



▶ *Strong and Courageous* ◀

JOSHUA'S COURAGE WAS GROUNDED IN THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S TRUSTWORTHINESS.

JOSHUA 1:1-11,16-18

Russell Kelso Carter was a professor at the Pennsylvania Military Academy in 1886 when he wrote “Standing on the Promises.” For well over a century this great hymn has been sung by believers all over the world. Why? Because its lyrics remind believers that God is trustworthy and His promises “cannot fail.” Consequently, those who are trusting in God “cannot fall.” Joshua discovered these truths and grounded his courage in the assurance of God’s trustworthiness.

 **What makes a person trustworthy?**

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOSHUA 1:1-18

There are few things more intimidating than being the replacement of a person in leadership who is revered by those whom he led and is the only leader they have ever known. This was the situation when God called Joshua to be Moses's replacement and lead Israel into the promised land.

The Lord providentially prepared Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. He was raised by Pharaoh's daughter and thus grew up knowing the ways of the Egyptians and the plight of the Israelites. God providentially moved him to Midian, where he learned the ways of the wilderness. Then God commissioned him to become His leader and bring Israel out of Egypt. God performed many wondrous miracles through Moses. At Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the law to give to the people. Exodus 33:11 states, "The LORD would speak to Moses face to face."

When God called Joshua to be Moses's replacement, humanly speaking, Joshua had every reason to be intimidated. He had witnessed many of the things God did through Moses. However, as with Moses, God had prepared Joshua for his task. Joshua had led the Israelites into battle and witnessed God give them victory (Ex. 17:9-13). He accompanied Moses part way up Mount Sinai when Moses went alone to the top to receive God's law, and he returned with Moses when Moses confronted Israel and its sin (24:13-18; 32:15-20). From the time he was a young man, Joshua served as Moses's assistant until Moses's death (33:11). Furthermore, Joshua along with Caleb were the only two spies who saw the promised land and believed that God would give it to them (Num. 14:6-10). Finally, just before Moses's death, God told Moses that Joshua had His Spirit in him. He instructed Moses to bring Joshua before the high priest and the entire community of Israel to lay his hands on him and commission him to be his replacement (Num. 27:18-22).

God's assignment for Joshua would be different in nature from what Moses's assignment had been. Nonetheless, as with Moses, God providentially prepared Joshua for the task before him. Therefore, there was every reason for Joshua to trust the Lord and be strong and courageous.



As you read Joshua 1:1-11,16-18, note God's words of encouragement. Consider how these words impacted Joshua.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

GOD'S PROMISE (JOSH. 1:1-5)

¹ After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's assistant: ² "Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. ³ I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses. ⁴ Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great river, the Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea. ⁵ No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or abandon you."

VERSE 1

Deuteronomy 34:1-8 records Moses's death. Moses had led Israel for forty years, and during that time Moses and Joshua became close. For instance, in Numbers 13:16, Moses changed Joshua's name from Hoshea, meaning "deliverance," to the name Joshua, which means "Yahweh saves." In the Greek traditions of the Old Testament, it is the same name as Jesus in the New Testament. Joshua's name foreshadows how the Lord Himself would deliver the Israelites from their enemies.

What's more, God had instructed Moses to be a mentor and encourager to Joshua because the Lord had chosen him to be Moses's successor (Deut. 3:21-22,28). Joshua learned to assist before becoming the leader. It is also significant that ***the LORD spoke to Joshua***. This demonstrated it was time for Joshua to take on the mantle of leadership. Just as God had personally spoken to Moses to instruct him on what he should do concerning Israel, the Lord was now doing the same with Joshua as He spoke to him.

