

Forward: Claiming the Life God Gave You
The Commission – Part 2 (Be Strong and Courageous)
Joshua 1:6-9

Introduction: Last week we looked at the first two of the three parts of God's commissioning of Joshua to lead the people into the promised land. In Joshua 1:1-4 we read,

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. (1:1-4)

The focus of that part of the commission was that God was telling Joshua to lead the people to go claim something He had already given them. Joshua was not charged with conquering and claiming whatever Joshua wanted, but rather, the specific territory that God had already deeded to Abraham and his descendants to be a mighty nation. Being everything belongs to the Lord, we can only claim what God has given, but if God has given it then we can indeed have confidence in claiming it ... more on that today!

The second part of the commission is seen in verse 5.

5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. (1:5)

Joshua had seen the significance of God being with Moses, so he likely well knew if God was with somebody, nobody else would be able to stand against them! After all, Joshua had spent more than forty years being mentored by Moses! However, for God to clarify that truth to Joshua, then follow it with a very clear promise to always be with him, was HUGE! If God is with us and for us, then who can be against us (Romans 8:31-39)? This promise from God also logically leads us right into the third part of His commission to Joshua—the command to be strong and courageous. God tells Joshua,

6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:6-9)

In a very short statement to Joshua, God repeated himself three times to be strong and courageous. In other words, there's no way Joshua could claim he didn't know! But what does it mean to be strong and courageous? It's interesting that God didn't define the terms, likely because Joshua already understood them correctly. However, given how little we see either one of these terms lived out in our culture, let me take a second to make sure we are on the same page with what they mean.

- (1) Strength is the ability to overcome resistance. It is an adaptive quality. When you fully use it, you gain more of it; however, it decreases when you don't.**
- (2) Courage is the determination to face that which seems to be greater than your strength. Because strength is adaptive, those who continually have more courage than strength consistently increase in both, but those who continually have less courage than strength decrease in both.**

So, with that as our understanding of the context of what God is commanding Joshua to have, let's unpackage it and go deeper into what God said to Joshua.

Proposition: In Joshua 1:6-9 God answers two key questions about his command to be strong and courageous.

The first key question God answers about His command to be strong and courageous is WHY.

- (1) God gives Joshua two reasons WHY he should be strong and courageous. (1:6, 9)**

The first reason WHY Joshua should be strong and courageous is that,

A. God promised to use Joshua to lead Israel to victory! (1:6)

- 1. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.**
2. The only thing more motivating than knowing something will work if you truly give it everything you got, is knowing that even if you mess up, it's still going to work! Imagine your job is to push a large object across a floor and if you don't get it across the floor nobody else can do their job and as such everybody fails. It would be really encouraging if somebody told you that they knew for sure you were strong enough, so just give it everything you got, and we will be just fine! However, imagine if right before you started to push it you thought, what if I twist my ankle? What if I pull my hamstring? What if I hit a bump? The fear of failure would start to kick in, and odds are, you wouldn't push as hard as you would have in fear that you might get hurt and fail. You would rationalize that it would be better to go slower with less effort and risk not moving the object in time, than it would be to risk

pushing it with everything you had and not finish. HOWEVER, imagine if your boss said he was going to guarantee the object got moved and he was just inviting you to work with him and push as hard as you can so you can truly enjoy the victory with him! If you know the victory is guaranteed whether you succeed or fail, then you should have no worries about giving it all your strength!

3. At this point, Joshua has to be wondering if he even has the ability to lead the people to fight. Remember, in Numbers 13 and 14 they wanted to kill Joshua and Caleb for suggesting they should go west across the Jordan and fight the people in the land of Canaan; add to that Joshua hasn't forgotten that they wouldn't follow the greatest leader in Israelite history either—Moses! Therefore, it's a really big deal for God to say I'm going to use you to lead the people to conquer and claim the land that I've given to you. God is saying, Joshua, you have every reason to lead Israel to go fight, even when it doesn't seem like you have the ability to win the people over to fight the battle, or have the ability to lead them to win the fight, because I'm the one guaranteeing your success at leading them! You can confidently apply all your strength as a leader to push against the resistance to go forward in to the promised land because I'm personally guaranteeing the outcome!

