

BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

Joshua 1:1–18 (Key Verse 6)

“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.”

This chapter opens with the death of Moses, the faithful servant of God who led Israel out of Egypt with mighty signs and wonders. Yet, because of his disobedience at Meribah, he was not permitted to enter the promised land. This became a learning, challenging and hurtful time for the Israelites, as they lost their valuable leader, Moses, who was a powerful figure used by God. It may have raised a lot of concerns for the Israelites, leading to future insecurity of occupying the promised land.

However, the Lord, God Almighty, came forth to choose Joshua, son of Nun, and commissioned him to lead the people, promising to be with him as he guided them to conquer the land of Canaan. He told him to be strong and courageous so he could lead his people to the promised land. This takes us back to the Lord’s earlier promise to Abraham, from the book of Genesis 12:1-3, that his descendants would inherit the land, showing us that indeed God is faithful to his promises.

The fulfilment of God’s promises calls for our obedience, strength, and courage, as this chapter also foreshadows the battles that lie ahead, as the Lord assures Joshua of his victory over the inhabitants of the land. The path of faith is rarely smooth. It is marked by trials, temptations, persecution, and spiritual battles. But in Joshua’s story, we will see how God equips His chosen servant, not only with authority, but with divine assurance and strength for the mission ahead. Just as God promised Israel a land flowing with milk and honey, He has promised us eternal life and fellowship with Him through Christ Jesus our Lord. Joshua’s commissioning is not only historical but also instructional; it teaches us how to respond to God’s call with boldness and trust. May this message stir our hearts to become modern-day Joshua’s, obedient, courageous, and ready to walk in the promises of God. Amen!!

Verses 1–2 set the scene: *“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.’”* This was after a painful period of mourning, when Israel grieved Moses for thirty days (Dt 34:8). The people likely wondered, “Will we be able to enter the promised land now? Who will lead us now? Will he be like Moses?” Moses’ obedience, faithfulness, and intimacy with God set a higher standard for future leaders. Some may even have thought of returning back to Egypt, just as they once plotted idolatry when Moses delayed on Mount Sinai. But now God Himself appeared to Joshua, Moses’ assistant and faithful servant. Joshua had already proven his courage in the book of Numbers 13, where he and Caleb trusted God’s promise to give Israel the land, despite being still under the leadership of Moses. Now God appointed him to lead the nation across the Jordan.

Through this, God reminded His people that although Moses was gone, His promises remained. His promises are not dependent on a specific individual but on His faithfulness to His covenant. I know the death of Moses could imply many things in our lives, but that does not prevent God from fulfilling His promises. We might think of important people we miss, broken relationships with good friends, failure in our academics, missed opportunities, and job prospects, but none of these change God’s faithfulness. The same God who helped the Israelites is the same God who will help us.

Now, Joshua is called to step into his mentor’s shoes and continue the work that God had started with Moses. God’s command was clear: *“You and these people, get ready to cross the Jordan.”* Obedience was the key to entering the promised land. Indeed, this could have challenged Joshua, who was to fill Moses’ position; he might have asked himself a lot of questions, “How will I lead this stubborn nation that caused Moses, the servant of God, to sin? Will I be able to manage these people? Will they listen to me? His heart might have been filled with a lot of doubts, doubting himself whether he is capable of this position he was to take and whether he will be able to defeat the inhabitants of the land.

How did God equip Joshua? God then gave Joshua powerful encouragement: *"I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses."* The boundaries were wide, from the desert to Lebanon, from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea. These were the same promises spoken to Moses, proving God's faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham to give his descendants this land as an everlasting possession. His word never fails, no matter how long it may take, He will surely fulfil it.

He added another assurance: *"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."* Joshua, who had watched God's presence with Moses, now received the same promise for himself. He needed this assurance because he was going to face a lot of battles ahead of him for the Israelites to occupy the land. Yes, he knew there were giants in the land, nations with fortified cities; well-established nations. This promise gave Joshua the assurance and confidence he needed to step into his role as the new leader of Israel.

God's faithfulness to Joshua foreshadows His faithfulness to all believers who trust in Him to lead them through life's challenges. Joshua's obedience and reliance on God's promises are keys to the success of the Israelites as they embark on this new chapter of their journey. This passage serves as a reminder to us today that, like Joshua, we can move forward in faith, knowing that God goes before us, never leaving us nor forsaking us. Matthew 28:18-20 also says *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"* May the Lord help us to put trust in the Lord God who promised to be with us in serving Him always.

