



## **ENTER** God's presence

**The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.**

**-Psalm 19:8-9**

Heavenly Father, you have called us to be courageous in faith, to trust that you will do the things which you have promised. Lead us into a deeper knowledge and confidence in those promises as we gather around your word and grow in us hearts of courage that will step boldly wherever you lead. Amen.



## **SHARE** life together

- 1. Share your highs and lows with each other?**
- 2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
- 3. What is the greatest act of courage or bravery you have ever witnessed?**
- 4. American pastor and speaker Andy Stanley says, "a single act of courage is often the catalyst for the extraordinary." How have you witnessed this in your own life?**

The first step is the hardest. Seeking help when life is unmanageable. Taking responsibility for a life in freefall. Offering forgiveness when someone has wronged or offended you. Moving forward when fear paralyzes. Changing direction when life is comfortable. Embracing a relationship when vulnerability is risky. The first step is the hardest. Joshua and the people of Israel knew that feeling. The Jordan River was that boundary between the wilderness and the Promised Land. They can't go around it, there are no bridges over it, and there is every excuse as to why it's not a good time or a good place to cross it. But there is life on the other side if they will only have the courage to take the first step and go through the river. Individually and corporately as a Church, we stand on the edge of our own Jordan Rivers in life that God is inviting us to cross. It's a crossing that will take courage and today God commands us to be courageous and take the first step. For his promise is that when we do, the flood waters will be parted, dry land will be revealed and a way forward into fullness of life will be opened up.

Week beginning:  
Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Worship series:

**RESET**



### **VERSE** for the week

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.

**Joshua 1:9**



### **REMEMBER** this week

**Courage is not an absence of fear but a willingness to let faith take precedence over the fears. For courage comes from the presence of God with us and God will never call us to act where his power and promise will not sustain us.**



**LISTEN** attentively

Read Joshua 1:1-11 and 3:5-17

5. **What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
6. **What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
7. **What does being strong and courageous look like to you?**

God repeats the phrase 'Be strong and courageous' to Joshua three times in these first 11 verses of Joshua chapter 1 and the people of Israel say it to Joshua one more time in verse 18. Things that get repeated this often usually carry special significance or call us to pay special attention to them. It is interesting that God instructs Joshua to be strong and courageous at this particular point because this is not the first time Joshua has stood on this side of the Jordan River looking into the promised Land. Some of you might recall the story from Numbers 13 and Deuteronomy 1 of the 12 spies who Moses sent ahead of the people to scout out the land God was to deliver to them. Of those 12, only Joshua and Caleb were confident that God would deliver the land into their hands. The other 10 were overcome with fear when they saw the size of the people and the strength of their fortified cities. As a result of the report of these 10 men the people of Israel refused to cross the Jordan on that first occasion. Because of this, God caused them to wander in the desert for another 40 years until all those who had not trusted his word, that he would deliver the land to them, had died. Failure to step courageously where God was leading caused many to miss out on the blessing of life in the promised land. It did not stop them from being God's people, God was still with them as they walked around in the wilderness for another 40 years, providing them with manna for food and water to drink, but those who lacked courage to trust God's word simply did not get to see the fullness of God's promises fulfilled.

8. **Can you recall and share a time when as a result of performing a single act of courage you received extraordinary or unexpected blessing?**
9. **Consider some of the regrets you have in your life. How many of these come from refusing to take a step of courage?**

Take a close look at Joshua 1:9. For years when I heard this passage read aloud, I heard God commanding Joshua to be strong and courageous. However, look more closely at the punctuation (particularly in the NIV translation). There are two separate sentences or statements here. The more accurate way to understand this passage is not that God commands Joshua to be strong and courageous, rather, he has commanded Joshua – **therefore** he has reason to be strong and courageous. When God commands and directs our path then we can be confident, bold and courageous, because the whole of the Bible attests to the fact that what God says, He will do!

Pastor Charles Stanley defines courage like this, "Courage is the quality of mind or spirit enabling one to meet danger or face opposition or the challenges of life with fearlessness, calmness, and firmness." We know that faith is taking God at his word and acting on the basis of his promises. So courageous faith then is: stepping forward to meet danger, face opposition or the challenges and uncertainty of life with fearlessness, calmness, and firmness because God is true to his Word and will do what he says he will do.

10. **Sometimes courage can be hard to muster up for yourself. What difference might it make if you found your courage in God's promises and power rather than your own abilities?**
11. **Another quote about courage and faith comes from Martin Luther King Jr. who said, "faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." How often do fear of the future or the unknown impede your steps of courageous faith?**



**GROW** deeper

The difference between the first Jordan crossing in Numbers and Deuteronomy, and the Jordan crossing at the beginning of Joshua was that the people, largely due to Joshua's leadership, remembered and trusted that God was with them. Not only that, but they listened to and followed the directions of the Lord. The first time, God commanded them to go into the land and take possession of it. They went in, checked it out, and then retreated because of their fear and the insurmountable challenges that they believed they would face. In Joshua 1:7 God

reminds Joshua to obey his laws and commands. When it comes to the people preparing to cross the Jordan River in chapter 3, Joshua is given some interesting directives from God. With no way over or around the river, Joshua is told to send the priests, along with the ark of the covenant (the primary symbol of God's presence with the people of Israel) and have them walk directly into the river. Acts of courage tend to lead us into unexpected places or to do unexpected things. Yet, when we step where God tells us, when we follow his word and allow it to direct and inform us, no matter how strange the journey might be, God assures us he will lead us to blessings.

12. **How consciously aware of God's word are you when you make important decisions in your life?**
13. **Many TV shows, movies and books have used the line, "they're either incredibly brave or incredibly stupid." How often does fear of the opinion of others or fear of being perceived as foolish or stupid, stop you from taking courageous steps of faith?**



## **LIVE** purposefully

Every challenge, trial or obstacle can be an opportunity to take a courageous step of faith. To move from where you are and into a new place, a new season, a new experience of the depth of God's love and blessing in your life and to bring that to the lives of others. Sometimes taking courageous steps on our own is difficult. This is part of the gift of the church. As part of God's people we can step together in courageous faith, encouraging and supporting one another with examples of God's faithfulness in our wown lives.

14. **What 'Jordan River' are you standing on the banks of in your life right now? What encouragement or support do you need in order to take that first step of courageous faith into the water and cross to the other side?**
15. **What stories could you share from your own life that might encourage or support those who are also trying to take courageous steps with God?**



## **PRAY** intentionally

- Praise God for his promise to always be with you.
- Thank Jesus for his courage and determination to go to the cross for you.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you step courageously wherever God is leading you.



## **BLESS** one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], be courageous, the Lord is with you. Amen.**