

A DEVOTIONAL
BY PASTOR JULIE BLASE

7 DAYS OF
declaration

iSEECHURCH

Day One – COURAGE IS NEEDED

These next seven days we'll set aside some time to meet with our coach, the Holy Spirit, to participate in a sacred pep talk for a new season. The Scriptures call Him the 'Encourager'.

Our Father God has prepared good works for each of us to do. No 'good work' will ever succeed without struggle, and to overcome in that struggle, we'll need courage. We'll be leaning in to hear His voice and echoing some audacious declarations to build a highway of faith to walk on. We often think of courage in militant terms but some of the most daunting things we are called to do are simple acts of obedience, that produce peace and of love. "Speak Lord, we are listening".

Joshua, from the Bible, was called to step into a whole new season and God spoke to him saying:

Joshua 1:6 "Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous."

Before we start, let's keep in mind that we are beloved sons and daughters. We are not slaves or outsiders trying to earn our spot, but members of the royal family of heaven. Because of amazing grace, we hold our heads high knowing it's not because of anything we have done but because of God's great love. Some days it takes courage to believe this.

A few years ago, I was watching a movie with my kids. My spirit ears pricked up when the 'movie dad' said this to his daughter, "Courage is not something you 'have', rather it's something you choose a thousand times a day." (Nim's Island)

Those people we admire aren't 'fearless' but have learned to keep their fear in check because there is something of higher value at stake. That is why when God told Joshua to '**be strong and courageous**', He spoke of the future. Like Joshua, the courage you choose in this next season of your life will be the foundation to your own future and those who follow you. The Father still calls out to the son or daughter who listens, **be strong and courageous, there is blessing ahead!**

DECLARE: Now is the time of the Lord's favour. I am chosen and loved by God and set apart for a good work. I am being equipped for the life of faith, and choose to be strong and courageous. Surely goodness and mercy are following me today. Amen

Day Two – JESUS EXPLAINS

Jesus was sitting with His disciples and preparing them for His physical absence, when he says these words:

"Don't let your hearts be troubled." John 14:1

It can be a confronting thought to realise that we are the stewards of our feelings! Here, Jesus would not ask His disciples to do something they are not capable of, so He says; "do not let your heart be troubled". It is unpopular psychology to instruct someone to 'not feel something', and I acknowledge that denial can be an unhelpful strategy. But Jesus here is metaphorically clapping His hands and getting the boys attention to remind them, that their hearts are theirs to guard. Allowing 'trouble' to have free reign in your heart will not serve you well in the life of faith.

Imagine you are walking up a set of stairs. On the fourth step there is an aggressive spider. So you see it, you acknowledge it is there, and then (depending on your mercy ratio) you either step on it or skip that step and keep moving upward. Feelings can be the same. They happen. You see them, acknowledge them, feel them, discern their value by asking how helpful they are to your future, and then move past them.

In Mark's gospel, Jesus had already told the disciples that they were sailing to the other side of the lake. He loved these guys like sons and used this situation to upskill their faith. What He said to them halfway and during the storm, helps us understand the dynamics of faith.

"Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40)

Their out of control fear robbed them of faith. Letting fear manage your behaviour is the opposite of 'being strong and courageous'. Getting yourself all worked up about what is going wrong is not helping you 'get to the other side'. In a storm, believing takes courage. When we choose to not 'let our hearts be troubled', we 'walk by faith'.

DECLARE: I am aware that Jesus is always here with me. I fix my eyes on Him and choose peace. I declare peace over my heart and mind. I am not afraid. I will be strong and courageous today and surely goodness and mercy are following me today. Amen

Day Three – COURAGE HACKS

Joshua's life is a living epistle of spiritual warfare. From his example we can learn how to 'fight' to possess the thing promised to us. Paul writes to the church: **"These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age."** (1 Corinthians 10:11)

Amazingly, this portion of scripture promises more than a single victory but success in everything.

Joshua 1:6-9 "Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. 8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. 9 This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

There is a lot of good stuff here but let's just choose two.

1. Study this Book ...

To study is not a skimming, or a tick to your daily bible reading, but a thoughtful and concentrated reading. We are invited to discover its intention and allow it to change the way we think about everything. It suggests a prolonged amount of time invested to understand what the writer (Holy Spirit) wanted us to know.

