



“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” –Joshua 1:6-9 (NIV)

Dear brothers and sisters,

It won't take long in your journey of faith in Christ to find yourself standing before a seemingly insurmountable wall or obstacle. It may be a relational disaster, a financial catastrophe, or a threatening health issue to name but a few possibilities. In Joshua chapter 1, we find the young aide of Moses now called upon to fill some big shoes. He is to lead God's people into the Promised Land.

Do you see what is happening at this point in history with God's people? The people are literally on the edge of stepping into the promises of God. They are inches from realizing “the promise,” but it must have felt like miles and miles when they realized their first obstacle was the most fortified city in all of Canaan—Jericho.

Does God give Joshua a psychological pep talk here? “Go get ‘em boy! Be strong and courageous!” No he tells him **how** to absolutely be centered in his strength. To paraphrase, he says, “*Joshua if you want success in life you've got to meditate on my Word day and night; and you must have it on your lips, memorize it—speak it as you go about your day. Hold it close to your heart for it is my wisdom that brings life and prosperity. But don't merely 'know' it; 'be careful' to **do** my Word and don't turn from it! It's not enough to just know it or say it. The purpose is to 'do' it—so you'll discover the promise that's waiting for you!*” We must do God's Word! But how can we do it if we don't know it, meditate on it, memorize it and have it on our lips—close to our hearts? How can we possibly have the strength we need if our diet is one of merely nibbling a few morsels from God's Word on Sunday morning for less than one hour out of 168 per week?

How much of it do we need to ‘do’? We must be careful to do all of it. We need to obey—and not just our favorite parts. Then we'll discover success. Too many Christians are expecting 100% success and blessing from God while giving 25% obedience. It doesn't work that way. We must carefully ‘do’ the commands of our Lord to receive His blessing. It's a conditional promise. “If you do this, “then” you will discover this...

Not only does God tell us how to be strong but he reminds us—no—he actually commands us (vs. 9) to live with courage! What is courage? Courage is faith in the face of fear. It's not courageous for me to ride a bicycle without training wheels, but it is for my 5 & 7 year old.

Lindsay just recently discovered the joy and freedom of riding all by herself. You should have seen her face and heard her shout with excitement. As her father, that moment will be forever etched in my memory.

She was terrified at first! So what gave her the courage? Faith. Her fear was real but her faith in me running by her side, reminding her that I wouldn't let go until she was ready, gave her the courage necessary for a breakthrough! You should have heard her arguing with me when I insisted that the training wheels were coming off. "No daddy!" she insisted. But daddy knew it was time... time for a breakthrough.

Let me ask you—where do you need a breakthrough? It's long overdue, isn't it? Time to remove the training wheels?

What is your Jericho?

Will you let the fear of your Jericho keep you from entering your promised land? Will you let sinful weaknesses keep you from discovering the promise of prosperity and success that God has for you? (Genesis 4:7)

Here is the million dollar question for us today: Will we let fear & disobedience stunt our growth in Christ or will we exhibit Christian strength and courage like Joshua?

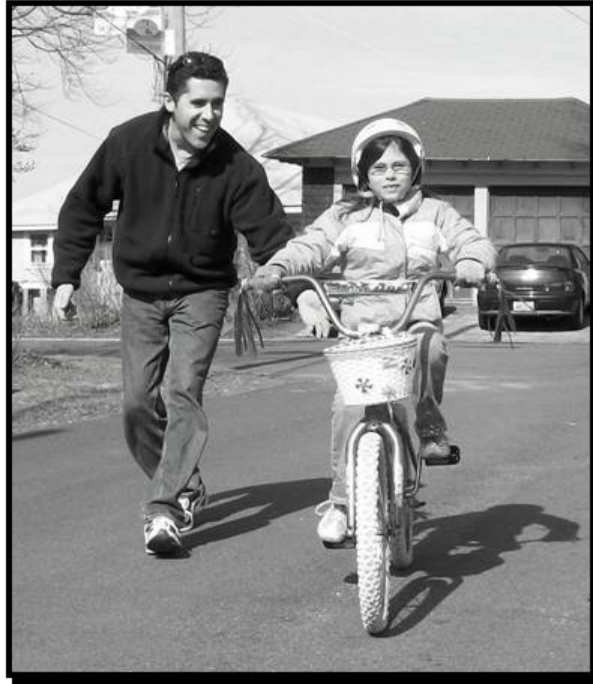
Remember, God has promised that *he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...* (Philippians 1:6). When you embraced the free, underserved grace of God in Christ Jesus the 'good work' began. Now... today...remember... You are not riding your bicycle alone—someone is running with you. And he is a good daddy. His promise is to carry His good work in you on to completion—His ultimate purpose of conforming you to the likeness of His Son. (Romans 8:27-29).

He will see you through ...
and cheer you on ...
and share your joy ...
as He leads you to your breakthrough!

He did it with Joshua. He's done it and still does it with me. He will do it with you.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. -Hebrews 12:1-3

Hang in there. Don't lose heart. Let's ride!



God bless you!

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Going Deeper... Faith

The word “faith,” which is English for a Greek noun (*pistis*) formed from the verb in the phrase “believe into” (*pisteuo*), gets the idea of trustful commitment and reliance better than “belief” does. Whereas “belief” suggests bare opinion, “faith,” whether in a car, a patent medicine, a protégé, a doctor, a marriage partner, or what have you, is a matter of treating the person or thing as trustworthy and committing yourself accordingly. The same is true of faith in God, and in a more far-reaching way.

It is the offer and demand of the object that determines in each case what a faith-commitment involves. Thus, I show faith in my car by relying on it to get me places, and in my doctor by submitting to his treatment. And I show faith in God by bowing to his claim to rule and manage me; by receiving Jesus Christ, his Son, as my own Lord and Savior; and by relying on his promise to bless me here and hereafter. This is the meaning of response to the offer and demand of the God of the Creed.

Sometimes faith is equated with that awareness of “one above” (or “beyond,” or “at the heart of things”) which from time to time, through the impact of nature, conscience, great art, being in love, or whatever, touches the hearts of the hardest-boiled. (Whether they take it seriously is another question, but it comes to all—God sees to that.) But Christian faith only begins when we attend to God’s self-disclosure in Christ and in Scripture, where we meet him as the Creator who “commands all men everywhere to repent” and to “believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ ... as he has commanded us” (Acts 17:30 ; 1 John 3:23 ; cf. John 6:28 ff.). Christian faith means hearing, noting, and doing what God says.