But God did not stop with promises. He gave Joshua a command in verse 6: *"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them."* Though Strength and courage here did not mean physical might or military power. God was not telling Joshua to train like a warrior in the gym. Instead, He was calling him to trust fully in His word. To be strong meant to stand firmly on God's promises, enabling them to sink deep into our hearts so that they become a source of motivation to give us the courage to step forward in obedience, even when circumstances seemed uncertain. Joshua's strength would come not from himself, but from faith in God's unchanging word. The secret of Israel's military success was in following the word of God. This teaches us that courage and strength in the face of challenges are essential qualities for us, and that relying on God's promise and provision is key to achieving success in His plans.

God repeated this command because Joshua's task was daunting. He had to lead a stubborn and fearful people into unknown territory. Without faith, he could not inspire faith in others. He needed to have faith in God, believing that all He said would come to pass. Likewise, for us to lead in ministry or guide others in God's Word, especially through Bible studies, we must first believe it ourselves. Strength and courage begin with personal trust in God's promises; without this, we cannot have confidence to lead others.

Verse 7 clarifies how Joshua was to be strong: *"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."* Faith must be matched with obedience. James 2:17 says, *"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."* God emphasises in this verse that Joshua's strength and courage should be closely tied to obedience to His commands. Joshua is reminded to follow the law given by Moses faithfully and not to deviate from it.

This highlights the importance of obedience to God's instructions in achieving success and prosperity in life. Joshua assures success in all his endeavours by staying obedient to God's word and not wavering in his commitment. Just as a student cannot expect success without studying, we cannot expect spiritual success without acting on God's word. God called Joshua to carefully obey His word, not shortcuts or compromise. The same is true for us: obedience to God's word keeps us aligned with His will.

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Verse 8 gives us the key: *“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.”* God called Joshua to constant meditation on His word. Just as repeated songs stick in our minds, repeated meditation on scripture shapes our hearts and actions. Like food nourishing the body, God’s word nourishes our soul. Meditation allows His truth to sink deep, transform our character, and strengthen us for obedience. Joshua will be equipped to make wise decisions and lead his people effectively by immersing himself in God’s word. This shows us that meditating on God’s Word is essential for spiritual growth, wisdom, and success.

God wants to give us success in whatever we do. It begins through diligent Bible study. This is the very secret of success that God blesses. For Joshua to lead God’s people, he needed God’s word to dwell richly in him. For us to live godly lives, we must also dwell in the word daily. This is why UBF provides us with spiritual disciplines like weekly Bible study, daily bread, testimony writing, and Sunday messages. These are not burdens but blessings, God’s way of strengthening us to live faithfully and courageously.

Finally, verse 9 repeats the charge: *“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.”* This was the third time. God emphasised this because He knew Joshua’s fears and doubts. Repetition shows the importance of this truth: Joshua’s courage must rest not on himself, but on God’s abiding presence. This was God’s wake-up call to action: to move forward in faith, trusting in His promises.

This is also our calling today. God commands us: *“Be strong and courageous.”* Yes, we will face challenges, doubts, and fears. But God assures us that He is with us wherever we go. Strength and courage come not from circumstances but from His word and presence. Like Joshua, let us stand firm in God’s promises, obey His word, and lead others with faith. Just as God told Joshua to be strong and courageous in leading his people we are encouraged to trust in Christ, who has already overcome the power of sin and death for us. May we be strong and courageous, not in ourselves, but in the Lord who never leaves nor forsakes us. Amen!

From this same chapter, I also chose my key verse for the year—Joshua 1:9. At the beginning of this year, my future felt uncertain. I faced many challenges while finalizing my master’s dissertation, and as a result, many of my plans seemed to fall apart. I had hoped to pursue another master’s degree this year as an academic progression, or possibly even a PhD. However, I had to confront the reality of repeating the program I hadn’t yet completed.

In that difficult time, I was reminded of God’s command in verse 9: *“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.”* This word strengthened my weak faith and encouraged me to keep trusting God despite the failures and discouraging circumstances. By His grace, everything came together successfully, at the last minute. God blessed me to get cum-laude. This taught me that God’s will is for us to be successful. Through this experience, I learned how vital it is to remain grounded in God’s word, not just for a moment of crisis, but as a daily foundation for this year ahead.

Although my academic plans didn’t unfold as I had envisioned, I began to see a deeper purpose. I recognised the urgent need for spiritual leadership at NUL UBF. This realisation challenged me to reconsider my pursuit of material success and instead prioritise the things of God. The call to serve as a campus shepherd became clearer and more compelling. Not that I am giving up on my career or throwing it away but to align everything with His will and purpose.

