

Weekly Reflection – Joshua (part2) “Be Strong and Courageous”

Joshua chapter one teaches us several things about courage and how to be courageous.

A Clear Assignment from God

Number one, courage rests upon a clear assignment from God. There is no such thing as courage apart from a mission. You are not just courageous for the sake of being courageous. You are courageous for something. God comes to Joshua and He says: **“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.” (Joshua 1:2 ESV)** Just like God gave Joshua a clear call, He has given you and I a clear call. The question is, “What is the call, or assignment, God has given to you?” There are some clear assignments He’s given you. (Husband or wife, parent, church member, school, workplace, etc...) And these are specific to you, your spouse, your children, your workplace, your neighbors, your gift to be used at your local church.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10 ESV) Good works (assignments, missions, calls) that God has for you and me to do. That you and I “should” do. That implies obligation. There are good works that God has prepared ahead of time and right at the right time, those good works for you intersect, that you should (obligation) walk in them. Secondly, it implies choice. You do not have to, but you will miss your moment. What are the things that God has called you to do? What are they? Find it. Your courage will rise when you have confidence in the call.

The Need for Obedience

Courage rests on and is anchored in obedience to God’s Word. **“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. 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.” (Joshua 1:7-8 ESV)** Now, notice the pronoun. He does not say, “Then I will make your way prosperous.” No, He says, **“Then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success”** (Joshua 1:8). Success or failure of a mission is tied to your relationship to truth. When we are obedient and follow the truth of the Word of God we will have good success in the assignment God has given us.

I see three things in these verses that help us to be courageous and obedient to the Word of God. First, **“this Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth.”** Proclaim it, speak it, talk about it, ask questions about it. Second, He says, **“but you shall meditate on it day and night.”** Meditate is a word which can be translated “a dull sound.” It is the background noise of your life. When we meditate on the Word of God then the Word of God will come out of our mouths. Third He says, **“being careful to do according to all the law”** and **“be careful to do according to all that is written.”** We must not be hearers only of the Word but doers of the Word. When you know you are being obedient to God’s Word it is much easier to be courageous.

The Assurance of God’s Presence

Courage rests upon the assurance of God’s presence. **“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.” (Joshua 1:5 ESV)** **“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 1:9 ESV) God never calls us to anything apart from Him. God never hands out solo missions, only missions that He is involved with. Second, this assignment is not just a job for you to do for God, it is an avenue to be with God, the assignment is where God is, the assignment is God’s means of sanctifying you. God gives assignments to be with us and make us more like Jesus.

Is God just referring to His omnipresence or is there something more personal going on here? I don’t believe God is reminding Joshua that He is everywhere all the time. I believe He is promising Joshua that just like He was with Moses in a very personal, intimate, and tangible way, He will be with Joshua. Here is what I mean...Consider the difference between God’s omnipresence and His manifest presence. God’s omnipresence is His attribute of being everywhere at once. He is omnipresent even when we do not experience His presence; He is here, even if we do not recognize Him. God’s manifest presence is when the fact that He is with us is made clear and convincing.

The fact that God is omnipresent may or may not result in a special experience on our part. However, God’s manifest presence is the result of His interaction with us overtly and unmistakably. It is when we experience God. God makes Himself known in an experiential way.

Should we trust in God’s omnipresence, even when we don’t feel He is with us? Absolutely. God, who cannot lie, says that He is everywhere all of the time. Should we also seek God’s manifest presence? Absolutely. It’s not that we rely on feelings or that we seek after a sign, but we should want to manifestly experience and be with God.

John 14 describes who God will manifest Himself to by His Holy Spirit. ***“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”*** Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ***“Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?”*** Jesus answered him, ***“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:21-23 ESV)*** God desires to manifest Himself to us but He places conditions upon His manifest presence. One of the major differences between the omnipresence and His manifest presence is that there is no condition placed upon his omnipresence. The manifest presence: however, has conditions to it as we read in John 14. What are the conditions to God’s manifest presence? Obedience.

Focused Determination

Courage rests upon focused determination. Listen to what he says to him. He says: ***Be strong and courageous (verse 6). Only be strong and very courageous (verse 7). Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous (verse 9).*** God is telling Joshua to be courageous because the mission is not going to be easy. This assignment will take hard work, determination, and intentionality. God says, “Here’s the location, go.” They’re not going to say, “Oh, here come the Jews. They’re going to take our land, let’s just give it them.” You’re going to be shot at. In the words of Elizabeth Elliott, “Jesus Christ has not called us to a playground; he’s called us to a battlefield.” There’s real warfare. That’s why the call to be strong and courageous. It takes focused determination.

What are the practical implications for us today of God’s call to Joshua 3,500 years ago?

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to

observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:16-20 ESV) There is an unmistakable parallel between the commissioning of Joshua to enter the promised land and the commissioning of Christ’s disciples (us) to enter the whole earth. As Moses’ death left Joshua in charge of Israel, the ascension of Jesus left the church in the hands of the disciples of Jesus. As Joshua’s commission launched Israel’s crossing into Canaan, Jesus’ Great Commission in Matthew 28 commissioned the church “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). That is why we must be strong and courageous.

I know the literal words be strong and courageous are not in the Great Commission, but the idea is clearly there. Jesus book ends the Great Commission with two statements that very clearly are meant to encourage and equip us to be strong and courageous. ***“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” “And, behold, I am with you always.”*** When Jesus says, “I am with you always,” I do not believe He is only talking about His omnipresence, I believe He is talking about His manifest presence. I believe He is saying, “When you step out and go to make disciples I will show up and make Myself known to you, I will show up and give you what you need in that moment.”

LET’S BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS!