

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Courage for the Difficult Tasks

KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:1-9 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Exodus 14:13 | Joshua 6:1-3 | 2 Timothy 1:7

► SUMMARY

At some point in our lives, we all face fearful situations.

Perhaps we dread poor health, financial problems, the loss of a loved one, or uncertainty about the future. Or maybe we're afraid of failure because we feel weak and inadequate for a particular task or challenge. Whatever our fears may be, we must learn how to face them as God desires—with courage.

► SERMON POINTS

Joshua 1:1-9 was written long ago, but its principles regarding courage are still true for those of us living in the 21st century.

- **Fear** is an internal alarm that goes off within us in some fashion when we're facing imminent danger, feeling threatened, or feeling helpless to avoid or change the situation.
- **Courage** is the quality of mind or spirit that enables us to meet danger or face opposition or the challenges of life with fearlessness, calmness, and firmness.

According to 2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV), God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind. Furthermore, we have His promises that empower us to walk courageously through every challenge.

Joshua's Situation

After Moses died, God gave Joshua the task of leading His people into the land He'd promised to give them. Although he'd been trained by Moses and had worked under him, the thought of replacing Moses and taking responsibility

for these people must have filled him with fear and trembling. He'd seen how rebellious and unbelieving they had been.

Joshua also knew what a challenge it would be to lead two million Israelites into enemy territory. The land was filled with walled cities, giants, well-armed soldiers, and chariots. Although these obstacles seemed insurmountable, Joshua remembered how God fought for His people by parting the water for them and burying the Egyptians and their chariots in the depths of the sea (Ex. 14:13).

The Basis for Courage

The Lord's promises were the basis for Joshua's courage. Today our courage as believers comes from our relationship to God through His Son. Although our situations differ from Joshua's, the principles and promises revealed in this passage are true for us as well.

- **God's promise to Joshua.** "Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you" (v. 1:5). We have this same assurance because God is living within us through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Whatever fearful situations we face, we are not alone. Instead of looking around at the circumstances, we should look up to the Lord who is always faithful.
- **Joshua's responsibility.** "Only be strong and courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go" (v. 7). God didn't give Joshua a war plan for victory. His success would only come by keeping his eyes focused on the Lord and doing exactly what He commanded in His Word. This was not a task to

be done with natural, man-made strength but with obedience and the supernatural strength of the Holy Spirit.

This is the same blueprint for victory that God gives us. We are to do what He says, when He says, and how He says to do it. There is no room for picking and choosing which Scripture passages to believe and obey and which to ignore. The success God promises is not that of the world. In His eyes success is a godly life that He can use as a witness to the world and a challenge to fellow believers.

The Key to Courage

“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; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (v. 8).

Daily meditation on God’s Word is the key to courageously accomplishing all that He sets before us. It includes five essential elements.

- **Reading.** We must first know what God has said in His holy Word.
- **Believing.** Then we should believe His Word and His promises.
- **Absorbing.** Next, we absorb Scripture into our thinking so we understand it, and it governs our thoughts.
- **Applying.** God’s Word applied directs our way of living.
- **Obeying.** Knowing what God has said, we respond with complete and full obedience. This is the goal of meditation.

Although college courses and degrees may claim to make us prosperous, nothing can compare to God’s path for success. If we’ll meditate on His Word daily so we can carefully obey His instructions, we may not be considered successful by the world’s standard, but the Lord is the ultimate judge and the one before whom we will stand to give an account of our lives.

The command to meditate day and night doesn’t mean we must spend hours every morning and evening in God’s Word. The Lord can do big work in our lives if we’ll simply give Him ten to fifteen minutes every day. By meditating on His Word, we’re acknowledging that we need His help because we’re not smart enough or strong enough to direct our own lives. As our Lord and Savior, He has every right to tell us what to do, and if we do what He says, He will enable us to live successfully in accordance with His will and plan for us.

God’s Warning to Joshua

The Lord emphatically spelled out what Joshua must do in order to succeed at bringing the people into the Promised Land—“Be careful to do according to all that is written in it” (v. 8). Obedience is of utmost importance because God’s methods won’t always seem reasonable. When the people approached Jericho, the Lord gave Joshua a very strange strategy—march around the city once a day for six days, then seven times on the seventh day. Then shout and the walls will fall down (Josh. 6:3-5). If Joshua had not followed God’s directions, he would not have succeeded.

Like Joshua, we must trust the Lord and courageously obey no matter what He may require of us. He will never give us a schedule so full that we have no time to meditate on His Word. As we focus on Him and move forward in obedience, we will be sufficient for everything He calls us to do.

► RESPONSE

- What do you fear most in life? What part has God’s Word played in how you have handled your fears in the past?
- If you have made meditation of Scripture a vital part of each day, how has it helped you obey the Lord? If not, what can you do to make time for the Lord and His Word in your daily schedule?

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