As a campus shepherd, I need the assurance of Joshua 1:6 every single day. Serving students at NUL UBF is not easy, especially in a country struggling economically, where corruption and nepotism make it difficult for us young people to find meaningful jobs. I often feel the tension of being young, with multiple options before me, yet choosing a path that seems uncertain. In many ways, it feels like I’m risking my future, but in truth, I’m gaining something far greater. This passage teaches to be strong and courageous not on my potential or capabilities but on God because His will is for me to be successful.

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Still, leading in ministry comes with its own challenges. Guiding students is not always easy. I am constantly challenged to be patient and to keep faith. My Bible students sometimes discourage me when they become inconsistent in bible studies and are lazy in writing testimonies. It's also a challenge to me to prepare Sunday messages every week and have bible studies, and write a testimony. Despite all these, I could also see myself growing in faith and character as these things also sharpen me to become a better leader and a better man. This passage continues to speak to me: Be strong. Be courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. Why? Because the Lord is with me, always. This truth compels me to meditate daily on God's word, so that I may obey it fully and not turn to the right or to the left. I am still weak. I need God every day. Truly, obedience to His word is the key to success, not just in ministry, but in life. Just as God equipped Joshua to lead a nation, I believe He will also equip me with wisdom, courage, and discernment to lead well, make godly decisions, and even thrive economically. My prayer is that God may guide me in everything I do. May He strengthen me to be a faithful shepherd, a courageous leader, and a servant who walks boldly in His presence, no matter the challenges ahead.

Let's see how Joshua responded to God's call. *10 So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: 11 "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.'"*

Now we see a different vision of Joshua, a man filled with courage and faith, to lead the Israelites to the promised land. He was deeply touched by the word of God, and he stepped out in faith. Just as Joshua was called to lead the Israelites into the promised land, we are called to trust in God's guidance and provision in our own lives. "Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight".

The command to cross the Jordan River to possess the land was symbolic of the Israelites leaving their past behind and stepping into a new chapter of God's blessings and promises. It mirrors the concept of leaving behind our old ways and embracing the new life that God has planned for us. Just as the Israelites had to physically cross the river to enter the promised land, we must also be willing to step out in faith and leave our comfort zones to experience the fullness of God's blessings. Joshua's obedience and leadership serve as a powerful example for us to follow as we navigate our own journeys of faith and trust in God's plans for our lives.

In the same way, to follow Christ, we must leave behind certain things, just as fishermen and tax collectors left their nets and tables to follow Jesus. Even Apostle Paul, after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, was told, "Now you will be told what you must do." Likewise, faith requires surrender and obedience to God's direction. We need to obey and follow God's direction. Just as Joshua led Israel into the promised land after Moses, in the same way Jesus lead us into internal promise of God—salvation, rest and new life (Hebrews 4:8-10). Amen.

How did the Israelites respond to Joshua? verse 16 says *"then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go."* This response exemplifies the obedience and faithfulness of the Israelites to both Joshua, their newly appointed leader after the death of Moses, and ultimately to God. This demonstrates the importance of obedience and submission to God's chosen leaders in fulfilling His plans and purposes. Throughout the Bible, God calls for His people to obey Him and those He places in authority over them. God's ultimate authority should always be respected and followed. The Israelites' declaration here sets a powerful example for us today to heed God's commands and follow His appointed leaders.

The people pledge their support to Joshua, saying, "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses." This statement reflects the Israelites' acknowledgement of the importance of divine presence in their leadership. They recognise that the source of Moses' authority and success was the Lord being with him, and they now extend this same desire for Joshua. It is a reminder that our success in any endeavour relies on God's presence and blessing.

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Lastly, verse 18 concludes with the people's warning to Joshua: "Whoever rebels against your command and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous." This final statement underscores the severity of disobedience and rebellion in the sight of God. The Israelites' firm stance on rebellion reflects the seriousness of sin and the need for discipline within the community of believers.

In conclusion, this passage encourages us to be strong and courageous in our faith, to diligently follow God's commands, to meditate on His word continually, and to trust in His unfailing presence in our lives. Just as God equipped Joshua for the challenges ahead, He also equips us for whatever tasks He sets before us, empowering us to live victoriously according to His will. Just as God promised to be with Joshua as he led the people into the promised land, we too, can trust in His guidance and provision in our own journeys. Joshua's example encourages us to step forward with faith, knowing that God goes before us and fights our battles.