

Strong and Courageous
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Joshua 1:1-11;16-18

Welcome back to the Old Testament and the book of Joshua! This week's passage is one of my favorites because it applies so practically to our lives and focuses on having faith and trust in our Heavenly Father. The heart of this passage is the command: "*Be strong and courageous.*" The command is simple. Doing it can be hard.

Think back to when you were a young person and a parent, teacher, or coach helped you face your fears. (Illustration: Our son-in-law David's "ride incentive" at theme parks). Being strong and courageous isn't just kids' stuff; it shows up in every phase of life. What are some examples of times when we need help to be strong and courageous?

This brings us to Joshua, God's chosen successor to Moses, who was to lead the next generation of Israel to claim the Promised Land. Though he was an experienced military man and Moses had prepared him, he still needed courage that only God could give.

The Point: We all have times in life when we face a new challenge or chapter that causes us to say, "*Lord, I'm just not sure I can do this. I'm not 'strong and courageous', I am weak and discouraged.*" As bad as fear feels, our weakness is when God's power shows up (2 Cor. 12:9). Like Joshua, we can be strong and courageous if we trust in God's promises and depend on His power.

(NLT) — **1** After the death of Moses the Lord's servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said, **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. **3** I promise you what I promised Moses:—**4** from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the land of the Hittites.'

- "God commissioned Joshua to...lead the people into the land, defeat the enemy, and claim the inheritance. God could have sent an angel to do this, but He chose to use a man and give him the power he needed to get the job done."ⁱ
- Verse three: God had promised Moses, 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you.' Joshua was not receiving a new promise. He was receiving the responsibility of leading Israel into the fulfillment of a promise God had made centuries earlier to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Deut. 1:8).
- The first step in being strong and courageous is to TRUST God's promises.
- Which promise of God has helped you through a difficult season of life, and why?
- God DID give Joshua a specific promise for the task ahead. Look at verse five.

5 No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.

- To be strong and courageous we must claim the promise of God's presence and depend on His power!
- Hudson Taylor quote: "...all God's Giants have been weak [people] who did great things for God because they reckoned [counted on] God being with them."ⁱⁱ
- God's promises pointed to His PURPOSE for Joshua:

6 "Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.

- God gave Joshua a definite PURPOSE. What did he NOT give Joshua?
- Warren Wiersbe: "God didn't give Joshua explanations as to how He would accomplish these things, because God's people live on promises and not on explanations. When you trust God's promises and step out by faith (v. 3), you can be sure that the Lord will give you the directions you need when you need them."ⁱⁱⁱ In other words, God didn't explain everything but there WAS a plan:

7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.

- To be strong and courageous we must pursue God's PURPOSE, claim His PROMISES, count on His PRESENCE and POWER and live by His PRECEPTS.
- I can't find anywhere in scripture where God gave His servants a task and told them to figure it out for themselves. In fact, when they attempted to figure things out on their own, it didn't go well. (i.e., Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Jonah.)
- The instructions from Moses were what God had already revealed and what Moses had shared, recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- God was not giving Joshua a new playbook; He was telling him to faithfully follow the one already revealed. Verse eight gets very practical.

8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

- That's the NLT translation. The ESV also says, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth." What do you think that means?
- We are told to MEDITATE on God's word daily.
- I have always said, "If you can RUMINATE, you can MEDITATE." What is rumination? What happens when a cow "chews the cud?" How can we apply that to the command to MEDITATE on God's PRECEPTS and PROMISES?
- Worry is meditation on your problems. Biblical meditation is meditation on God's promises. We do the first by nature; we can learn to do the second.
- If we follow God's PRECEPTS, there is another PROMISE. What is it?
- Does "prosper and succeed" mean financial gain? Why not?

- Some of God’s servants in scripture WERE blessed with material wealth. On the other hand, if "prosperity" always meant wealth, then many faithful believers—including Jesus, Paul, and countless missionaries—would have been failures.
- Scripture clearly teaches that God’s definition of biblical prosperity is:
 - Accomplishing God's purposes.
 - Experiencing God's favor.
 - Living in obedience to God's will.
 - Bearing spiritual fruit.
 - Becoming the person God intends you to be.

9 This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

- What did Joshua do next? Sit in his tent for a week and think about it? Form a committee to study God’s instructions? No, apparently, he TOOK ACTION.
- Trusting God to do what only God can do, Joshua did what he could do.

10 Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, **11** “Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

(NLT) — 16 They answered Joshua, “We will do whatever you command us, and we will go wherever you send us. **17** We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses. And may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. **18** Anyone who rebels against your orders and does not obey your words and everything you command will be put to death. So be strong and courageous!”

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- We all have times in life when we face a new challenge or chapter that causes us to say, “*Lord, I’m just not sure I can do this. I’m not ‘strong and courageous’ I am weak and discouraged.*” As bad as fear feels, our weakness is when God’s power shows up (2 Cor. 12:9). [“Dumber people than us...weaker people than us”]
- Spoiler alert: At the end of his life Joshua said to the people of Israel, “*Not a single one of all the good promises the Lord had given to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; everything he had spoken came true.*” **Joshua 21:45 (NLT)**
- After Joshua said that, I’ll bet they sang, “Standing on the Promises of God!” ☺
- Any idea how old Joshua was? Trusting God for courage is a lifelong practice.
- Here is a little “formula” to help us remember how to be strong and courageous:
 - **Pursue** God's PURPOSE (He has one for each of us)
 - **Proclaim** His PROMISES (to ourselves and others)
 - **Perceive** His PRESENCE (Remember He is ALWAYS with you)
 - **Prevail** through His Power (“I can do all things through Christ.” Phil. 4:13)
 - **Practice** His PRECEPTS (Trust and obey)
 - **Proceed** in faith (Move ahead with confidence in God’s direction)
- When we need courage, let’s put that formula into practice!

ⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong* (p. 24). Victor Books.

ⁱⁱ https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/James_Hudson_Taylor?utm_source=chatgpt.com

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong* (p. 24). Victor Books.