

# **“GOD’S IN CONTROL, SO BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

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**Texts for the Sermon: Joshua 1:7-9**

**Introduction. Cadet Sunday.**

What book in the Bible is your Cadet theme verse from?

Who is Joshua? Tell me what you know about him.

Do you know how old he was when God said these words to him? He was 80 years old. How many of you think that’s really old?

Do you know where he was born? He was born in Egypt, he was born a slave in a foreign country. For the first forty years of his life he had to do hard work making bricks out of mud and clay for the Egyptians to build their buildings. He didn’t get to go to school or play sports.

But when Joshua was 40 years old God sent Moses to deliver His people out of slavery. Joshua followed Moses into the wilderness, into the desert to escape Egypt and the Egyptians. Do you know how long Joshua was in the desert? 40 more years wandering and living in the desert.

For the first 80 years of his life, Joshua knew only suffering, pain, hardship, difficulty. Think of the very worst day of your life, and then think about that lasting not just for a day or a month or a year, but eighty years. If you think these past two years with Covid and facemasks and all that stuff have been bad, think of it lasting for 80 years.

And then just when the Israelites finally got to the edge of the Promised Land God promised to give them, Moses died. Moses was the greatest leader ever and now he was dead and God put Joshua in charge of leading Israel and the armies of Israel. Those were huge shoes to fill.

The job God gave Joshua was to lead these millions of people into the Promised Land which we call Israel. But there was a big problem. Who lives in the Promised Land? All kinds of evil people, six nations, six armies and the Israelites were going to have to fight all of them to take over the land God promised them.

Do you think Joshua was a little nervous, maybe even afraid? How many of you would have been afraid?

So what does God tell him? Be strong and courageous. Well that’s easy to say, but hard to do. So what else does God tell him? I will be with you, just like I was with Moses.

Have you ever been in some dark or scary place where you were afraid? Does it help you if someone else is with you? Then it isn’t so scary is it.

Joshua spent the next twenty years leading the armies of Israel in fighting against all the enemies of God. Until he is 100 years old. How many of you think 100 is old?

The Bible says God is always with you and will never leave you or forsake you. Do you believe that? Do you believe you have the supernatural power and presence of God with you always?

The reason we can be strong and courageous is because God has already promised He will be with us wherever we go, He will never leave us or forsake us.

God doesn't tell Joshua to grit his teeth, to grin and bear it, to screw up his will power or his courage on his own. God says be strong because I am with you and if I am with you then you don't have anything to worry about. God is in control.

But that was Joshua, he was a great leader, God called him. What about us, what about ordinary people like you and me? Is what God says to Joshua also true for you and me?

**Hebrews 13:5** ... [God] has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Believe this, repeat this to yourself. God is with me, God will never leave me.

But God does ask us to do some hard things. He promises to be with us and so He asks us to not be afraid, to be strong and courageous and to obey His Word. God told Joshua to know His Word and to obey His Word. Notice how important the Bible is. That is where we get our call, our charge, our courage. If you do what it says you will have good success in life.

**Psalms 1:1-3** Blessed is the man ...

2 [who delights] in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water

that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

**Six ways for boys to be strong and courageous.**

God's command to Joshua isn't just for him, it's for us also.

Let's look at six practical ideas for being like Joshua, six ways for boys to be strong and courageous. And you can do these things because God is with you, God is your strength and help. Rely on Him, depend on Him and do what He says.

***1. Take Responsibility for yourself and your actions.***

Don't make excuses, if you fail, own up to it; if you break it, admit it; if it is your fault, don't blame someone or something else. Don't say the dog ate my homework.

One of our boys got upset one time and threw his shoe and it hit a glass door on a bookcase and broke it. And he said, "Well if that dumb bookcase hadn't been there it wouldn't have broken."

That's an example of blaming something else and not taking responsibility.

When Moses died, Joshua stepped up and took responsibility.

Jesus took responsibility and came down to earth and saved us from our sins. He didn't say tough luck, He didn't say you messed up so deal with it. He came and took responsibility.

Don't complain about life being unfair. Man up, take responsibility for yourself and your actions. Be strong and courageous.

## ***2. Work hard and do the hardest thing first.***

Joshua did this. The very first job God gave Joshua was to attack Jericho. It was the most fortified of all the cities in the Promised Land. It had the highest and thickest walls.