VERSES 2-3

The Israelites mourned Moses's death for thirty days east of the Jordan River in the plains of Moab. After that, it was time for Joshua and the people to prepare to cross over the Jordan and enter Canaan. Although it may appear to be an obvious statement, God's pointing out that Moses His servant was dead was a way of saying the time for mourning was over. There was still more to be done. Moses's death may have marked the passing of the greatest leader

Israel had ever known, but God's promises and plans for His people lived on. Many centuries before, the Lord had promised Abraham that He would give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan. Now was time for it to happen. As the Lord was ready to fulfill His promise by giving the Israelites the land, His people needed to be ready to follow Him by crossing over the Jordan and receiving it.

The beginning of verse 3, ***I have given***, is connected to the end of verse 2, ***I am giving***. The Lord was emphasizing that the land the Israelites were about to conquer and inherit was His gift to His people. This is a major theme in the book of Joshua. Giving His covenant people the promised land of Canaan was an expression of God's grace. Therefore, they needed to understand that they themselves would not and could not be able to take it themselves, even though God would use human agents to bring it to fruition. What's more, using both the present and past tense together here recognizes that, while the Israelites were presently receiving this gift, the land had already belonged to them since God declared it so. This concept began back in Genesis when God promised the land to Abraham (Gen 15:18; 35:12). Israel had been waiting on God's timing to possess what was already theirs.

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VERSES 4-5

These words closely echo the words God spoke when He described the land to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-20. The statement, ***No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live***, repeats almost verbatim much of what God promised the people through Moses in Deuteronomy 11:25a. By carefully repeating these statements in this way, God was assuring Joshua and the people that He would be faithful to keep the promises He had made.

What God promised Joshua in the second part of verse 5 must have comforted Joshua and filled him with confidence at the same time. God promised, ***I will be with you, just as I was with Moses***. God made the same promise to Moses when He commissioned Moses to lead His people out of Egypt (Ex. 3:12). Joshua's memories of seeing what God did through Moses surely helped Joshua understand the meaning and weight of this promise. Also, God promised that He would ***not leave*** or ***abandon*** Joshua.

Joshua's success depended on the presence of God. This means the Lord would be an ever-present, faithful helper to Joshua.



How have you experienced God's faithfulness?

JOSHUA'S ASSIGNMENT (JOSH. 1:6-11)

⁶ **“Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their ancestors to give them as an inheritance.**

⁷ **Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go. ⁸ This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.**

⁹ **Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” ¹⁰ Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, ¹¹ “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get provisions ready for yourselves, for within three days you will be crossing the Jordan to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you to inherit.’”**

VERSE 6

Earlier, the Lord instructed Moses to encourage Joshua because He would enable Joshua to lead the people into the land of Canaan and receive their inheritance from the Lord (Deut. 1:38; 3:28). Here, it was the Lord Himself who was encouraging Joshua. This was the first time out of three times that the Lord would command Joshua to ***be strong and courageous*** in this section. This echoed the words of Moses's encouragement in Deuteronomy 31:6-7. Israel would need to see Joshua's strength and courage as an example to follow in the face of what would appear to be insurmountable challenges in the land of Canaan. Joshua would be the one who would distribute the land to the people as their inheritance.

VERSE 7

Most importantly, Joshua needed to ***be strong and very courageous*** to ***carefully*** obey everything God commanded him. He was not to deviate from it at all. Obeying this command would be at the heart of Joshua's success. This is the reason the word *very* is added. Joshua's obedience to God's Word was more important than any military strategies he might employ in the heat of battle. The conquest would be more of a spiritual endeavor than it would be physical. Joshua would display his dependence on God and devotion to God through his faithful obedience to God. Then, God would receive all the glory for every victory won.



KEY DOCTRINE: *The Scriptures*

The Holy Bible is a perfect treasure of divine instruction.
(See Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

VERSES 8-9

The command to not allow God's Word to ***depart from your mouth*** is closely connected to the command to ***meditate*** on God's Word. In Hebrew, the word *meditate* literally means to read in an undertone or to mutter. The idea here is that Joshua was commanded to continually speak God's Word to himself so that he would not only know what it said but also so that he would thoroughly obey ***everything written in it***. While it is true that knowledge of God's Word does not guarantee obedience to it, it is safe to say that it is impossible to meticulously obey what one does not know. All who love the Lord will commit themselves to knowing His Word so that they may obey Him (John 14:15,21a).

