

Joshua 1 "The Lord Calls You to do Hard Impossible Things"

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Date: 06 September 2026

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[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Just bow your heads in prayer as you stand. Father, you know how things in our culture can make it hard to hear your Word. And we are entering into a part of your Word today, Father, where that is definitely the case. And so Father, we ask that you help us to sow, hear, and receive your Word, knowing that you who are the good, the true, and the beautiful, have revealed to us your Word, which is true, and good, and beautiful. And we might so listen to our culture and be able to commend and defend your Word, but even more importantly, that we might receive all that you desire to give us in and through your Word this morning. And so we ask that your Holy Spirit would do that gentle but powerful work in our hearts. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated.

I'm going to do something a bit unusual. Joshua chapter 1, that's what we're looking at, verses 1 to 9 primarily. And I'm going to read the first three verses. And the first three verses go like this.

[2:25] After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant, is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. The book of Joshua is the story of the people of Israel entering into the promised land. It's a story of conquest. And so I really need your prayer over this sermon series. We're not going to look at every single verse in Joshua. We're going to do it in 10 to 12 weeks. So sometimes I'll just say this is what's going on here and just summarize it. But I really need your prayers, more so than normal, because there's five really big areas where

I could go with the book of Joshua. And just roughly what they are, I could talk about modern politics. I could talk about archaeology. I could talk about apologetics. I could talk about what the text means.

And I could talk about what the text means to me and you and why you should read it. Archaeology, there's piles of debate behind this book. And all I'm going to say is, I'm going to put in the announcements this coming week, I'm going to give Morris a link that people can go to on a YouTube video. I think it's about an hour long. Very good one on the dating of Jericho and a few other things in the book of Joshua. But I'm going to go, just so you know, there's the traditional dating and then there's the very modern mainline dating. And I'm just going to, I'm not going to talk about any other week. I'm just going to say something now. And from now on, I'm just going to assume it. And that is the traditional dating is that what's being described here either happened in the year 1406 BC, give or take, or 1220 BC, give or take. And the dating has to do with some

archaeological stuff and how you read different parts of the first of the book and the first five books of Moses. And that leads me to the second thing about politics, because I don't want to get dragged down rabbit trails of politics, which I could easily do because I'm interested in politics.

But what I want to say is, as you go into it, you're going to very, very clearly see, even right off the bat, Israel go in and conquer the land. Obviously, there's some political implications that in terms of what's going on right now in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza and Jordan and Lebanon and that Egypt and that whole region, it obviously has some types of political implications. You can add to that the fact that there's a large segment of the general evangelical world who would say that God's promises to Israel means we have to support Israel. And I don't want to go down any of those rabbit trails on this book. One of the things we might do if there's an interest is I might organize a circle time, so to speak, end of October, early November, where we can gather maybe on a late Saturday afternoon and have Coke or coffee and hot chocolate and donuts and just have a free-for-all conversation, where you ask me questions and challenge me. That would be good. Maybe we'll do that. We'll see.

But while I'm not going to get into any of those things about the promises to Israel in the modern state of Israel, the book is going to have certain types of implications that are unavoidable.

[6:07] And it just has to do with some of the arguments that we would support and some of the arguments that we would reject. There's other arguments other than this. But what this book clearly does reject is one of the main arguments used. This is the only time I'm going to talk about something political and you can challenge me afterwards. That's completely fine. Send me emails if you're watching online. And that there's one thing, it's just a fact, that means that a certain type of argument Christians should never accept. And the class of arguments that Israel is not indigenous to the land, that they are a colonial occupying power, you can't read the book of Joshua as a Christian and accept that argument. You have to reject it. This book is talking about Israel entering the land in 1406 BC. That means they have been in that land because there's been continuous inhabitation for 3400 years.

And as well as that, because I've heard people get this completely wrong, and this is the only other fact, the people that the Jewish people are displacing in this book are not Arabs. They are displacing Canaanites. Arabs don't enter into this territory until the mid-600s or approximately 2,000 years after this book. So all I'm going to say is you can have, there's all sorts of other arguments you can do about Israel's actions and Palestinians and all that. There's all sorts of good ones, but one of the most popular ones in North America, a Christian just has to reject. You just have to reject.

