

“The Secret to Courage”

The majority of people here know I grew up in Southern California. I've told Nikki before that if I knew how awesome Texas was, I would have met you and moved to Texas immediately. Well, on the mean shores of Southern California it doesn't snow very much. All this ice and snow and dripping of faucets was new to us when we moved here 7 years ago. Whenever we encounter a cold week where there is snow or ice, I do a great job and preparing and gathering everything we would need. I remember in 2021 during the snowpocalypse, some of the people in my previous church were chopping up and burning their furniture in the fireplace to stay warm. If you were like us, we lost power for a solid seven days straight. We had literally an hour of power a day. The temperature inside our house got down to 37 degrees. This past week we were hunkered down inside and didn't go anywhere because of the cold and all the ice. I did my normal preparations to make sure our generator was running, we had gas, had plenty of food and more. However, this is the first time we have been snowed in with five people in the house. So, by Monday all of our storm snacks were gone. Did anyone eat all your storm snacks too early too? We were out of milk, almost out of bread and eggs and the dog's biscuits were almost done. So, I had to venture into the tundra. I didn't want to drive because it was solid ice so I decided to walk the half mile to the Mexican grocery store around the corner from here. I got 6 bags of groceries and walked the half mile back. I got what I needed but it wasn't easy. The on Tuesday, Gabe needed to go to work in Grand Prairie and Dahlia needed to be at work in Cedar Hill. The roads were still bad. Monday night I was calling auto parts stores thinking I might be able to walk to one and get some snow chains just to make all the driving a little safer. Well, Monday night I went out to double check my tire size and I noticed they were snow rated. I didn't buy these tires; they came with the van when we bought it not too long ago. I went on google and YouTube and started seeing all these videos of these tires on ice, going up hill, going through roundabouts and having zero issues. Most of my stress started going away. Then I take Dahlia to work Tuesday morning and if you saw my Facebook post this past week you saw me post a picture of my tires. Michelin Cross Climate 2's are the only tires I will ever buy again. I was going 30 miles an hour up the hill here on Main Street. I was driving through snow and ice, and my car didn't slip or slide once. I was getting so comfortable I even took a phone call. I talked to my friend in California and started talking about my tires! I told Nikki and she was like, "That's awesome. Hey since you are so comfortable, can you run to the post office for me?" Friends, I don't have to be afraid of snowy days anymore. As long as I have my Michelins, I'm good.

Today, I want to share a message with you titled "The Secret to Courage." I have no trouble driving in snow because of my tires. Well, we should have no fear in life because of our Jesus. The term "courageous" is honestly not that popular in the Scripture. Most of the time when we see the word courageous in the Bible it is centered around the character Joshua. If you have your Bible, go with me to the book of Joshua. I want to read one of the most famous portions of Scripture on courage.

As you are turning there just a note on Joshua. Joshua is best known as being the successor of Moses. Talk about big shoes to fill. Joshua wasn't just following a leader; he was following a legend. Joshua wasn't given an easy task from the Lord. Joshua was responsible for taking two million people into the Promised Land. It was a land that was already occupied so that meant battles, wars, and difficulty ahead. That is a topic for another sermon but think about that. The

Promised Land was the fulfillment of the promise of God over the Israelites. And yet the fulfilled promise had battles. I am convinced that so many Christians fail in different areas of life because they don't know what to do with victory. They get too quickly discouraged because after achieving something they have prayed about for years, they discover the difficulty is still there. This is why the story of Joshua is so profound. Joshua was not like Moses who came from the palace in Egypt. Joshua was a slave. Joshua experienced deliverance from bondage through God's supernatural power. Now he is in a position to take the lead from Moses and step into an occupied territory to take possession of it. No pressure. It makes a lot of sense why God told Joshua over and over again, "Be strong and courageous."

Joshua was able to succeed in the promised land because 1. He got passed his past. 2. He had vision in the wilderness. 3. He wasn't discouraged by difficulty in the fulfilled promise. Let's dive into Joshua chapter one beginning in verse one:

Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. 5 No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have 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 success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

– Joshua 1:1-9NASB1995

I love websters dictionary definition of "courage." The definition of courage according to Webster is "Mental or moral *strength* to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." This is a great definition in light of the Hebrew definition of courageous here in Joshua 1. The Hebrew word for courageous is *amets* which means to strengthen. A longer definition is "to be strong, alert, courageous, brave, bold, and solid." Being courageous means to have the strength to withstand fear, danger, or difficulty." One thing that is very certain is that you only tell someone to be courageous if they are in fact not acting very courageous. I find great comfort in how many times the Lord had to tell Joshua to be strong and courageous.

It is very interesting that the word in Hebrew for courageous is used 41 times and the word for Strong which is *chazaq* is used 293 times. The word courageous in the Bible seems to point more toward mental strength where the word for "strong" here in the Hebrew seems to lean more towards physical strength. God is telling Joshua to be strengthened physically and mentally as he leads the people towards their destiny.

Something I want you to notice in this text is the ratio between God's commandment and God's promise. In verse 2 God commands Joshua to arise and take the people into the Promised Land. Then in verses 3-5 God lists one promise after another. Then in verse 6 God gives Joshua another command, be strong and courageous. Every time God gives Joshua a command it is followed with a promise. He tells Joshua to meditate on the Word of God day and night and if he did this, he would make his way prosperous and find success.

Joshua had every reason to be afraid. His whole life was lived in slavery. He never had to take leadership in something because he was always told what to do. Joshua was now in charge of two million people. Let's be honest, these people were not the easiest to deal with. They were complainers and often prone to turn away from God. Now I don't have to sit here and explain why fear is such a bad thing in our culture today. But I do want you to think about something. How many dreams went unfilled because of a lack of courage? How many commands of God were disobeyed because of a lack of courage? How many spiritual battles were lost to the enemy because of a lack of courage?

