

Answering God's Call

Joshua 1:1-9

Intro:

Good morning church! My name is Eric Aho and I serve as the Small Groups and Congregational Care Pastor. I'm very thankful to Pastor Rob for the opportunity to fill the pulpit this morning while he continues to rest for the month of July. It is so important that he has this time away to recharge and come back ready to preach and lead. I just finished my own Sabbatical and am so appreciative of the elders giving me that time away to rest. Marlorie and I had an absolute blast, but we both said we missed being here on Sunday mornings. It's just not the same without the body of Christ.

If you have your Bibles with you this morning, you can open them up to Joshua 1. If you need a copy of God's Word, one of our ushers would love to get one into your hands.

One of the things I appreciate most about gathering together on a Sunday morning is that God often speaks to me. I'm not saying with an audible voice, but through the preaching of God's Word. I often leave here with a call to do something, to live differently.

God calls us to do many different tasks.

Some of them can be very hard. Calls to ministry. Calls to prioritize him over family. Calls to be generous. Calls to love others you find difficult to love.

This morning, I want you to think about what God is calling you to do. What has he been pressing on your heart over the last few weeks or months? What has he been teaching you from his Word that he wants you to believe and act on? The Word is the main way God reveals to us what he is calling us to do.

My call to ministry wasn't with a voice. It wasn't with an overwhelming feeling. It was one choice at a time that God had me make. He would open a door and I would have to choose to step through it. God opened the door for me to intern at a church after my freshman year of college and I obeyed and discovered how much I loved student ministry.

God opened the door for me to come to Coram Deo 10 years ago and leave what I was familiar with. I had to choose to step through and I discovered a church I love and have grown in.

One year ago, Pastor Rob and the elders asked to me to step into my role as the small groups and congregational care pastor. I chose to obey where God was leading. I'm still learning and growing in this role. If I'm honest, there are often situations in ministry that scare me.

I don't think I'm alone in this. Many of us are intimidated by what God asks us to do.

When I think of someone who would have been scared by God's call in Scripture, I immediately think of Joshua.

God had been preparing this man for a special role for many years.

He had been Moses' assistant and had personally witnessed how God had worked through Moses. He had been one of the 12 spies who went through the Promised land, the land God had sworn to give to

Israel. He had seen what a good place God was giving to Israel. As Moses' life was coming to an end, Moses had asked God to appoint someone to take his place.

In Numbers 27:18-20 we read “So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. ²⁰You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.”

God personally chose Joshua to be Moses's replacement. This was no small task. He was to replace a man called the servant of the Lord. Someone who had personally talked to God face to face. He was to lead a people whom he had seen rebel against God and Moses many times over and conquer the promised land.

From this call on Joshua's life, we are going to learn two principles this morning in how we are to respond.

Let's start by reading Joshua 1:1-2.

“After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, ²“Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.”

This is an incredibly somber note. Moses, the servant of the Lord, the one who had led the people since the time of Egypt, is dead. But God had a plan. It was time for Joshua to lead.

If this was me, I would have been terrified. He faced a lot of pressure. How is he supposed to lead this great nation to take over a land? Apparently Joshua needed a lot of encouragement because God had directed Moses before his death to encourage Joshua in Deuteronomy repeatedly (1:38; 3:28). Moses reminded Joshua of all that he has seen God do to their enemies so far. He will help him do the same to the rest of the nations that occupy the Promised land. He does not need to fear because God fights for them (Deut 3:21-22). We are going to see God repeat this encouragement in our passage today.

You see, God doesn't just call Joshua to lead and then leaves him to figure it out. He encourages him through a couple of promises.

Let's read **Joshua 1:3-5.**

“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. ⁴From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. ⁵No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.”

God wanted him to draw strength, not from believing in himself, but believing in God. When he believed and trusted what God promised, he would have the courage to answer God's call.

This leads us to our first principle we learn from this call on Joshua's life. To answer God's call, you must... Believe and trust God's promises.

There are two incredibly comforting promises given to Joshua in these verses.

First, in verse 3, God told Joshua explicitly that he had given him every place the sole of his foot would tread upon. Notice he says it in the past tense. "I have given to you." In God's eyes it's an already done deal. It shows the certainty of what he is promising Joshua.

No battle will be too great. No enemy too powerful. He clearly tells him no man would be able to stand before him. Is this because Joshua was an incredible fighter? No. It was because God was giving him success. He would ultimately be responsible for victory.

He would give Israel the land. He even lays out some general boundaries of what this land would be in verse 4.

Check out this chart based on the more specific description from Numbers 34.