2. Meditate on it ...

Meditate; means to ponder its truths, give deep attention to; wonder at its purpose and revisit it often. Day and Night; implies, often and all the time. Talk about it, sing about it, write about it, think about it, enjoy it.

We all meditate but often without intention and on things that do not hold promise for blessing. Every time you worry or ruminate on something, you are meditating, and are being fashioned into the shape of your thoughts.

DECLARE: I am being changed by the Word of God. I acknowledge your help Holy Spirit as I learn to dwell in the Word richly and to walk according to its wisdom. By your grace I am strong and courageous; and remember that surely goodness and mercy are following me today. Amen

Day Four – COURAGE TO SAY SO

Joshua 1:10 Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, 11 "Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you."

What a spectacular declaration of faith. Joshua demonstrated his trust in God regarding their future and offered himself to the cause. 'With our hearts we believe and with our mouths we declare', this is how faith works. Joshua's words here, heralded the beginning of the end of wandering in the wilderness. Compelled by the word God had spoken to him, he called his team together and made these bold statements. Get ready, we're crossing over, and we are taking possession.

The beginning of a new season always starts with the courage to announce it. Joshua had no proof that this would actually happen but believed wholeheartedly and said so. Their 'promised land' was actually still inhabited by people who were not going to be excited about handing it over. This bold leadership speech took place on the wrong side of Jordan, before the spies had gone in, before the walls of Jericho had fallen and even before he had a strategy. Joshua shows us how to put our faith into action by echoing out loud the word of the Lord. It was not long though, before the soles of their feet were walking on their promised homeland.

The life of Jesus is an object lesson into this kind of faith that creates. He was described as The Word made into Flesh, and His coming illustrated for us this most profound spiritual reality. Before anything appears in this world, it is first spoken out by someone somewhere. The prophets foretold Jesus' birth, His life and death. It takes courage to take a heavenly truth and declare it on the earth. God invited Joshua to co-labour with Him by declaring a new season for the nation. It required him to be strong and courageous. Joshua stepped up, spoke out and his leaders passed it on to the people. It takes courage to pull away from the status quo and become mindful that every word we speak is a seed, sown into our future. What words could you echo from heaven into your world today?

DECLARE: I am strong and courageous. I will agree now with heaven that I am blessed and my children are blessed. I am grateful to co-labour with heaven to declare that the time of the Lord's favour is now. And I know that surely goodness and mercy will follow me today. Amen

Day Five – WE THE PEOPLE

Joshua was, no doubt, afraid in his new role as commander in chief. He had an encounter with the Lord where he was commissioned and warranted the exhortation to 'be strong and courageous'. He released the Word that a new season of conquest was upon them, and began the journey to take possession of what was promised. The Bible records the response from the people in Joshua 1:16-18.

The paraphrased version is, '**great, let's do this and you are the boss, Josh.**'
16 They answered Joshua, "We will do whatever you command us, ... be strong and courageous!"

Never underestimate the power of unity. Agreement is a spiritual principle that unlocks the dynamic power of heaven. When we, the people, come into alignment with the Word from heaven, and with each other, blessing and victory are inevitable. There is a battle recorded in the book of Judges that wraps up with a triumphant song. The first two lines illustrate this Spirit charged possibility:

Judges 5:1 When Israel's leaders took charge, and the people gladly followed. Praise the Lord!

We have been shaped by an individualistic culture and it is a work of the Spirit to come into unity with a heavenly vision and work together for the cause of the Kingdom. Jesus modeled this in the garden of Gethsemane when he said to His Father; "not my will but your will be done".

Is there a Word over your life that you can come into agreement with? Is there a higher reality for your family or your destiny that requires your alignment? Historically, the enemy has used disunity against the Church and divisions have resulted. Since time began, he has undermined heaven's agenda by separating us from each other. However, God has a plan for His church and asks each one of us to take our place, to invest in it and agree that the gates of hell are no match for a consecrated people. There is a future and a hope that Heaven has set aside for us as we agree with God. Surrender is a superpower in the Kingdom of God. By the Grace of Jesus we can be strong and courageous.