Lacking courage can have devastating consequences. It reminds me of the cruise ship captain Francesco Schettino (sket-tino). He was in command of the ship *Costa Concordia* and while cruising just off the Italian Island Giglio the vessel struck a rock. The captain as showing off by cruising way too close to land. The ship capsized and 32 people were killed. The shocking part of the story was that the captain was not the last person off the ship. Everyone knows if the vessel is in danger, it is the captain's responsibility to be the last one off the vessel to ensure the safety of all on board. The captain refused to get back on the ship and do his job. The captain was eventually convicted and is serving 16 years in prison for manslaughter. The local newspapers gave him the nickname "Chicken of the Sea."

Now I don't know about you, but one day when I face God in heaven I don't want to stand before my Maker and give one excuse after another. I want to face God one day with joy knowing I did everything in my good conscience to obey His commands and live with courage in a dark world. I know it is not easy to live with courage in this day and age. It is not easy, but it is worth it.

Reasons You Are Walking in Fear:

POINT #1 – You believe you are Alone.

The whole reason the Israelites could go into the Promised Land was because God had given it. Notice God told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous" but right after in verse nine God said, "And the Lord your God is *with you* wherever you go. I love that the Scripture here says, "The *Lord* your God." "God" here in Hebrew is the word *Elohim* which is a general name for God meaning "Maker, Creator, or Strong." The word here for "Lord" here is the Hebrew word *Jehovah* or *Yahweh* which is more personal and speaks more on intimacy. It is important for us to realize that God is both powerful and personal. He is both infinite and intimate. You have to understand both.

As I was studying this verse something jumped out at me that I had not realized before. Verse nine say that God would be with us *wherever* we go. I think it is safe to say that none of us are perfect.

Some of us have gone to places we shouldn't have gone. But the Scripture here said, God will go with us *wherever* go...even if where we go is a bad place. God is with you in the fear. God is with you in the failure. God is with you in the frustration. Your door to a personal victory in your life begins with the understanding that God is always with you *wherever* you go. His mercies are new every morning. If you are wanting to live a more courageous life, it begins with the recognition that you are not alone. You are only able to fulfill what God has called you to because He is with you. The next time you are afraid or dealing with anxiety, declare out loud, "God thank You that You are with me." Let's say that right now, repeat after me, "God, thank You, that you are with me." See how easy that was? Do that 10 times a day and see how much your life changes.

POINT #2 – You believe God is not Able.

In Numbers 13 Moses sends spies into the Promised Land to scope it out. They all come back with fearful report that there were giants in the land. All except Caleb and Joshua. They came back with a positive report. The main issue with their situation was that the people were not trusting in God's ability. They were trusting in their ability. They cried out to Moses saying, "*We are not able, they are too strong for us.*" Nowhere in their cry did they acknowledge that God was able to do far more than they could imagine. Here is the human dilemma. Even though the Israelites had seen God supernaturally deliver them from Egypt, even though God was supernaturally providing food for them every day, and even though a literal pillar of fire was guiding them through the wilderness they did not believe God was able because of their current problem. We have to be careful that we do not fall into the same trap. Every person in this room has seen God move and do mighty things in their lives. But sometimes our current reality eclipses God's ability. The Apostle Paul says something remarkable to the Ephesians in chapter three. Ephesians 3:20-21 says,

20 "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." – Ephesians 3:20-21 NASB1995

I want you to notice that according to Paul here in Ephesians, God's power doesn't just work around us, but it works in us. We can just pray prayers like, "Lord, I believe You are able, please remove this problem from my life." We need to pray prayers like, "Father, I believe You are able, and here I am, use me." God is able, but sometimes God wants to be able *through you*.

POINT #3 – You believe the Accuser.

One of the biggest lies that the enemy will try to convince you of is that God is not able. He will also try to convince you that you are not able. The enemy loves to plant lies in your head that are connected to your emotions. No one here has ever let their emotions get the best of them, right? Just like in Numbers 13 with the spies, you have the option of believing the good report or the bad report. You will walk in fear if you begin to believe the wrong report which is the lies of the enemy.

God knows that Joshua is going to face one nation after another in his conquest of the Promised Land. God needed Joshua to understand His favor before he began fighting. I hope you are

hearing me this morning. Before you go to fight, understand God's favor. Verse five of our text this morning says, "No man will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. For just as I was with Moses, so shall I be with you." Joshua went into battle knowing that God would have the victory. Joshua went into the Promised Land knowing God's favor went before them.

The question then is how do we do that? Our text this morning gives us the answer. Right after God tells Joshua that no man will be able to stand against them, He commands Joshua to meditate on the Word of God day and night AND to do all that is according to it. The Scripture here says, *then* Joshua will make his way prosperous and find success. Meditating on the Word of God is vital for so many reasons. The first is that we are commanded to. We don't need any other reason to study the Scriptures other than God said to do it. But one of the incredible benefits of studying the Word is that you will always hear the voice of God. It is 100% accurate at allowing you to hear God's voice. Why is this important? Because we are emotional people. Because we are tired. Because the world is in chaos. There are going to be so many moments in our lives where we can't seem to find God. Maybe we let our hearts grow cold with sin. Maybe we allowed fear to rule and now we can't see God in all of our bad circumstances. If you can't feel God or if you cannot see God in your current situation, always remember that at any time, you can always *hear* God if you have His Word. Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden Your Word in my heart." Imagine how fear would be removed from your life if you hid the Word of God in your heart. Imagine how much more courageous you would be if you hid the Word of God in your heart.