The second reason WHY Joshua should be strong and courageous is at the end of the commission in verse nine.

B. God promised to be with Joshua everywhere! (1:9)

1. **9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."**
2. In verse nine God emphasizes His command to be strong (use all your effort) and courageous (don't be afraid to put it all on the line) by highlighting what not to do – "**do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed.**"
3. Everybody likely has an idea of what it means to be "frightened." The Hebrew word has in its context an uncontrollable outward response caused by an inward rationalization that your circumstances are a threat to your well-being. It literally means to be shaking out of terror. **One of Venture's Associate Pastors loves making his staff feel this way! For instance, check out this 30 second video of Jenifer Primm's first day under his leadership!**
4. God also tells Joshua not to be dismayed. To be dismayed is to be brokenhearted or defeated because you feel like you can't win. There are going to be days in Joshua's leadership where he's going to think all is lost and that he can't get the job done. Not long after their first big victory they are going to suffer a defeat that absolutely tempted Joshua to be dismayed,

that is, to lay down and give up! But, in that moment the circumstances that of themselves should cause him to tremble in fear and to think all is lost, he could go back in his mind to this moment in his life and remember something that trumps his perspective on the circumstances of a truly embarrassing defeat in battle, and that was the promise that God was never going to leave Him!

5. I spent a lot of time on this last week and I've already mentioned it in the introduction to this sermon as well, so all I want you to think about here is the implications on Joshua's strength (the ability to give everything he's got in the effort to lead Israel to conquer and claim the land) and courage (to not let seemingly insurmountable odds of winning, nor even insurmountable resistance from your own people, to keep you from putting all your effort in to leading them to go forward!) from God assuring Joshua that He is with him.
6. This was a constant problem for the Israelites. Every time things got wonky, they started saying God had brought them out of Egypt and left them to die. Joshua never gave in to that temptation, but now He has a literal Word from the Lord to give His heart and mind every reason to never go there.
7. In the New Covenant in Christ, we have an even greater Word, because what we have has been given through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ; and that it includes the promise of the Holy Spirit who is working out God's will in and through our lives!
8. **14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ... 26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:14-16, 26-27)**
9. **11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)**

10. God doesn't leave His kids to their own demise. He may bring us into trials, but He doesn't do it to leave us; He does it to walk us through them. The trial you are in is there for His glory and your good, and therefore you can be assured He will not leave you while you're in it! Your trials nor your failures are going to frighten or dismay the King of the Universe!

The second key question God answers about His command to be strong and courageous is HOW.

(2) God told Joshua HOW to be strong and courageous successfully—strictly obey the Law God gave Moses! (1:7-8)

- A. You can win a game by playing it by the rules or you can win a game by cheating. The statement that cheaters never win is a lie! You can accomplish the right thing the wrong way and cover it up that you did it the wrong way. God, however, says that's unacceptable. A person who claims to be a follower of Jesus might be able to build a successful life the world's way, and possibly even die a prosperous and respected person from doing so, but that doesn't mean they have or will receive the blessings of God's life! When they stand before the judgement seat of Christ, they will at best watch all their life's work burned up as worthless hay and straw (1 Corinthians 3:11-15), or worse, find out they were not His at all (Matthew 7:21-23, Galatians 5:21); either way, they will have lived their life void of the experience of His Life! You don't get to bask in the blessings of God's life unless you live the way He commanded us to live!
- B. When it comes to Joshua, God is saying you can put all your strength into leading the Israelites to conquer and claim the land I've given them; you can even do it with all kinds of courage in the face of circumstances that would cause others to quit; but you still have to live the way I told you to live if you want to prosper in the victory I'm guaranteeing. As such, God reminded him HOW to do that in verses seven and eight. God says,
- C. **7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.**
- D. He then tells him how to be careful, that is, how to make sure he obeys all the law that Moses commanded. God does this first by commanding this,
- E. **8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, (1:8a)**
1. At this point the only books of the Bible that Joshua would have had were the ones originally written by Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They would be considered as one Book just as we consider the Old and New Testament as one book – the Bible.