1406 Israel enters into this part of the world, and so these other things are just wrong. The other three, well, one of them is as you get into the book, and if you look at Wikipedia, which increasingly is a really good way to find out a left-wing consensus on a whole pile of things, that's often what Wikipedia has become from what it used to be. But you'll see that this is a real big battleground text on why you shouldn't have anything to do with the Bible, why you shouldn't be a Christian.

There are claims that this book is teaching genocide, it's teaching race hatred, it's teaching othering, it's encouraging violence, it's encouraging pride and presumption and modern Israeli policies, and a whole pile of things are often alleged to be in this book. And there's six or seven or eight of things that we need to do with them, and we need to deal with them, and we need to deal with them.

So just so you know, what I'm going to do is I'm not going to have probably one sermon where I just talk about them all. There's different strands of complaints, or not complaints, what are the words that I wrote down? I should look at my notes, eh? Indictments. There's seven or eight indictments against the Christian faith in this book, and I'm going to deal with them one at a time as they come up. In fact, this week I'll deal with one indictment in the text, which is often used against the Bible and against this story. But I'm not going to, but I am going to look at them. But I want to have the focus, the majority of my sermon, so other than this longer introduction, I want to have the focus on what it meant, and what it means, and why Christians should be reading it. And I want to be able to deal with some of the apologetic issues as they come up, because I want everybody to be a Christian. I think Jesus really did rise from the dead. I think he is the hope of the world. I think he is the only savior. Jesus believed and trusted the Old Testament, so I believe and trust the Old Testament. And I want it to remove anything that makes it impossible for you to think that the Bible might be something that Jesus is someone you actually need to have in your life. And I think the

book of Joshua, it comes from the good, the true, the beautiful God, and I think the way it describes the things it will help you to do in your life are good and true and beautiful. I mean, one of the things that the book is going to constantly be looking at, we're going to look at in a moment, is it's this call to do hard things. The call to do hard things, which is a perennial issue. So pray that I can stay in my lane and not keep going off into other lanes. And as I said, if there's lots of accumulative questions, after my eight o'clock service, somebody came at me, not like in a very friendly way, asking me what implications from something. I'm quite willing to have a coffee time or a Coke time or hot chocolate time, and we'll just handle these things in a circle, not a lecture format. So please pray. Let's read the text again, okay? And it goes like this. If you turn in your Bibles, Joshua 1, 1 to 3.

[10:57] After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses's assistant, Moses, my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you, just as I promised Moses. Now it's very significant. It's easy to miss, but it's very significant that the book begins with a funeral, so to speak, or that after the reception for the funeral is over. It begins with a funeral. It's very significant to the whole book, and it's part of the reason why, although it's a complicated book nowadays, and because of the issues of alleged genocide, etc., Christians don't want to read it. Historically, this has been a very popular and powerful book to read, and it's partially captured in why this opening sentence is so important. And it's reflected in the original language, if you knew it, about how it describes Moses and how it describes Joshua. But what you need to understand is this.

Moses, okay, Moses is like the superstar of superstars of superstars in the Old Testament. He is the greatest prophet by far. Only to him did God speak in such a particular way. Only for him that all of these remarkable things happen. And he is like the superstar of the superstar of the superstars. And that's described in the language, in the original language. And Joshua is just a servant to give you a sense of what that means is imagine this. I don't know. Sorry, this is a basketball analogy. So some of you are going to go just over your head. But probably many of you have heard, at least have heard of LeBron James or Michael Jordan. And there's a big debate as to who is the goat? Who is the greatest of all time? Is it LeBron or is it Michael Jordan? At coffee time, if you ask certain people of a certain age who's the greatest of all time, Michael Jordan or LeBron, you'll get a conversation going about it. It doesn't matter which one it is. I'm just going to use the example of Michael Jordan. So Michael Jordan at his peak,

Chicago Bulls, I'm his assistant. I am a short, slow, untalented, non-basketball playing white guy. He is the greatest of all time. And imagine that we go, Michael Jordan has to go into a key playoff victory to win the game. And at the last second, he sprains his foot. And so he claps me on the back and says, George, you're on in my place. Well, that wouldn't happen. But that's a little bit of what's happening in this book. Moses is the greatest of all time. Joshua is like way, way down at the bottom. And God says to Joshua, okay, Moses is dead. Joshua, take him into the promised land.

[14:00] Moses, God is asking Joshua to do something which he would have viewed as impossible. It's not just a hard thing. It's an impossibly hard thing. And so you'll see as the book develops, one of the regular themes is this call to do hard things, impossible things. And wisdom, I think wisdom, which is ultimately good and beautiful and true, beautiful, good, true wisdom about the context of doing hard, impossible things. Now, some of you might say, okay, George, that's very interesting. You're going to talk about all of those things. And I am maybe a little bit curious about listening to it. But George, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Right off those three verses, there's like two huge problems that are going to stop me from listening. I mean, the first one is, is this saying that God is going to actually defeat all these people? Like he's like, he's like a drone hellfire thing that defeats people? And the second thing is, how can he give that land to other people? Like that's just wrong.

And what gives him the right to do that? The fighting we're going to deal with at another time. You just have to park that, write it down in your notes, make sure I deal with it down in the future, not this sermon. But let's look at that particular first thing about what right does he have to God have to give the land. And to answer that question, I want to ask a question back. Who does the land belong to? You see, the indictment implies something, implies something as just being obvious.

But it's not obvious at a whole lot of levels. I mean, you can get into debates as to whether the land belongs to the king, whether the lands belong to the idols, whether the lands, which by the way, they might have actually said to us, they wouldn't actually said that the land belongs to them as much as it belongs to their idols, their gods, their goddesses, which, you know, we assume one type of thing, and the ancients, if you could go back in time, would go, what? What are you talking about? That's...

You know, but is it the king, who's often semi-divine or a god himself? Is it the idols? Is it the tribe? Like, is it the people? Is it the individual who owns the land?

Now, here's where the Bible goes in a way which is very, very, very unsettling to modern Canadians. But if you press into it, it's actually very wonderful. You see, God would say, the Bible teaches that the land belongs to the Lord because he is the creator and sustainer. The land doesn't belong to the king. It doesn't belong to the tribes or the families, definitely not to the gods and goddesses. The law, the land belongs to the Lord because he is the creator of the earth and the sustainer of it. Now, that's a little bit unsettling, but another implication of that is far more unsettling to us, and that is, okay, if you're saying that the land belongs to the Lord, who do I belong to? Who do human beings belong to? So, once again, in Canada, people would say, well, ultimately, of course, I belong to myself. And in fact, it's often now in the world, whatever I, you know, and I need to find my real me and all of that. But if not that, then there's, because it's conflicting, the state, people belong to the state, people belong to parents, people belong to themselves, people belong to corporations. You know, there's a contesting thing as to who people belong to, but the Bible would give one very simple but shocking and unsettling but ultimately wonderful answer, that you and every human being belong to the Lord because he is the creator and the sustainer of human beings. And so that the way that a person is to understand who they are is that ultimately, in fact, and this isn't just, I mean, there's a wonderful emphasis that comes in the rest of the Bible, but every single human being that you see walking out there, the fentanyl addicts aren't, don't belong to fentanyl. They belong to the Lord. The politicians that way, they belong to the Lord.

[18:40] The land ultimately belongs to the Lord. We are called to be stewards of something that he owns. And just as if I was to, let's say, allow one of my kids to have a car, and for a variety of reasons, I kept, made the insurance joint and I've made the payments, but it's ultimately mine. I haven't given it to them. I'm just allowing them to use it. And if I started to think that they were abusing the car, I would take it back. And none of you would say, how come you took the car away from your son or your daughter? That's their car. I'd say, no, no, no. It was my car. My car. I was paying for the insurance. I was paying for the gas. It's my car. I can take it back. And every one of you would agree with me. And as you're going to see in the whole thing, as to why the land is taken and given has to do with these types of issues. Now, it's very, very unsettling, but it's actually at the end of the day, as you press into this idea that the Lord belongs, it is both, you see, it's a wonderful, it is what protects us to have autonomy as individuals in the face of the state.

