

# Keep Trusting God!

## *Lessons for Overcomers:*

Joshua 1:6-9

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**Bethany Church**

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You and I live in a world where good must fight evil. You and I live on the battleground between two kingdoms. When you put your faith in Christ, you don't embark on a pleasure cruise. You change sides and battleships in a war. You don't live in comfort while others sacrifice. You take up your call or you don't. Your generation and those that follow are affected by your choice. You have an assignment in a world of turmoil. The Apostle Paul listed trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword as part of our experience on this earth. He wrote:

*In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*  
(Romans 8:37, NIV)

In Christ we are more than conquerors. We are to live this identity. It is one thing to be a fireman. It is quite another to overcome fires. A fireman has an identity and call. He or she is provided equipment. However, the identity, call and equipment are no substitute for training. To be effective, one must learn to overcome fires. There are lessons to be learned and implemented. For us to live as conquerors there are lessons to be learned and implemented. God is calling us at Bethany to learn and implement these lessons from his word, the Bible.

Lesson #1 is "Don't assume that God is supporting your perspective and actions... even if everything you do is for him." Until you trust him with your life, you are not on the right side. Get on the right side. Lesson #2 is to get wisdom from heaven. Signs of heavenly wisdom have

more to do with character than results. It is more important to look for these signs than the anticipated results because sometimes validation for our actions shows up after death.

Lesson #3 is visible in every notable victory. When Moses commissioned Joshua to lead Israel, he said in the presence of the people:

***Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their forefathers to give them... The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.*** (Deuteronomy 31:7-8, NIV)

Later as Joshua prepared Israel to meet its foes in Canaan, God told Joshua three times to be strong and courageous. When Joshua gave orders to the officers of Israel and especially addressed one group, they responded that they will obey him and said to him: ***“Only be strong and courageous”*** (Joshua 1:18, NIV). Do you think God had a message for Joshua when he spoke through Moses, directly to his spirit and through some of his officers? I think God was emphasizing something vital to overcoming.

I did some research on the Hebrew term we translate “Be strong.” I found that it shows up 290 times in the Old Testament. Frequently, it is encouraged of leaders and believers. Sometimes, however, it describes the hardening of a heart, like that of Moses’ opponent, Pharaoh. Other times it describes the repair of a wall. In each case, it speaks of how one stands when it is easier to give way. To be strong is not to pose as Mr. Universe. It is not to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger. It is to stand in contrary wind. It is to withstand contrary currents. The call to be strong is a call to not give way in difficult circumstances.

I recently read an example of that. A young boy was considered muddled and confused by his teacher. When his mother got wind, she pulled him out of school. He had only three months of formal education. She home-schooled her free-spirited son. As an older youth, he suffered debilitating hearing loss, yet he ended up with a good job, rewarded by the grateful

father, when he heroically saved a youngster from a runaway train. He was a telegraph operator and he made much of it by improving the telegraph. He also improved the incandescent light bulb, so that it was affordable for the average American. In a world lit by candles, he believed that one day only the rich would use them. He “Westinghoused” dogs, cats and even an elephant in a perverse attempt to associate rival George Westinghouse and his use of AC electric current with electrocution. (He was playing the semantic game we see in the abortion debate with words like pro-choice, pro-life, reproductive-rights, and pro-death.) He wasn’t very nice there. He said,

*Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.*

He said:

*Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.*

He had over a thousand US patents in his name. Most of these came from teamwork and improving on other people’s ideas. Thomas Edison had glaring faults, but the belief inculcated by his mother helped him overcome the doubts that debilitate most people.

Jesus said, “**Everything is possible for him who believes**” (Mark 9:23, NIV). When we realize that we were made by an infinite and benevolent Creator, when we truly understand that we were made in God’s image, then most of the limitations we attribute to being human will be recognized for what they are – unbelief. To be human is awesome! To be human is a divine gift and privilege. To be human is to reflect an awesome God. Do you know what Jesus said is the work of God on this earth? He didn’t say love. He didn’t say obedience. He didn’t say fighting evil. He said:

***The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.*** (John 6:29, NIV)

Jesus sees belief as work. Belief is not a passive assent to some principles. It is a conviction that puts us doing, often in contrary circumstance. God said to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous.” Courage is belief prevailing over fear. Courage is acting on faith in fearful circumstance. One is not strong without courage, and one is not courageous without a faith that is stronger than fear.

Joshua was commanded to be strong and courageous. How did he do it? How can you and I become strong and courageous? One, we need to hang with people who are strong and courageous. Faith and courage are infectious. Joshua was mentored by Moses. King David was mentored by Samuel and surrounded himself with courageous people that he both inspired and drew strength from. Who are you hanging with and listening to? Second, we need to consume the Bible as daily food. We need to chew on its words and talk to its author about its message. Without its words forming your thoughts, you will succumb. Literally, God’s word purifies your thinking. It repairs or strengthens the wall of your life that is torn by the assaults of this world. How is the Bible a part of your daily life? Third, we need to exercise the faith we have. Strength doesn’t just happen, and neither does trust. Both must be developed. Just as you build strength by lifting weights and increasing them over time, you build trust as you act in faith and find validation. Grow your trust in God’s word by obeying it. Grow your trust in God’s provision by relying on it. Grow your trust in God’s love by acting on the faith you already have in it. In faith, give him thanks. In faith, offer him praise as you face challenges. Act on his word. Then you’ll be able to keep on trusting when testing comes. Jesus said that whoever puts my teaching into action is like a person who builds their house on a rock and withstands the storm.

God is calling you to be strong and courageous. That’s instruction to fulfill your identity.