2. That doesn't mean Joshua was supposed to walk around all day long speaking it, but rather it meant it was to be what dominated and defined Joshua's heart and mind, and therefore determined what came out of his mouth and life. Jesus echoed this truth when He said,
3. **18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, (Matthew 15:18)**
 - F. God then expounded on what He just commanded Joshua to do by specifically telling him how he could be defined and dominated by the Law. God says,
 - G. **but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (1:8b)**
 - H. In our teaching team meeting we drilled down on the meaning of the Hebrew word translated here as "meditate," and in doing so we saw a really cool template on what it means to truly meditate on God's Word in a transformational way.

Note: [There are two essentials for properly meditating on God's Word.](#)

[The first essential is that we ...](#)

1. **PONDER God's Word to understand how it tells us to interpret it.**
 - a. "meditate, ponder, give serious thought and consideration to selected information" ¹
 - b. Throughout history people, and at some point all of us, learn the words of the Bible but totally misunderstand them because we don't interpret them the way the Bible tells us to interpret them. There are a lot of Words in the Bible and if you don't interpret each word in it by what is taught in all the rest of it, then you will not correctly understand it.
 - c. For instance, we spent months studying the book of Galatians. In it we learned about a group of people known in church history as the Judaizers. They quoted the Bible all the time, however, they were totally incorrect in what they said the verses they were quoting taught. They were teaching Christians to obey the Mosaic Law, and were likely using Scriptures like Joshua 1:7-8 as their proof.

¹ Swanson, J. (1997). [Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew \(Old Testament\)](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

- d. Christ clearly taught that He had fulfilled and replaced the Old Testament Law with something better, and we know that not because a church Council stated it, but because the Apostles of Jesus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, infallibly and inherently wrote down that this is exactly what Jesus taught. For instance, in Galatians we read,
- e. **5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith ... 19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. ... 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:5, 19, 24-27)**
- f. Therefore, obeying the Law God gave Moses does not guarantee your success or prosperity as God just promised Joshua. The Law Joshua is being commanded to follow are a set of rules in a covenant God made with Moses, that if followed, would result in the Israelites prospering as the nation God promised to form them into regardless of what they did; the nation He formed to bring forth the one who would bless every nation—Jesus. However, both the Old Testament and New Testament clearly teach us that Christ fulfilled the covenant God made with Moses and replaced it with a new and better one that frees us from the curse of sin and death; that prison that keeps us from living and abounding in the eternal life of truly abiding in God.
- g. There are some similarities between some of the rules in the covenant God made with Moses and some of the expectations the New Testament tells us Christ has for us to abide in Him (i.e. that we love one another), but that doesn't mean we are still somehow under the covenant God made with Moses or the law that governed it. Christ's covenant is not a promise of national prosperity with religious rules and traditions to maintain it, but rather freedom from the prison of sin and death that separated us from God and His eternal life, as well as the ability to walk in His life now by living in obedient submission to the Holy Spirit.
- h. On the other hand, some read Galatians, Hebrews and other passages and books in the Bible focused on this subject, and then make the same incorrect conclusion a popular preacher in the United States recently made, and that is that the Old Testament doesn't have any practical purpose or value for a New Testament believer. But again, we don't meditate on the Scripture to get it to fit in to our logic, but we meditate

on it to properly understand it the way it tells us to understand it. To those who believe what this popular preacher said, Paul writes,

- i. **14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)**
- j. What Timothy was to continue in (3:14) was what he learned about the Gospel. There is no suggestion by Paul to Timothy that he needed to live under or by the Old Testament Law. However, Paul is clearly telling Timothy that all Scripture, including The Old Testament Law, when properly pondered and understood, helps people grow in their competency concerning the things of God, and as such, make a way for them to truly live in God's life!
- k. Therefore, when you read your Bible it's important to consider how the rest of the Bible weighs in on what you think is being taught in that passage. This is why a reliable study Bible or commentary can be so helpful. The Bible is a big book, and it can be a lot to ponder. Reliable Study Bibles like the ESV Study Bible or the Faithlife Study Bible, and commentaries like The New Bible Commentary or Calvin's Commentaries are so helpful. It's not that they have everything right and therefore we should believe whatever they wrote to be true, but because they are all trustworthy sources, they can help us properly consider what we are reading in God's Word.

