

## Weekly Reflection – Courageous Surrender (Joshua 5:13-15)

How important is courage if we are going to live our lives following Jesus? Can we obediently follow Jesus without being courageous? “Christian courage is the willingness to say and do the right thing regardless of the earthly cost, because God promises to help you and save you on account of Christ.” (John Piper) Because there will always be cost to following Jesus, following Jesus will always require courage.

We need to recognize that there are not three groups of people, those who are the courageous type, the cowards, and than normal people. You are either courageous or a coward. When you and I live courageous lives it glorifies God, but when we live as cowards it belittles God. Those are the two options.

### What does God think about courage?

Let's go back again to the first time Joshua visited Jericho in Numbers 13-14. Moses has sent out the twelve spies to scout out the Promised Land. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, came back ready for Israel to go in and take the land, they believe God's promises and power. The other ten spies came back full of fear because the people and the cities are too big and too fortified. All twelve spies went to the same places and saw the same things. Who would Israel listen to? This is Israel's response when the spies came back from scouting out Jericho and the Promised Land: ***“Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.””*** (Numbers 14:1-4 ESV) Is that a courageous response or a cowardly response?

This is God's view of that cowardly response: ***“And the Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.””*** (Numbers 14:11-12 ESV) The people were grumbling, they were scared, and they wanted to go back to Egypt. God's response was, “Why do you despise Me? Why have you stopped believing in Me?”

God has a very high view of courage and a very low view of cowardice. Courageous people, like Joshua and Caleb, trust God; they trust His promises, they trust His power, they trust His character to do what He says He will do. Cowardly people do not trust God; they don't trust that God can and will do what He says He will do. At this point, I hope we desire to be courageous and not cowards.

### How can I be courageous?

To be truly courageous you need to do the most courageous thing you have ever done and surrender. Surrender is the most courageous thing you can do and it's how you will become courageous. We don't typically associate courage or victory with surrender. Surrender is usually viewed as a sign of defeat and weakness. When we hear God command over and over to be strong and courageous you probably don't start thinking about surrender. But what if surrender really is the key to living a courageous life? Joshua lived a lifestyle of surrender and that is why he was courageous.

### Joshua 5:13-15

***“When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?”” (Joshua 5:13 ESV)*** At least from a manly standpoint this is really remarkable. This man is standing in front of Joshua with a drawn sword, that means the man is ready for action, ready to fight. Remember who this man is? It’s the Son of God making Himself seen before the incarnation. This is an appearance of Jesus prior to Him being born in Bethlehem. So, Jesus, the Commander of the army of the Lord, is standing there with His sword drawn, and 80-year-old Joshua, not knowing yet that this is the Son of God, went up to Him. What does it mean, “went up”? That’s a metaphor. That’s a way of saying Joshua went up and challenged him. “Are you for us or against us?” In other words, he’s saying you have two options. You can either fight me to the death or bow the knee to me and be part of my army, because I’m the general. My point with this is that Joshua is not acting scared, or timid, or weak. Joshua is acting courageously.

Now let’s see how this courageous man acts next to see where his courage is coming from. ***“And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my Lord say to his servant?”” (Joshua 5:14 ESV)*** Joshua says, I’ve given you two choices. And the man says, I reject them both. And Joshua hits the dirt and worships, and he says, command me. There’s immediate surrender. There is no, “God this is what I would like you to do so that we can get this victory.” There is no, “God I’ll do that if ...” Or “I’ll do that when...” Joshua does not say, “Lord, I am your servant and here is what I need you to do for me.” Too often we attempt to make Jesus our servant and forget He is the Master; He is the Commander. There is only surrender, “What does my Lord say to His servant?”

The victory over Jericho happens because of courageous surrender. It didn’t happen because Joshua prayed for God to join them and help them overcome Jericho. We will see that the victory happens because Joshua, and Israel, surrender to the the Lordship of Jesus.

### How does surrender lead to courage?

When we surrender, we are placing ourselves with God, with the Commander of the army of the Lord. Can you think of a place that would be safer? ***“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.” (Psalm 121:1-8 ESV)*** When we surrender to God, we are placing ourselves in the protection of God Almighty. Not only will His strength and power protect us, but we are guided and directed by His wisdom. Is there someone else you would feel safer with telling you how to live your life? ***“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32 ESV)***