You belong to the Lord. Every human being belongs to the Lord. And that gives them a type of dignity that they have intrinsic. And it's not just that white people or black people or North Americans or Africans or Asians belong to themselves. Like, every single human being of every nation belongs to the Lord. We, of course, will see in a moment that we belong to God by nature being created. But more importantly is you need to belong to Him by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. And it's on one hand, it's a protection against tyranny. In terms of the land, it's a protection against whether they be communist megaprojects or capitalist megaprojects that want to rape and pillage the land. It is a protection against that. There is a limit because the land belongs to the Lord. And there's an, and the day there's a type of judgment about how you exercise your stewardship. And it also is very wonderful at an individual level because it takes the weight of being off your shoulders. It's not all up to me. It never is. I belong to the Lord. And He has, in a sense, a role and a place in dealing with the things that are in your life, a proper place in dealing with them.

So we're stewards, not owners. But some people may say, okay, well, George, that's interesting. I have to meditate upon it. I must say I don't entirely like the idea that I don't belong to myself, that I ultimately belong to the Lord. Some people might hear that and hear it the way it's intended to be, that it's the first glimmer of hope and peace and relief and a lifting of burdens and loads off of you. But George, the text seems to indicate that the Lord is fighting for these Jewish people as if they're somehow special. There's something about their biology and their genetics that makes them special. And it just seems as if it's opening the door to conquer the whole world. Well, we're going to

deal with the violence in subsequent sermons. But the Bible, the text that we're looking at puts two huge limits to show you that nobody should read the text this way. That's not what's happening. But let's look at verse four. Actually, we'll read verse three again to get the context. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given you, just as I promised to

Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the great sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. So the first limit is that it's just for this particular piece of land. It's not that you can, like the Koran basically teaches a type of worldwide conquering. And that's not at all in this text for the Jewish people.

There's a specific part of the world that is to be their land. And then you might say, okay, George, that still sounds really weird. Like it still sounds like there's favoritism and prejudice. And once again, that's not going on. And so we're going to look at the next five verses. And then I'm going to sort of, because there's these several themes that go in and out of it. So I'll read the whole verse, and then we'll go back and look in bits and pieces to show why there's a very second, very, very important caveat in this command. So read with me verses five to nine, and maybe you'll start to see it. Verse five, no man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Now, once again, if this is like a worldwide conquest, that's like a really weird, that's a weird promise. But that's, I'll read it again, no man shall be able to stand before you, no woman, all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. Here's a very important thing. I will not leave you or forsake you.

[23:58] Be strong and courageous. By the way, you're going to now see this, one of the many recurring themes why, like a hundred years ago, this would have been a very popular book to be read.

Not now, but a hundred years ago, and in many parts of the world, a very popular book to be read. Verse six again, be strong and courageous. For you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their forefathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses, my servant, commanded you. That's the first five books of the Bible. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of the law, that's those five books, shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night.

I just have to say, there's this one really neat thing in the original language for this word, meditate. It actually is literally mumble or mutter. And what it's implying is that, you know, as you go through your day, you want to, he wants you to memorize the scripture. And you know how some people were there, you know, one of the problems we'll have is their self-talk, you know, I'm never going to be good enough. They're sort of mumbling and muttering under their breath. And what it's saying here is the first five books of the Bible, that's what you should be muttering under your breath.

Mutter scripture. Think about scripture. Have that be your self-talk rather than this other type of stuff, you know. You know, rather than I'm really, I'm the best or I'm not good enough or all those other things that we mutter to ourselves. Mutter, mutter these five books. I'll read it to you again.

Verse 8, this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it, mutter, mutter it, on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your, for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.

