



August 21, 2022 ~ The Flame of Courage

OPEN

Ralph Waldo Emerson once observed, “we are always getting ready to live but never living.” Does this resonate with you?

The Biblical character we are examining today was given time to become ready, to learn, and to prepare. But God did not leave Joshua “in school”. God called him to an exciting adventure of living and leading with **courage**.

God gives us courage to obey what He commands us to do. Today in our **ignite** series we consider the God’s command to be courageous is yet another way in which He stirs spiritual passion in our lives so that we are “on fire for Him”.

DIG

Who?

From Exodus we learn that Joshua was a protégé of Moses and fought the Amalekites (Exodus 17, 24). In Numbers 13 we read about his mission to spy out the land of promise. In the book of Joshua we discover his commission from God to lead Israel into full possession of Canaan. His name translates from Hebrew to Greek as “Jesus” and means “Jehovah is salvation”. Also called “Hoshea” he was the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim.

When?

Joshua journeyed with Israel from slavery to freedom. They were struggling for God’s **shalom**: *being in the wholeness of restored relationship with God, others, creation, and self*. Deuteronomy closed with the death of Moses (Deut 34:1-8). This put Joshua into leadership.

William Shakespeare said, “Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.” Under Moses’ leadership, Joshua grew in wisdom and authority (Deut 34:9).

Deuteronomy is recited or recorded on the edge of the land of promise, offering a glimpse of God’s people when they were poised to enter Canaan. In Deuteronomy 31:7-8 the whole nation of Israel was instructed – “*be strong and courageous*”. Gerald Gerbrandt writes, “*Deuteronomy serves as an ‘altar call’ at that border.*” (**Deuteronomy**, Herald Press, 2015, 21)

What?

In the larger context, the nation of Israel was at a pivot-point...again! What was at stake for Joshua as a new leader in a critical moment? He had to overcome **fear** – as evidenced by God’s call to courage. Merriam-Webster defines fear as “*an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger.*” “Fear” comes from Old English *fæ̆r* “sudden danger”; Old German *fāra* “ambush”.

Do you have any of these fears?

- Claustrophobia - Fear of confined spaces
- Nyctophobia - Fear of the dark or of night
- Glossophobia - Fear of public speaking
- Arachnophobia - Fear of spiders
- Agoraphobia - Fear of open spaces or crowds
- Mysophobia - Fear of dirt or contamination
- Arithmophobia - Fear of numbers
- Aviophobia - Fear of flying
- Ecclesiophobia - Fear of church
- Auroraphobia - Fear of Northern lights
- Xenophobia - Fear of strangers or foreigners
- Panphobia – Fear of Everything
- Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia - Fear of long words

[A] Courage Calculates Fear – vv. 1-9

As we read Joshua 1:1-9 we encounter a command so wonderful that only God could accomplish it. What can we understand about the fear that Joshua faced? And how do we experience these aspects of fear? Consider five ways in which we can face fear even in a new, exciting opportunity to serve God.

1. Loss of stability – v. 1

Joshua had to face the fear of change and destabilizing of his life. His identity was tied to being an understudy to Moses. But now his mentor was dead. Perhaps some of the fear in Joshua came from seeing his situation become far less stable and predictable. Are you facing the fear of loss of stability?

2. **New responsibility – vv. 2,7-8**

New levels of responsibility can be wonderful...and fearful! Joshua faced the fear of failing in this new role as leader of Israel. He certainly had a lot to live up to...he had great sandals to fill! In Moses' absence he was now faced with a huge increase to duties for the nation – though he had already been given leadership authority (Numbers 27:18-21). Are you fearing a new responsibility?

3. **Greater possibilities – vv. 3-4**

How many people are ruined by the sudden increase of wealth? That is just one example of the challenge that accompanies the increase of possibilities. This is the fear of choices and increased capacity. Research shows that one of the factors that cripple us is too many options! *“Left to do its insidious work, anxiety will eventually drain us of all resources and leave us emotionally bankrupt and spiritually immobilized...”* (Chuck Swindoll).

4. **Unrealized promises – vv. 5-6**

These verses are powerful and full of promise. However, when Joshua heard them, these promises remained unrealized and unfulfilled. This is a characteristic of the Kingdom of God. We describe it as “now but not yet”. We live in this same space just as Joshua did. God has promised to accomplish great things...but they are yet to be realized. This can cause fear if we are not careful and intentional in trusting God.

5. **Anticipated negativity – v. 9**

John Locke wrote, *“Fear is an uneasiness of the mind, upon the thought of future evil likely to befall us”*. Joshua faced both imagined and real threats. As one of the spies he was keenly aware of the challenge of taking possession of Canaan. Had his opinion changed over forty years? In Numbers 14:6-9 he had declared his implicit trust in God and that there should be nothing to fear.

[B] **Courage Conquers Fear – vv. 10-18**

Having been commanded to live courageously, Joshua began to lead with courage – see Joshua 1:10-18. Did he *“just do it scared”* – or mindlessly? In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus agonized and pleaded for release from the pain of the cross. However, His conclusion was, *“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”* (Matthew 26:39)

Courage is gifted to us as we submit our will to God. In Hebrew, “courage” translates from *hā·zaq* (as in Joshua 1:6,7,9,18) and means *“to be or grow firm or strong, strengthen”* (**Strong’s Concordance**, 2388).

So, the term “courage” in Hebrew, conveys prevailing and even has the sense of severity (**TWOT**, 636).

The Greek translation of the Old Testament translates this Hebrew term to *andrizou* which commands someone to be courageous or “manly” – even heroic. Just let that sink in...God is calling us to *heroic obedience* !

Being courageous for God is serious, spiritual business because courage comes through willful obedience to the call of God. Courage comes when live in our new identity in Christ.

Paul commanded Timothy, *“kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”* (II Timothy 1:6-7)

REFLECT

Henry Ward Beecher said, *“We steal if we touch tomorrow. It is God's.”*

Are you stealing from God by letting the fear of tomorrow take hold in you?

Or are you obeying Him and growing in courageous trust today?