

MOSES

A Man of Selfless Dedication

STUDY EIGHTEEN

Filling the Shoes of Moses

Numbers 27:12–23

One who steps into the shoes of a great man or woman is often a very different leader than his or her predecessor.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

A pivotal point in any organization is the transfer of leadership. Sometimes, the transition occurs abruptly, as when a senior leader suddenly dies. Tremors of grief shake people to their core. The new leaders must handle the transition with sensitivity as they care for hurting people and establish trust.

Other times, an older leader steps aside and hands over leadership to a new person. This kind of transition can be rocky. Some leaders refuse to release the wheel even after the new leader has taken over. People sometimes resist the transition, complaining about the new leader's personality and methods. They don't like the changes that come with new leadership, and they undermine each decision. Transitions rarely go smoothly . . . unless the Lord is at the center of the process.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll see how the Lord marks the end of Moses' role as leader and appoints Joshua as the new leader. Moses handled the succession process admirably, accepting God's plan and supporting younger Joshua as the best person to lead the nation into the promised land. The transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua is a model for how all changes in leadership should go.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Pray with the psalmist: “Teach me your ways, O LORD that I may live according to your truth” (Psalm 86:11). Invite the Lord to help you understand and apply His Word today.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

For forty years, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. After those who refused to enter Canaan died, the next generation returned to the same location at the border of the promised land. With no water to drink, they complained to Moses just like their parents did: “Why did you make us leave Egypt and bring us here to this terrible place?” (Numbers 20:5).

To display His mercy, the Lord told Moses, “Speak to the rock over there, and it will pour out its water” (20:8). Moses, however, indignantly shouted, “Listen, you rebels! . . . Must we bring you water from this rock?” (20:10). And then he struck the rock twice in anger (20:10).

Moses disobeyed God’s clear instructions. He made himself judge in God’s place, snubbed God’s holiness, and stole God’s glory. For this sin of presumption, God told Moses, “You will not lead [the Israelites] into the land I am giving them!” (20:12). If not Moses, then who?



Observation: The Appointment of Moses’ Successor

Observation identifies the thought-flow of a passage and looks for key words and main points.¹ Read the verses and answer the questions below, using the following headings as an outline.

Viewing the Land—Numbers 27:12–14

What did the Lord allow Moses to do instead of entering the land in *Numbers 27:12–14*? How did God explain His reasons for barring Moses from Canaan?

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Choosing the Man—Numbers 27:15–21

What request did Moses make in *Numbers 27:15–16*? What do you observe in Moses' attitude toward the Lord?

What qualities did Moses say the Israelites needed in their new leader, according to *27:17*? What do you sense in Moses' tone? How has he changed?

In response to Moses' request, what instructions did the Lord give in *27:18–21*? What key procedures were essential in transferring authority from Moses to Joshua?

Joshua was “Moses’ assistant since his youth” (Numbers 11:28). He was honed by Moses for the task of leadership, although he didn’t know that he was in training for Moses’ job. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Following the Plan—Numbers 27:22–23

How did Moses respond, according to *Numbers 27:22–23*? How did his actions demonstrate his change of heart?

When God’s leader moves on to another position, nothing of God moves on. God is still at work. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Principles for Selecting New Leaders

Interpretation looks for the meaning of a passage, uncovering truth in the form of timeless principles. Let's look for valuable guidelines from this text for leaders in transition.

What attitude did Moses have toward succession? What lesson might he teach leaders who are coming to the end of their role?

Moses didn't appoint his own successor. He requested that the new leader be God's choice. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Review the qualities in the new leader that Moses outlined in [Numbers 27:15–17](#). How might this list be used as qualifications for leaders?

Review how Joshua was chosen and inducted as leader in [27:18–21](#). What principles do you see for selecting and commissioning spiritual leaders?

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This time, Moses didn't take matters into his own hands. He had learned the importance of doing God's will God's way, and he followed God's instructions carefully. In summary, what advice would Moses pass on to veteran leaders who are approaching the end of their role? To new leaders who are just beginning?

Moses asked God, "Send us a man with a heart, someone who will take care of the flock." And the Lord said, "Take Joshua." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: How Leaders Interact with God

In a parallel account in Deuteronomy, Moses pleaded with the Lord: "Please let me cross the Jordan to see the wonderful land on the other side, the beautiful hill country and the Lebanon mountains" (Deuteronomy 3:25). The Lord said no, but He did allow Moses to "see the wonderful land" from a mountaintop overlook.

Moses handled his disappointment by investing himself in the next leader. He chose to accept his circumstances and to "commission Joshua and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead the people across the Jordan" (3:28). What words of encouragement do you think Moses gave Joshua? What essential obligations does the older leader have in transferring leadership to the younger leader?

*Moses had not an ounce of self-pity or bitterness. He said to Joshua, "You're God's man," and he publicly let it be known that he supported him. It's hard not to be impressed with how well Moses handed over leadership.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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Application: Three Principles for Transferring Leadership

Leadership succession can send tremors through churches and organizations, causing deep rifts in relationships. But it doesn't have to. Applying three truths from Moses' transfer of authority to Joshua can help smooth leadership transitions.

First, *when God removes, He replaces*. Losing a beloved leader is upsetting, but remember, God's purposes are bigger than any one person. Are you going through a leadership transition at your church, business, or even in your family? If so, what fears have you had? How can God calm those fears?

Second, *when God appoints, He approves*. Even though a new leader's personality and methods are different than the previous leader's, we need to remain open-minded, flexible, and supportive. How can you support a new leader knowing that God has approved him or her?

Third, *when God sustains, He gives success*. As God's leaders follow God's guiding Spirit, their work will bear fruit for Him. How can you be part of God's new work?

Leadership is like a relay race—it's often won or lost in the passing of the baton. Honor the "Moses" leaders in your life who have run the race faithfully. Encourage and strengthen the "Joshua" leaders who are just taking off. Across the Jordan is new territory in God's kingdom to explore, and God has selected just the right leaders to take you there.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You have selected, approved, and sustained certain leaders in my life, and I am grateful for their role. Keep them in Your care and guard them from sin. Protect their families. Inspire their walk with You. Give them Your vision. Help me to follow You well, as I follow their lead. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2024–2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1975, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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