[26:19] Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. So what's the second type of big limit to what's going on in this text? Is that the first big limit is this. I'll give you the big idea, then I'll make a nuance with it. The Lord isn't looking for Jews to go into the land. He's looking for worshippers to go into the land. Now, Romans 11 and other parts of the Bible very clearly teach that God is not finished with the Jewish people, but the second thing is connected to it. If you go and you look at the Old Testament prophets and other parts of the Scripture, you'll see that a regular theme within the Bible as it develops, within the Old Testament, what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh, is that God didn't choose the Jewish people because they were the greatest, the best, they were the goats, they were the most holy, they were most special.

He did it as an act of grace, and impartially if you look at it from the point of view of 1 Corinthians 1 and 1 Corinthians 2, it's how he shows the wisdom of the wise and the power of all their foolishness by using this small, tiny, powerless people. Because one of the reasons that Joshua has to be encouraged to be strong and courageous is that he was there 40 years ago. He was one of the two people who went with a group of 12 to scout out the land. And if you go back and you read it in the

book of Numbers, the 12 come back and 10 of them say, listen, there's no way we can cross the Jordan River and going into that land. Technologically, they are vastly superior to us. Almost the equivalent of first world soldiers going against the modern U.S. Army. The technological advantage was quite huge. The technological advantage is huge. They have fortified cities. There's giants. They're too numerous. There's no possible way we could go. Joshua came back and said, we can do it because the Lord will do it. But he knows all of those types of things. He knows how hard and difficult and maybe impossible it is unless God does something.

And so the point of all of this is that it's God's grace for these people. It's not none of the language that's in the text says that it's a reward. It's connected to their accomplishments or anything like that. It's an act of God's grace and kindness. And as we see, his plan was to have the kindness first to the Jewish people and from the Jewish people to the entire world. And you'll see that even in the book of Joshua as it goes on later on and on.

But he's looking for worshippers. And this brings up, out of these verses, one of the big ideas, not just in the book of Joshua, but the entire Bible and how the old, the Tanakh and the New Testament fit together. And that's this big idea. I should have had it up on the screen. I forgot to do it.

God's concern is this. God's plan is this. His people in his place, in his presence, under his saving rule. That's this big theme from Genesis chapter 12 to the end of the book of Revelation. God's concern that he will have his people in his place, in his presence, under his saving rule. And we see that embodied and made very specific here in the book of Joshua.

[30:10] And you see it in the Old Testament. And you'll notice if you continue on to read the Old Testament, the nation of Israel is eventually, the majority of them kicked out of the land. They lose their kingship. And they'd lose that because they stop obeying the Lord and worshipping him, because that is his heart. His plan is to have his people in his place, in his presence, under his saving rule.

So people might say, well, okay, George, are you saying then that every Christian should move to Israel? Like, don't you know the Jewish people? No, no, no, no. I don't say that. And I don't just say that just because I say that that's not what this text is teaching us. And it's because Jesus changes everything. Jesus changes everything. And the resurrection of Jesus changes everything. If you go back and you look at Luke chapter 24, you'll see that Jesus says twice that everything in the Old Testament is pointing to him. He is the culmination of these promises and the launching of things in a different direction. And it's all about him. And so you could say that only in Jesus, not only can you say this is what you should say. So, I mean, in other words, if the book of Joshua just stopped there and there wasn't the rest of the Bible and you didn't know about them being kicked out of the land because of their rebellion and hatred, and you don't know about Jesus and the fulfillment of the promises and the promises to be a greater prophet than Moses, the covenant to David, all of those things. If you don't know that, then you just have to stick with that. But we don't read it just as if it's just this. We read it in light of Jesus who changes everything. And it's because of Jesus, he went through a true and greater slavery. I mean, he takes us out of a true and greater slavery. Moses brought people out of the bondage. Jesus is the true and greater Moses who takes us out of a true and greater slavery, which is to sin and death and submission to idols. And he is the one who is the true and greater Joshua who takes us through a true and greater Jordan, which is the valley of the shadow of death and death itself. And he is the one who is the true and greater Joshua in the sense that he takes us out into a true and greater promised land. When we put our faith and trust in Christ and we are united with him, we are taken out of a greater slavery, cross a greater barrier, which is the valley of the shadow of death, and promise of a greater future, which is a true and greater promised land to dwell with God in a renewed heaven and earth for all eternity. Jesus changes everything.

