

Courage: Inborn or Instilled?

Joshua 1:1-9, 16-18

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Where does our courage come from? In the bible, we see inborn courage in people like David, Joshua and John the Baptist, who appear to be naturally courageous. We also see instilled courage in people like Gideon, Moses, Jeremiah and even Apostle Paul, who still display courage although they may seem timid. Whether courage is inborn or instilled, it should not matter. Every Christian is called to courage. Individually, and as a church, we are called to courage.

3 reasons why we should embrace the call:

1. Because you are not there... yet.

Joshua was chosen to become Israel's new leader after Moses, who was described as an unmatched prophet and leader (Deut. 34:10-12). God did not encourage Joshua before calling him to arise and take Moses' place and lead Israel into the promised land. Joshua was called to surpass Moses, to succeed where Moses had failed due to his sin.

We also often find ourselves in the face of God's call to us but while we ought to respond wholeheartedly, we also have our difficulties and limitations. Here are 4 general responses to God's call:

Sloth: You choose to go at your own pace, with whatever is convenient or comfortable. You are not bothered by God's call, because you don't intend to respond.

Cowardice: You let your fear dictate your response and you ignore God's call. You play the coward.

Foolishness: You accept the call without thinking it through, having confidence in yourself to be able to manage.

Courage: You say yes to God's call despite being full of fear and feeling inadequate.

Courage is proved at the intersection of fear & action, of uncertain realities & God's promises.

All of us stand at the intersection of various difficult realities in our lives – yet God is calling us to trust Him, to trust His promises, and to act in courage.

2. Because God is not done... yet.

The book of Joshua is, fundamentally, a book about God. Over 500 years before Joshua, God promised Abraham a land belonging to him and his children. However, Abraham and his descendents died before seeing the promise fulfilled. The promise was eventually passed down to Moses but he too died without seeing it fulfilled. God then entrusts this promise to Joshua. These mighty men of faith may have died. But God's purposes live on.

Verses 4 and 14 quantify the promise. From east to west, from the rising to the setting sun – all that land would be Israel's. But for the land to be theirs, Joshua had to take the first step to cross the mighty Jordan river. God encourages Joshua that He is with him and will inherit the promised land (vv. 5-9). Crossing the river would be Joshua's commitment and declaration to follow wherever the Lord leads.

Courage is about making one big commitment, expressed in countless smaller ways – declaring: "I will follow God!"

- Courage is not firstly about WHAT needs to get done or WHAT you can or cannot do.
- Courage is not firstly about HOW those things are gonna get done.
- Courage is about WHO you're committed to. WHO you're going to follow.

1,400 years after Joshua follows God across the raging Jordan River - Jesus (called "Joshua" in Hebrew) would come to the banks of the Jordan River. Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist and before Jesus had even done anything - God declared, "This is my Son. I love Him. I am so pleased with Him." As we decide to make a big commitment to follow Him – God receives us like a Father. Even before we actually do anything for Him – He already celebrates us. He already delights in us. Will you make that Big Commitment to follow Him?

3. Because Jesus is greater yet!

5 practical ways to cultivate courage:

1. Get into God's word daily. There's a strong relationship between taking God's word seriously – and having courage. God designs courage to flow from His word, as we meditate on and keep His word and do it (vv. 7-8).

2. Make Sunday worship your weekly highlight. God's greatest encouragement to Joshua is that He is with him (vv. 5, 9). Similarly, whenever we come together to worship on a Sunday morning – we renew that reassurance of God's presence with us.

3. Let God's people into your life. Verse 16-18 shows the people encouraging Joshua, echoing God's encouragement over him. In Agape, community happens especially in cell groups. Join a cell group & let God's encouraging promises be resounded over you!

4. Get in touch with Agape's legacy. When Joshua took over Moses' leadership, he also inherited Moses' legacy. Every decision, every mistake made by Moses' generation – every benefit & burden; all of it – was inherited by Joshua and his generation. Deepen your appreciation of Agape's legacy this season in Agape's 40th year.

5. Challenge your levels of outreach. God's call to Joshua was to go. We too are called to go. To bring the good news of God's averted judgment to others. Take your outreach to the next level: whether in Pek Kio, during the Easter & Christmas seasons, or through Agape's Church Planting initiatives.

It is so stabilising to know that we are not the Joshuas in our stories. We need a courageous leader like Joshua to lead us so we can also respond in courage. However, every courageous leader in biblical history eventually dies. When Jesus died on the cross, the disciples must have felt the cycle repeating itself. But Jesus was resurrected and overcame the grave!

Where we feel inadequate, lost, discouraged, overwhelmed, or we don't know how we'll ever get there, that's when we most need a Courageous, God-committed, Unfailing Leader. Make that Big Commitment, trusting in Jesus.