If you are familiar with the rest of Scripture, you might know that at no point in Israel's history did they fully occupy all of this land. Does this mean God lied to Joshua? Does it mean he failed to keep his promise? NO! absolutely not. Israel failed to live up to their end of the bargain. They failed to continue in the conquest of the land, but gave up and made deals with the people in the land. They disobeyed what God commanded them to do.

God's promises are sure. But he expects his people to act on them. To believe and trust him. This is what Joshua was going to have to do, if he was going have the courage to fulfill God's call on his life.

The second promise God gives to Joshua is his ongoing presence.

Verse 5

"Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you."

Moses had once told the Lord that if he wasn't with them, it wasn't worth going to the Promised Land. He knew that success depended on God's presence. Only if he was there to help would they succeed. Joshua knew this too. Thus to hear God promise he would be with him as he was with Moses would have been extremely comforting.

In fact, God reiterates this promise in verse 9.

"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 could take great courage from this promise. But only if he believed God, if he believed what God promised.

This moment in history serves a good lesson for us as we are called by God to different tasks.

You might be sitting here this morning overwhelmed by what you see God asking you to do in his Word.

You might have heard a message from Pastor Rob or Jared and Jesse in the last couple of weeks and thought there is no way I could do that.

You might have that pit in your stomach feeling as you think about what God has laid on your heart to do.

Church take courage from God's promises.

Courage is the moral strength to do what God calls you to do despite danger, fear, or difficulty. It's not the absence of those things, it's acting despite them.

God wanted to encourage Joshua and us through recording this narrative.

The same God that Joshua followed is the God we follow. This does not mean we are guaranteed military success because of God's promise to Joshua. Or that God will give us success in anything we set out to do. That would be a total misapplication of the text.

However, we can see the certainty of God's promises from this narrative. What God promises he will do.

What does he promise us? While there are many promises we could look at, I want to briefly focus on two this morning that tie closely with the text we just read.

In Matthew 28:19-20, as Jesus was getting ready to return to heaven he tells his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

God promises us in the midst of the command to tell the world about him that I am with you always to end of the age. Like Joshua, **God will never leave you.**

There is not a moment that goes by where God is not there. He is with you, you cannot escape him even if you wanted to.

No matter how alone you feel, how overwhelmed you are, God has not left you. He is with you.

How does he do this?

John 14:16-17 – "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

God is with us day in and day out through his Spirit. We experience God's presence on a much deeper level than Joshua ever did.

Not only that, but the Spirit is called our Helper. **God will help you, his second promise.** This Spirit will empower you to do what God calls you to do. He will help you have wisdom, strength, the ability to resist temptation, and much more.

When you believe and trust these promises, you will find the courage you need in the midst of the call he has placed on your life.

You should then let that courage lead you to act in strength. Or as God tells Joshua - be strong and courageous .

This is our second point this morning, Be strong and courageous.

God calls Joshua to be strong and courageous in three specific ways. We will apply them in principle to our lives.

Joshua 1:6-9

“Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷Only 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. ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹Have 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.”

In verse 6, God first tells Joshua to be strong and courageous in the specific task of leading the people in conquest of the land. He reiterates his promise that Joshua will cause the people to inherit the land. Not that the ultimate victory belongs to Joshua, but that God will use him to lead the people to victory. Joshua is to be strong and courageous in the task God has set for him.

And we should seek to do the same. **Be strong and courageous to answer your call.**

What does this look like?

Well after being told to lead the people in conquest of the land, Joshua came upon his first challenge to this call – Jericho.

God gave him orders to march around the city and blow trumpets for 6 days. Not the smartest battle plan from a human perspective. If it was up to us, we would have tried to come up with some way to get inside the walls. Maybe dig a tunnel or use a boozka. Yet God had a different plan and Joshua was going to have to be strong and courageous to obey. On the 7th day, the people shouted, the walls fell down. God gave Israel victory. Joshua had trusted God would do what he said. He then acted on that trust by obeying.

This is what it means to be strong and courageous in the call God has for you.

First, you must believe God will do what he says. This is where courage comes from.

Second, you must act on that belief. This is exercising strength. Not strength in yourself but strength out of a trust in God.

We should approach our individual calls with the same strength and courage. A strength and courage found in God.

Believe God will do what he says and accomplish what he wants through you.

Then act on that belief by obeying him.

- We are to be strong and courageous in our call to share the gospel. He promises to use us to do so. We should obey no matter how hard it gets at times.
- We are to be strong and courageous in loving others. He promises to help us to love them despite what they have done, we are to choose to act in love.