And in Jesus's words, the final words in Matthew, he says to his people, go into every people group on the planet. I don't want there to be a people group anywhere on the planet where there aren't worshippers of me. And I want you to not understand that you have to go back to Jerusalem.

God is not finished with the Jewish people in Israel. That's very clear in the scriptures. But for you, your place is where you go in that people group. And I want you to be in that place knowing that this is the place that he has called you to be. And you are to be in his presence in that place. And you are to be his people in his presence under his saving rule in that place for the good of the city, in terms of sharing the gospel, and the good of the city so that you teach well. If you're in the government, you lead well. If you're in an embassy, you do embassy things well, to start businesses

well, to run businesses well, to write songs, develop dances, to clean up the neighborhood, plant gardens, grow troughs, be there for the good of the city. Share the gospel. Be there for the good of the city.

And know that for that time, I live in Ottawa. My true ultimate citizenship is heaven. My true ultimate king is Jesus. But he has put me in this place to be in his presence, to be under his rule, his saving rule, and to do strong and be strong and courageous and do difficult things in this place for his glory.

[34 : 33] That's how I'm trying to understand myself. Maybe he'll call me to live somewhere else. And when I'm there, I am to be with his people, because that's why God has called me to be there. I'm to be there as part of his people. I am to be there in his presence. And I am there to be under his saving rule wherever I am. Friends, brothers and sisters, he's called us to be in this city for such a time as this, to seek the true good of this city, the true good of the university, the true good of the civil service, the true good of Parliament Hill, the true good of the businesses, the true good of your neighborhood, the true good of your neighbors, the true good of your family, and to share the gospel with them under his saving rule. That's what he's called you for.

And to do that, knowing that Jesus came to seek you and die on the cross for you, you know that as you are now one of his people, and you are here because he has called you to be here, at least for this season of your life, and you are here to be under his saving rule in his presence, you know because of Jesus' death on the cross for you that he is for you.

He is with you. He is for you. He is for you. That isn't just pop psychology stuff, but for us in Christ, he is for you.

Now, as we see here in this text, and which is why it's this constant refrain to be strong and courageous, the Lord will call you to do hard things.

And I know what the hard things are. I mean, for some of you here, you're new Canadians. Welcome to Canada. We're really glad you're here. And just coming to Canada must have been an unimaginable hard, almost completely unimaginably hard thing, leaving behind maybe prosperity or position or whatever to come to a very different land, maybe with a different language, with a very, very different culture.

[36 : 47] He's called you to do that hard thing. Maybe it's to attempt that PhD. Maybe it's to start that business. Maybe it's to deal with an abusive husband or an abusive dad. Maybe it's to deal with an abusive boss.

Maybe it's to bring some major culture change to your place of work. He's called you to do hard things. That's what he's called you to do, and me.

So be strong and courageous, knowing him, his presence, his word, and his will. Like, it's very interesting. If you look at just very briefly, look at verse 7. One of the things about being strong and very courageous is being strong and courageous to read the Bible and actually want to put it into practice.

Look at verse 7. Only be strong and courageous, very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses, my servant, commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

It takes courage to say, you know what? Yes, the world is telling me not to do this. The world is saying this is a bad book. This is only going to harm you. Don't get extreme.

[37 : 55] No, no. Be strong and courageous. Read the word. Have it take in. Fill your mind. Shape your mind. Form your understanding of what the world is that you live in. Be strong and courageous and persist in the word.

Come to a church where the Bible is preached. Be part of the men's group or small groups or women's groups and Sunday school and youth groups where the word is brought to you and where we can discuss it and pray for each other and encourage each other.

But be strong and courageous to know his word. And it's not, you see, what makes Joshua able to take the land? God doesn't say to him, you know, man up.