DECLARE: I am a recipient of God's favour through Jesus. I am a son/daughter of God, being positioned to inherit the promises. I say yes and amen to heaven's agenda for my life, my family, and my church. I choose to be strong and courageous. Amen

Day Six – COURAGE FOR THE TAKING!

I've done some work with horses and understand what it is to 'take courage'. Sometimes I have had to dig deep and be brave. When my equine friend becomes afraid, I do not allow fear to take charge, or he will lose confidence in me and start making his own decisions. In the same way our hearts can become troubled by an outside influence. Taking courage is the act of sometimes 'behaving stronger than you are feeling'. Consider the frilled neck lizard. He is very afraid when he puffs out that leather mane and runs in the direction of his foe, but it serves him well and lives to see another day.

Matthew 9:22 But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well." At once the woman became well.

We call her, 'the woman with the issue of blood'. I think Jesus would have called her, 'Brave'. She had shown strength and audacity to be in the crowd that day. Her condition made it illegal for her to be out and about and she was certainly the wrong gender to be touching a holy man. She had decided that she would risk it all to be well. And she was rewarded for her courage.

It is astonishing to me that God saw her and honoured her for this. While Jesus was known to be a healer, there was no precedent for healing via fabric. Nope, it was not the garment that healed her, but rather what she believed and what she did about what she believed. Jesus commended her for both faith and courage. She believed in her heart and then she declared, "**if I can only touch his garment, I will be made whole" (v21)**. Jesus' response affirmed that her decision was a noble one.

We all have circumstances that prevent us from receiving our miracle. Courage is yours to take. Stand up, beat your chest if necessary. According to Jesus' style of discipleship, taking courage is the right advice when it's all on the line. In the famous story, where He walks on the water, we hear Him give these same instructions to His men at just such a time. ... they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "**Take courage ..." (Mark 6:50)**

Let's determine in our hearts this year, to take courage and act bravely in His name and for His glory.

DECLARE: I am strong, and I am courageous. Jesus is my anchor in every storm, and He cannot fail. I walk in the plans God has for me, plans for good, to be blessed and be a blessing to others. God has placed me right where I need to be. I am grateful. Amen

Day Seven - BRAVELY WAITING

Psalm 27:13 Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness while I am here in the land of the living. Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.

This scripture seems like the last place in the bible we would need the admonition to be strong and courageous. It is a glorious declaration of praise regarding God's goodness as experienced by King David. Although the shepherd king is confident, with hindsight he understands that, we who read it, may have to endure TIME as a prerequisite to promise. We know this because he indicates a time of waiting and he repeats the line for emphasis.

The words, 'wait patiently', imply a possible delay to fully receiving the blessing. We rarely receive an exact time for the fulfilment of a hope. When Jesus said, "behold I am coming soon", the disciples made the same error in judgement that we still make today. They interpreted 'soon' relative to their experience without factoring in the dynamics of the eternal plan. Let's not get into platitudes here when we all know that waiting, is one of the greatest stretches for our human character. That is why our hope can be in one thing only. Jesus Christ our Lord.

I love the lyric we are singing that says 'my agenda is Jesus', because it recalibrates our vision to who our souls actually long for. We should know that there is no miracle, no achievement and no pleasure in this life that will satisfy us, if it is received apart from Him. The 'good work' we are called to, is gifted to us so that we can discover Him more each day on the journey of faith. It is the raw material of our faith. It is the playing field where we partner with heaven, to see His Kingdom come, in our area of influence.

I, like Paul, am fully persuaded that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly and above what we are asking for. As members of His royal family, our part is to be strong and very courageous as we reveal Him. He promises a reward to those who remain faithful. So, as we fix our eyes and gather up our courage, we press on so that by our lives, His name will be honoured in the earth. As we bravely wait, let's close with a scripture to remind us of the great privilege of being the object of His Grace. In these verses, Paul is writing about the pure wonder of the Gospel.

"... the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them God has chosen to make known among the whole world the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1

DECLARE: I am loved by God. I am strong and courageous. I am blessed to be a blessing today. I fix my eyes on Jesus, the Son of God, who sends me into my world. I am indwelt by the Spirit who strengthens me in my waiting. Amen