- We are to be strong and courageous in enduring trials. God will help us through the darkest of moments, but we have to choose to rest in him.

Whatever God is calling you to do, be strong and courageous to answer your call.

This wasn't the only way God called Joshua to be strong and courageous, and it's not the only way we should live this out either.

Joshua was also to be strong and courageous when it came to the Law, what God had commanded Moses and he had recorded for the people.

Verses 7-8.

"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. ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Apparently God wanted to emphasize this area of being strong and courageous because he uses the additional words of "only" and "very." "Only be strong and very courageous."

How? In his dedication to God's law. This is the second way God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous and we ought to do so as well. **Be strong and courageous to hold fast to God's Word.**

At this point, Joshua would have had the first five books of our modern Bibles.

God wanted him to be all about his Law. Meaning he was to be careful to obey it as verse 7 points out.

Rather than go his own way or do what he thought was right, Joshua was to do what God wanted.

This was going to take strength and courage.

It's a weighty task to obey God in all things. He was to be committed to the Word. Not to be swayed by his flesh or others to turn from it.

But in order to obey it, he had to know it. Hence God told him in verse 8, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it."

Joshua was to mediate on the law. If you were around last week, you know Jared gave us a very graphic image of what mediation is. Suffice to say, it's not worldly mediation. Instead, it's filling your mind with the Word of God. You study it, memorize, repeat it to yourself and to others. Joshua's mind was to be consumed by it. Then it was to come out in the way he lived. In his day to day actions, he would remember what God wanted and could choose God's path.

The funny thing is while this took strength and courage to hold fast to the Word, he was also going to be encouraged by the Word to be strong and courageous. He would read about what God had done. He would see God's heart behind his law. This would encourage Joshua all the more to be strong and courageous.

As he held fast to what God wanted, he would have success. Success doesn't mean being given everything you want and never experiencing hardship. Success meaning living out God's plan. He would be successful in what God was calling him to do.

You should hold fast to God's Word like God commanded Joshua.

The value of the Word is emphasized throughout the Bible. Jesus responded to Satan in Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

You would do well to hold fast to the Word. You shouldn't let tiredness, or pressures from your own flesh or the world around you push you away.

Instead, like Joshua, you should meditate on it and seek to live by it. In fact, as you study it, you will learn all the more what God is calling you to do. As I said earlier, it's the primary way he reveals his call on our lives.

As you study it, you will be encouraged to be strong and courageous, you will know God's way, and you will be challenged to live it out.

What does your time in the Word look like? Do you seek to live by it every day? Do you study it and treasure it up in your heart throughout your day? If not, you are failing the call God has placed not only on Joshua's life but ours as well through the rest of Scripture.

Church hold fast to God's Word; it is a key way we can be strong and courageous in answering God's call.

Our final way to be strong and courageous is to resist the temptation of fear.

Verse 9

"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."

God knew Joshua was be tempted by fear. It's not going to be easy what he faces. There are going to be many scary fights and situations. In those moments and even in this moment as he takes on Moses's role, Joshua might be scared.

God reiterates his promise to be with him, he has no reason to fear. If he gave into that fear, he would abandon what God wanted him to do.

We face the same temptation. We fear what the call might cost us. We fear how people might respond to what God wants us to do. So we abandon what God wants.

Church fear will come. We are weak, but we are called act in strength and courage. This doesn't mean putting on fake face. It means acting despite your fear. Drawing your courage and strength from God like Joshua was to.

If I'm honest, this is one of the things I'm working on. Working in ministry is hard. I deal with a lot of hard situations, and lately I've been more scared and tired than strong and courageous. This isn't because God failed, but because too often I try to do what God wants in my own strength. This is exhausting. When preparing for this sermon, I realized I was going to have to grow in this. My prayer is that God would grow me in this in the coming months and years.

In fact, prayer is one of the main ways we draw courage and strength from God. We confess our weaknesses and ask for his help. God is faithful and will provide what we need.

Only then can we faithfully complete the call God has given to us.

What is God calling you to do? What has he been teaching you in his Word lately? What has he been placing on your heart that is being affirmed by other believers?

Be strong and courageous. Answer God's Call. You will be amazed at what he does through you.

Let's Pray.

Lord, we confess that we are weak. We confess that we need your help. Forgive for not believing and trusting your promises. Forgive us for trying to live out your call in our own strength. Lord, fill us and fuel us through your Spirit for what you are asking us to do. Help us to be strong and courageous to answer the call. With you, we will have success. The battle belongs to you.

Amen.