

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



A Formula for Courage

KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:5–9 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Joshua 6 | Proverbs 3:5–6

► SUMMARY

Where do you turn to for courage? Where do you go to strengthen yourself for everything you must face?

I recall the first time I preached a sermon and how feelings of inadequacy troubled me. My mother could see I was nervous about standing up in front of the church and knew I needed encouragement. So she said to me, “I want to give you a verse of Scripture that God has given me for you.” She then handed me a piece of paper with Joshua 1:9 written on it: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

I tucked that verse of Scripture into my pocket and walked to the church. When I got to the corner across from where the church was located, I pulled out that little slip of paper and read it again. That verse taught me the awesome principle that when you or I need courage, we cannot look to ourselves or our own abilities to find it. Instead, we can go forward with confidence, knowing that the Lord God is with us. He is the One who empowers, equips, and enables us to serve Him.

That day, God filled me with unusual courage as I preached, and afterward I walked away knowing that more happened through that sermon than I could ever have accomplished on my own. The Holy Spirit not only guided my words, but He also opened the ears of the people listening and worked in their hearts. I saw the truth of Joshua 1:9 lived out powerfully. And that verse has become an anchor in my life, helping me to face the opportunities, obstacles, and challenges that have arisen throughout the years.

► SERMON POINTS

My question to you is: Do you have Scripture passages you hold on to that remind you of the Source of courage who never fails you? My mother set me on the right path, anchoring me to God’s truth. I’ve faced many difficulties as a pastor, yet through His Word, Jesus has unfailingly and faithfully led me.

Therefore, I would say that the best thing you can do is to focus on how God empowers you, through the Bible, to live for Him. Because when you sink Scripture into your heart and it becomes a way of living, He leads you to the success that is truly worthwhile. That may not mean earthly renown, wealth, or any of that. Rather, it is a victory that pierces much deeper into the heart and soul—one that has lasting and profound value in eternity.

So what does Scripture instruct you to do so you can courageously face whatever happens? How do you overcome fear, inadequacy, and discouragement—three of our worst enemies? You must understand that:

1. Your intimacy with God determines the impact of your life and ministry. It is the time you and I spend getting to know the Father better, interacting with Him through His Word and in prayer, and being transparent before Him that strengthens us. When you spend time discovering who the Lord is—His attributes, character, and love for you, His child—you realize who is truly in control of all things and nothing can stand against Him. But you also recognize the importance of submitting to His commands and His timing.

2. God acts on behalf of those who wait for Him. Do you respect the Lord enough to wait on His timing? I think of how God directed the people of Israel to take a strange course of action—marching around the enemy city of Jericho for seven days—rather than follow a typical battle offensive. Because the Israelites waited on God, He gave them a stunning and memorable victory (Josh. 6). The same is true for you: Always wait on God.

3. You must fight your battles on your knees. Whenever a problem or hardship arises in your life, your first impulse may be to check your arsenal and come up with a battle plan. But resist that, and make prayer your first response. Ultimately, God is your Commander-in-Chief, and He knows the best strategy for your success. Yes, there will be times when you're mistreated, circumstances are confusing, and the Lord's directions don't make sense. However, Proverbs 3:5-6 promises, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." God will lead you to victory in the very best manner.

4. You reap what you sow, more than you sow, later than you sow. The amount of effort you invest in your intimate relationship with God is always revealed when new challenges appear. The more devotion and faith you have sown over time, the greater your courage on the day of battle.

5. Adversity is God's bridge to a deeper relationship with Him. The challenges and troubles you experience reveal your fears and the ways you rely on yourself rather than Jesus. Through adversity, He reminds you that He is the One who fights for you and provides. And because He is all-powerful, unfathomably wise, and unconditionally loving, you can put your full faith in Him and have unfailing confidence for whatever you may face.

6. Disappointments are inevitable, but discouragement is a choice. You will face setbacks. You will encounter delays, obstacles, and events that appear to throw you off course. What is important is that you do not accept that as the end of your story but continue serving God with faith.

► RESPONSE

Your courage, friend, grows out of the relationship you have with God. Therefore, cultivate intimacy with Him by embracing Him as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. And as a way of preparing yourself to be fearless for whatever may come, evaluate your walk with Him by asking these questions:

- Does my lack of courage reveal that I do not know God as intimately as I could?
- What is my first response when challenges arise? Do I immediately turn to people, my own resources, or other earthly sources to form a combat strategy? Or do I fight my battles on my knees and wait on God?
- What am I sowing into my life and the lives of my loved ones? Am I clinging to God's Word, focusing on the Lord, and trusting Him with every trial? Am I keeping an attitude of confidence in Him?
- What does the adversity I am facing reveal about me? What am I relying on that is failing? What Scripture could I claim as an anchor to my faith in Jesus?

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