

# Be Strong and Very Courageous

by

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***“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.” Joshua 1:7 (ESV)***

Men, I ask you to do yourself a favor and read the book of Joshua. It is an amazing chronicle of the Israelites taking and occupying the Promised Land that God had promised to Abraham’s descendants over 400 years earlier. It is also a story of God raising up a new leader to take those people beyond the Jordan and into the Land of Canaan. This leader I speak of was Joshua, and he is a real hero to me even to this day. In fact, if there were a spirit of a man that I would cherish in my own life other than the Spirit of Jesus, it would be to have the spirit of Joshua in me. He was a man of faith. He was also highly respected by the people he served, such as Moses, and then the people he later led. But, what stands out the most to me is that Joshua was a man of courage and I love courageous people. I especially love to see someone display the courage required to live out their faith in Christ to a world around them that will persecute them for having this faith. I love to see the courage of a man to love his wife as Christ loves the Church, and to embrace his children like the *Prodigal Father* did when his son came back home. I love it when I see men and women living a life of radical faith in God, when everyone around them thinks they are crazy. You see, I think this kind of courage to do these things that I’m speaking of is not the shallow representation of courage we see when someone fights or beats someone up in a movie. It is not a man who is able to walk into a cage fight and stand against another man. No, that’s *Little League* courage compared to a man who is willing to forgive a wife who has cheated on him and have the courage to restore her to his heart, and love her like Hosea did his unfaithful wife, or how Jesus loves us, His unfaithful Bride. That takes real courage, and not the kind this world gives us. But there is also the wife who does the same for her unfaithful husband, or a powerful man who can break another man into two pieces, but he instead turns the other cheek and blesses him. Real courage! Or a man to be wronged in many ways by another man, but has the courage not to take revenge or curse the man when he has an opportunity....this is real courage. This kind of courage is created in a man by a deep purpose God puts within him. It is obvious that Joshua had battlefield courage. But he also had this deeper courage I speak of, and it makes me want to be like him.

As I think of the characteristic of courage as being a “stand-out” for Joshua, it seems almost paradoxical that God would tell Joshua to be courageous, don’t you think? One would think it came naturally, even easily for Joshua .... that he was born with it. But, in the passage above we see an exhortation by God to Joshua to be courageous, even to be **very** courageous. It appears that God felt it necessary to speak to this specific need with Joshua, and I think it is because this great courage that defined Joshua’s life was, like most of us, was not something that came easily for him, or even naturally. In fact, I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that it was an area of weakness that God had to shore up in helping Joshua lead His people, for this courage would be tested as never before in Joshua’s life when he crossed the Jordan. Now many people would argue that Joshua had enough courage to stand

against popular opinion when he, along with another spy called Caleb, would encourage the Israelite people to go and take the land 40 years prior to the crossing of the Jordan River. They would say that he demonstrated he was a courageous man earlier in his life. I would agree that he had tremendous courage even then. But what I said is that I didn't think this courage came easily for him. I think like most of us, he had to dig down deep for the courage to trust God in the radical manner required of him and this kind of faith is not summoned by us without a fight. That is why God was exhorting him. No, this kind of faith requires a great amount of courage through the abandonment of our life and rights to our self in order to trust our King in such a way that we don't build an escape route if He doesn't show up. This kind of courage can be summoned up if we will require it of ourselves, and not lose heart if it takes time to come. It is something that Christ clearly requires if we want to be His disciple, and it is obvious that Joshua required it of himself. But it doesn't come easily. However, the rewards are great. As a result of Joshua being willing to trust God in radical ways, he was chosen by Him to lead His people to their Promised Land. Still, God saw the need to exhort Joshua to be courageous. Why is this?

I think most of us agree that the greatest demonstration of our courage has been only in our minds. I can't tell you how many battles I've won in my mind. I've been real courageous in that safe place, similar to the numerous hole-in-ones I've had in my mind, or the many sub-par rounds of golf I've had. If a guy could win every tournament by simply visualizing a golf course in his mind and playing around with a fantasy game in his thoughts, it would be me. In fact, in my mind I was never afraid of a water hazard or going out of bounds on a tight course or going for it on a dangerous shot. But the truth is, I've never had a hole-in-one or shot a sub-par round of golf. However, in the true test on the golf course when I faced those hazards, I became afraid of them. I couldn't visualize a great shot, for I saw only in my mind that I would hit it wide and in the water. Sure enough, and I believe most golfers will attest to this truth, most shots we are afraid of cause us to clench up and wind up doing the very thing we fear. It was only when I was confident and courageous that I pulled off the great shot of my dreams. This seemed to be a necessary ingredient to something that is greater than normal. In the same manner, I think God was preparing Joshua with the truth that leadership on the front lines of a battlefield is different than leading a discussion about war in the officer's club. It would be in the thick of battle that Joshua's true courage to lead and fight would stand strong or fail. God was shoring Joshua up for his role in leading God's people into the battles of their life. So, what else did God say to Joshua that would give him the assurance that he would need? After all, in order to be courageous some kind of assurance is required, wouldn't you think? Joshua was given this assurance and it is the best any man could ask for. Read it yourself:

***“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)***

***“..for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*** I will tell you this. There is a limited amount of courage that we can summon up personally as men. Some can do more than others. Even so, at best we are limited, and this limited courage will fail under certain pressures. There are many former POW's who will tell you that it is near impossible to not be broken and information given, even though they tried with everything within them not to give in. They were courageous men. But they still broke. Joshua would also have broken under the strain of leadership had he not had the assurance of God's presence in his life, and it was the assurance of God's presence with him that made him courageous. The closer he felt God's presence and assurance, the greater the courage he was able to have, and the better his leadership. There is a correlation. Great courage for Christian men in their leadership roles comes directly from the strength of our relationship with Christ. The closer we walk with Him, the greater our wisdom, the greater our courage, and the better our leadership becomes. This is why we

often see the greatest courage by Christian men being demonstrated while they are under the greatest duress and the greatest challenges. They shine. If we dig down more deeply we will find that it is because they are more closely connected to Christ. Because they are more aware of their need for Him and His presence in their life, the greater their pursuit is of Him. They find Him more intimately in the midst of their trials, and as a result they become courageous men, as God defines it.

So my question is why wait until you have your back against the wall to find this out? Why not get in His presence right now, and allow Him to begin a steady process of developing you into a man of courage and a man that can face anything that is thrown at you? He is telling His men over and over, "Come to ME and find what you are longing for."

A few days after Joshua heard God's instructions to mount up and take the land, he was given the battle plan for taking down the walls of Jericho. It required Joshua and his men to march around the city of Jericho once every day for six days with seven priests carrying ram's horns in front of the Ark. On the seventh day they were to march around it seven times, and then the priests were to blow the ram's horns and the people were to shout. I don't know about you but I would have been concerned as to how the people would have received that battle plan when I told it to them? I could see how some people would be skeptical. But, I also know this. If Joshua showed his fear and doubt about this plan God had given to him, the people would have picked up on it, and they would have lost courage themselves. All leaders lead in both good and bad ways alike, and their team either gets a benefit or a curse for following a good leader or a bad leader. Joshua was a good leader and instead of frightening the people with God's plan, his faith and courage infused courage into the people, and as a result the walls of Jericho fell down before them and they ran in and conquered the city. In the same way, Christian men are able to lead their family and infuse courage in them to also be courageous, by living out courageous lives before them. Dads, this kind of courage is only found by living in close proximity to Christ. Do you see what your next step needs to be, so that you can be this kind of leader in your home? Take a step toward Him. He is waiting for you.