If you have three things you are supposed to do, do the hardest thing first, get it out of the way. If you have two homework assignments, do the hardest one first. That is a way of showing you are strong and courageous.

**Colossians 3:23** Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.  
**Ecclesiastes 9:10** Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

All of us by nature want to be lazy, we look for easy ways or shortcuts to do things. Boys definitely have a tendency to want to be lazy. My five boys would have been lazy if I let them. Don't resent it when your parents tell you to do things and to work hard and get the job done. They are helping you learn something very important later in life.

Work hard, do the hardest thing first, and you will grow to be strong and courageous.

## ***3. Don't say "That's not my job."***

There is a funny picture on the Internet of someone who was painting the yellow lines down the middle of the highway and they painted over a dead raccoon. They said it wasn't their job to remove the dead raccoon.

Don't say, "That's not my job." That is laziness, that is weakness. Be willing to help others, pitch in, many hands make light work. Do for others what you would want them to do for you.

If you see some people working, ask how you can help, even if it isn't your job. Or maybe you have a younger brother or sister who made a mess on the floor. You could clean it up or put it away even though you didn't do it.

Show that you are strong and courageous, remember God is with you.

#### ***4. Help or protect those who are weak or not as strong as you or are struggling, hurting.***

Joshua did this. There was a woman in Jericho who asked for help and Joshua helped her and saved her, even though she didn't deserve it.

God says in His Word we are to protect and help and care for widows and orphans and the poor, in other words, those who are struggling in life, who are not as strong as you are.

Now at your age and in your world one example of that would be on the playground or during recess or after school helping or defending someone from a bully. Don't join sides with the bullies, or with the mean kids.

Another example, eat lunch with the new kid, or invite him to play with you at recess. Notice who is lonely or left out and you be the one to include him.

Another example protect girls, never hit a girl or hurt them. Show them honor and respect.

These examples are a way of being like Jesus who said:

**John 15:13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.

Do unto others as you would want them to do to you.

Be strong and courageous, do what is right, remember God is with you.

#### ***5. Never lie***

Don't try to lie your way out of a problem. Always tell the truth, be trustworthy.

Remember the rule take responsibility, telling the truth and not lying is one way to do that. Remember the rule do the hardest thing. Sometimes telling the truth is the hardest thing, do it anyway.

**Exodus 20:16** You shall not give false testimony.

**Ephesians 4:25** Put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor.

Be strong and courageous, God is with you, He will help you.

## **6. Obey parents**

Obey those God has put in your life to lead you, love you, help you, teach you, protect you. When you honor and respect and obey those who are older and wiser and over you, you are showing wisdom. You are saying those who have gone before have learned some things, they have more wisdom and knowledge than you, and you will benefit by listening and obeying them.

So respect and obey your parents, your teachers, your pastors and elders. Especially your mom.

Why do I say that? Because I had five boys, and I know boys. Boys will usually obey dad pretty quickly, but boys will often disrespect mom and that's not good. My job as a dad was to make sure my boys respected their mom and did what she said.

I heard about a dad who told his son, "When mom asks you to do something, think of me standing right there behind mom asking you to do the same thing."

**Exodus 20:12** Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

**Ephesians 6:1** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

**Proverbs 1:8** Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Obey, especially when it is hard, when you don't want to. Remember be strong and courageous, because God is with you wherever you go.

### **Conclusion and application.**

A little while ago you recited your Cadet Code:

**Cadets code:** A Cadet must be reverent, obedient, compassionate, consecrated, trustworthy, pure, grateful, loyal, industrious, and cheerful.

These six ways to be strong and courageous are related to your Cadets code.

Take responsibility for yourself and your actions.

Work hard and do the hardest thing first.

Don't say "That's not my job."

Help or protect those who are weak or not as strong as you or are struggling, hurting.

Never lie

Obey parents

God is with us, He is the one who helps us do these things, and all the other good works He created and saved us to do.

**John 15:5** ... apart from me you can do nothing.

**Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

**II Corinthians 12:9** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

**II Corinthians 9:8** God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

**I Corinthians 16:13** Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

**Matthew 28:20** Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

God is with you wherever you go, so talk to Him, talk to Him as you are going along, wherever you are going. Ask Him for help, ask Him to take away your fear, ask Him to make you strong and courageous, to do hard things, to do the hardest thing first, to protect those who are being hurt, to obey your parents and teachers.

God is in control, you can be strong and courageous, because He is with you wherever you go.