This leads us to the second essential for properly meditating on God's Word.

2. PLOT your life according to what you learn from God's Word.

- a. The Hebrew word translated meditate can also be translated as, **"decide, weigh, i.e., make a judgment about something after a thought process" or to "plot, plan, i.e., to think and so decide a course of action."**²
- b. Its why Paul wrote,

² Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

- c. **2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)**
- d. Meditating on God's Word necessarily means we are going through the mental and emotional process of making sure it is in authority over the decisions of our life. Therefore, for instance, when we are trying to decide if something is moral or ethical, we should stop meditating on what society is telling us. Instead, meditate on what God's Word tells us then let what we properly interpret in context from His Word determine what is right and wrong. Morality and ethics are not determined by us! The Bible leaves no room for such thinking!
- e. This is why the Psalmist wrote,
- f. **1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (Psalm 1)**
- g. David wasn't implying in this Psalm that we shouldn't be friends with those who don't love and follow God, even Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. What David is saying in this Psalm is that we should not let the counsel of a sinful world, that is the rationality of a sinful world; the lifestyles (ways) of a sinful world; or the aspirations ("the seat") of a sinful world, be what plots our life or determines our perspectives on morality and ethics, but rather, the Word of God alone! The New Testament is equally clear concerning this truth.
- h. **5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:5-10)**

CHALLENGE: Christ's death and resurrection guarantee our right to be God's children. However, our daily effort to trust and obey Him determines how we experience that life now. What describes your faith and obedience to Christ – strong and courageous or frightened and dismayed?

God was going to use Joshua to lead the Israelites to conquer and claim the land, the only question was how the experience of God doing that was going to play out in their lives.

Have things ever worked out just fine for you despite the fact you spent the entire trial locked up by fear? Instead of getting to the other side stronger and better prepared for the next trial, you instead got to the other side weaker, miserable and an emotional train wreck! You could have arrived with gratefulness and excitement; instead, you arrived with trembling and shame.

Keri and I are both carriers of one of the most severe genetic mutations of the gene that causes cystic fibrosis. The entire time Keri was pregnant with Ari I was sick with fear. My lack of strength and courage had no bearing on whether my son was going to be born with cystic fibrosis or not, but it had everything to do with my experience of waiting on God, and unfortunately my wife's experience as well. Instead of getting to go through that trial with a person living with strength and courage to face whatever God had for us; instead of having a cheerleader encouraging her through her own trials, she often had to deal with the negative weight of my struggle to trust God. Because I so often lacked the courage to put all my strength into trusting the Lord with whatever He wanted to do, I found myself angry at God for making us face this trial, worried sick that I would have to watch our newborn son struggle to breath his entire life and die as a young teenager.

We adopted our middle child from Africa therefore there was little to no chance that she could have cystic fibrosis because it's generally a genetic trait in Caucasians. However, Ari and Remi both had a 25% chance of contracting the disease, and a 50% chance of carrying the disease like Keri and I, but in the end, it wasn't God's will for them to contract the disease or even carry it. Eight years after Ari was born and four years after we got to adopt Ada, I went through the Keri's pregnancy with Remi a lot differently than I went through her pregnancy with Ari, but clearly God wasn't depending on my faith for the outcome of either—He had already determined that! However, my experience in Keri's pregnancy with Ari was in no way what God offered through a relationship with Him. It was in no way described by the fruit of going through it with strength and courage.

Every moment of your life is an opportunity to face it with the strength and courage to trust and obey God. As such, no matter what the circumstances become, we have the opportunity to thrive in the eternal life of God; in His Light, joy, and peace! What are you experiencing?