God promised that Joshua would ***prosper and succeed in whatever*** he did if he obeyed Him. Prosperity and success in the Old Testament rarely focus on material wealth. The idea is that one will succeed in fulfilling a respectable purpose. Joshua would have success in doing everything God was calling him to do if he obeyed God's Word. He would fulfill God's purpose for his life. When believers seek to know God's Word and obey it to glorify God, then in their pursuit to honor Him they become more like Christ.

Finally, the Lord concluded His instructions to Joshua, stating a third time for Joshua to ***be strong and courageous***. Stating this command three times was the most emphatic way of

communicating its importance in their culture. Nevertheless, to emphasize the importance of this even more, God restated it negatively, imploring Joshua, ***Do not be afraid or discouraged.*** God's instructions to Joshua infer that from a human perspective, Joshua would have reason to be afraid, yet there was no reason to be afraid because God was with him wherever Joshua would go.

VERSES 10-11

As the Lord's appointed leader of Israel, Joshua wasted no time to act. Just as he received the Lord's commands, Joshua issued commands to the leaders of Israel. As a wise leader, Joshua knew he could not lead the people by himself any more than Moses could. The command was to have all the people gather provisions and ready themselves to break camp in three days to cross the Jordan River, to enter the land of Canaan, and finally ***take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you to inherit.***



What role does God's Word play in our definition of success?



How does God's Word provide courage and direction for our lives?

ISRAEL'S RESPONSE (JOSH. 1:16-18)

¹⁶ They answered Joshua, "Everything you have commanded us we will do, and everywhere you send us we will go. ¹⁷ We will obey you, just as we obeyed Moses in everything. Certainly the LORD your God will be with you, as he was with Moses. ¹⁸ Anyone who rebels against your order and does not obey your words in all that you command him, will be put to death. Above all, be strong and courageous!"

VERSES 16-17

When the Israelites came to the land east of the Jordan River, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh requested

of Moses to allow them to settle on that side of the river. Moses granted their request (Num. 32:1-42; Deut. 2:26-3:17). However, Moses required them to help the other nine and a half tribes in conquering the land on the other side of the Jordan. Therefore, as the people prepared to cross the Jordan, Joshua reminded the two and a half tribes of their promise to help with the conquest (Josh. 1:13-15). They replied to Joshua by saying they would obey everything he commanded them to do just as they had obeyed Moses. Furthermore, they declared they recognized that the Lord would be with Joshua just as He was with Moses.

VERSE 18

To communicate the gravity of this moment and the sincerity of their commitment to Joshua, these tribes committed to imposing the death penalty on any of their people who refused to obey Joshua. With that, they also encouraged Joshua as they communicated their solidarity with the Lord and support of Joshua by also calling on their leader to *be strong and courageous*.



How does a shared commitment to God's purposes encourage other people?



BIBLE SKILL: *Note repeated words and phrases to gain additional insights.*

Biblical writers sometimes used repetition of key words or phrases to emphasize a theme or message. Identify and examine the repeated message or challenge in Joshua 1:6,7,9,18. Who was the speaker in each instance? Who was the recipient of the challenge in each verse? Think about what this phrase's repetition helps communicate in Joshua 1:1-18. What message does the repeated phrase convey to Bible readers today?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + We can find courage in the truth that God keeps His promises.
- + We can discern God’s best for our lives by studying His Word.
- + We can encourage the kingdom work of others by supporting them and partnering with them.



As a group, discuss how you can encourage, support, and partner with one another in kingdom work. What are the advantages to having a commitment to working together with other believers over having an individualistic mentality toward kingdom work?



What are some of God’s promises that help you find courage in day-to-day life? How does remembering the promises of God in day-to-day life help prepare you for the challenging or difficult seasons in life?

Memorize Joshua 1:8.

Prayer Needs



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter’s Bible passages.