



BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS: WALKING GRACEFULLY THROUGH SEASONS OF CHANGE

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Pastor AJ Swoboda

BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

TEXT: *"After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them."*

"The Church should always be alert to those who are between idols. That happens during major disruptions. When people lose everything, they long for something."

-Pastor AJ

"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your provisions ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.'"

But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, "Remember the command that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you after he said, 'The Lord your God will give you rest by giving you this land.' Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, ready for battle, must cross over ahead of your fellow Israelites. You are to help them until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land the Lord your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!" (Joshua 21:1-18)

MESSAGE SUMMARY

There is only one certain thing in this life: change. We all experience change and go through different seasons of life. How are we to handle change well? Joshua 1 gives us a glimpse into how God would have us to handle seasons of change and transition. At the beginning of the book of Joshua, the Israelites are facing a whole host of changes. They're going from wanderers to soldiers. Moses, their faithful leader has died. Joshua is taking over leadership of the people. A new seasons is beginning for them.

In the midst of all this change, God speaks to Joshua. He tells him multiple times to be strong and courageous because God will be with him and the Israelite people. We can have this same strength and courage. No matter what season we are currently walking through, we can know that in the middle of change or transition, we are given an unprecedented opportunity to experience the mercy and the heart of God in a disproportionate way. As God used the change in the Israelites' and Joshua's position to display his love and power in new ways, he will do the same thing for us today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What is the biggest change that has happened in your life in the last 12 months?
2. What is your favorite season of the year? Why?
3. When was the last time you moved (either houses or to a different place)?
What was the hardest thing you had to adjust to?
4. What is the first thing you think of when you hear the word "change"?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. How many times does the phrase "be strong and courageous" occur in this text?
Why do you think this phrase is repeated so many times?
2. God is not the only person who tells Joshua to "be strong and courageous."
Who else tells this to Joshua? What is the significance of this?
3. What things did God command Joshua to do?
4. God told Joshua that if he did certain things, he would be prosperous and successful.
What were the things God told him to do?
5. The Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh had already acquired their piece of the Promised Land. What was their responsibility to their fellow Israelites?

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. AJ talked about how people are often more open to God when their life or culture is in crisis. What are some crises that are happening in our own culture? What are some changes that are making people feel unsettled? How could we use these things to expose people to God?
2. When people go through a difficult season, does that mean that God is punishing them?
If someone is going through a good season, is God rewarding them? Why or why not?
(Hint: look at stories in the Bible to support your answers)
3. God told Joshua that he should meditate on Scripture and follow it to be successful.
What are things that people focus on that can be helpful to them in times of crisis?
What things can be harmful to focus on?
4. What similarities are there between the Israelites in Joshua 1 and our group (or our church)? What things are different?
5. When someone is entering into a new season or making a transition, how have you seen people support them well? How have people, knowingly or unknowingly, caused them harm?

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. How would you describe your current season? Is it good or bad, chaotic or peaceful, full of change or relatively steady?
2. When was the last time you went through a crisis or a chaotic season?
How did that season affect your relationship with God?

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS,
CONT.**

3. What role have the Scriptures played in your life when you've walked through tough times?
4. AJ talked about the importance of our identity being found in God in the midst of crisis and change. Do you think your identity is anchored more in your work/position/family/etc., or in Jesus? Why?
5. How have people walked well with you through difficult seasons or how have you walked with others in a difficult time? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. How can you continue to draw your focus to the Scriptures, no matter what your season? What will you do this week to more intentionally focus on God's Word?
2. Is there someone in your life (or even in this group) that is walking through a hard time currently? How could you support them and show God's love to them this next week?
3. How can your group pray for you this week as you seek to set your identity in Christ and not in your circumstances?