace? That you are walking in the Lord. John says, *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”* (III **John 4**) Whenever whoever taught you the Word hears you are in it now and believe in Jesus, they rejoice. They are comforted to see that God’s Word did what God’s Word does in people and that the Church will go on, just as Jesus said it would. With Joshua at the helm, Moses had this peace and joy.

God works through people to serve people. Those who serve are in the honorable position of being the vessel through which God’s compassion is poured out. God works in you and through you, exactly as he made you to be, doing precisely what he made you to do. He made Moses as he did to do Moses things. Same with Joshua. Same with you. Same with me. We serve each other most importantly by shepherding, guiding, one another’s focus to the fullness of God’s heart going out to them, his Son’s agony and death on the cross to pay for our sins. The Father forsook his Son for our salvation. God went through that agony because it’s at the very core of his heart to have you as close to him as possible for all time because he loves you so much.

God gives us people to remind us of this, even though we so often think we know it so well. Thank Jesus for the servants he gave you to teach you his truth. Think about how you can use what those shepherds gave you to turn right around and shepherd others by leading them to the green pasture and refreshing water of Jesus. Follow the example of Moses, a shepherd with a heart of care and compassion. Recognize that it’s Jesus who sends the Spirit so you can be a Joshua, a person of the Spirit. Be a person who lives rejoicing to know that the Lord of the Church, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus, has all his own in his almighty arms and close to his heart. Amen.