Put on your big boy pants. He doesn't say visualize success. You know, imagine everybody that you're going to fight are wearing no clothes or, you know, or manifest or do something like that. He says, no, it wasn't because Moses was special, but because I am profoundly special that he was able to do those things. And I am the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

[39 : 00] So do those hard things of confronting the bully or of taking that big step of faith. Do hard things and be part of a church. Pray that we will be the type of church where we can help people

discern those things.

We won't be the type of church that automatically says, oh, that sounds like really hard. Maybe you shouldn't do it. We want to be a church that does hard things and encourages each other to do hard things for your own good and for the Lord's glory.

Just one final thing. The Lord guarantees. So because some of you might say, okay, George, that's very interesting. But you're not very successful.

I mean, you're not in a big church. You're just buying, you drive the cheapest Subaru you can afford. The cheapest, not that I can afford, the cheapest Subaru there is. And you don't have lots of money in the bank.

Like, why should I believe that it's going to make you successful? Well, here's where you really need the Bible. You need to know what success actually is.

[40:04] You see, not only do you need the word to remind you of God's presence, you need the word to remind you that Jesus is for you. You need to know that from the word that the Bible will call you to do hard things about justice and injustice and prosperity and speaking the truth and being clear when everything around you wants to obfuscate what's really going on.

And just add that word of clarity. But you also need it to understand what success looks like. And here's the thing that the Bible does in terms of success. First of all, if you're in Christ, you're guaranteed that the end of your story will be good and true and beautiful.

That's the end of your story in Christ. And even in the end, because you are welcomed into God's kingdom, because you put your faith and trust in Christ and he accepts you into his kingdom.

And the final word about you, so to speak, on this side of the, you know, as you emerge out of the grave is the final word that we get in Christ is, I am so glad you're here as he welcomes you into the new heaven and the new earth.

But on this side of the grave, we need to understand what success actually looks like. You see, the Bible isn't against you trying to get promotions. The Bible's not against you trying to make money.

[41:27] The Bible's not against you trying to make lots of money. The Bible's not against that. It warns you about certain things. But you make money to meet needs and to be generous.

The successful person isn't the one who dies with a billion dollars in the bank. The successful person is the one who maybe dies with 800 million dollars in the bank because they gave away 200 million dollars.

The successful person is the generous person. The successful person isn't the person who climbs the hierarchy and everybody hates your guts. The person who is the successful one is the one who knows that you rose and you're a people person and you love people and you respect them and you listen to them.

The successful person isn't the ruthless person who can accomplish all these types of things. The successful person is the one who's learned forgiveness. The successful one isn't the one who ignores their neighbors as they build a bigger and bigger and bigger house, but the one who's known for their kindness and their prayerfulness.

God knows you need money. And he knows you need a roof over your head. And he knows there's nothing wrong if you've been really blessed with great mental and people skills and other types of things to get promotions and to do those.

[42:51] There's nothing wrong with that. But he blesses you to be a blessing. He blesses you to be a blessing. He blesses you to be that, you know, wouldn't you rather at your funeral, if you could, if God, like, you know, the Charles Dickens thing, if he could send you to your funeral and overhear what people are saying to you at the reception, wouldn't you rather here at your reception, boy, the thing about George is, gosh, he made a pile of money, and gosh, he was a cheap bleepity bleepity bleep.

Or would you rather here, you know, the problem with George was, he's almost too generous. Like, wouldn't you rather hear that about you at your funeral? Boy, he was, like, way too generous.

I'm surprised he actually died with any money in the bank. What was success? Let's stand, bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you want us to be your people.

You want us not only to belong to you by nature, but to belong to you by grace, that we put our faith and trust in Christ and we belong to you in a new and deeper way.

And we give you thanks and praise you desire us to be part of your people, that to know that we belong to you by nature and by grace. And we know we give you thanks and praise that you will use

us wherever we are.

[44 : 25] And even when we are called to change places, that wherever we are, you are there and we are to be part of your people. And we give you thanks and praise you want us to know that we are in your presence.

And we give you thanks and praise that you want to have us under your saving rule and authority. And so, Lord, we ask that you would so grow these truths in us as we grow in our love of Jesus, that as your Holy Spirit prompts us to do hard things, things which maybe even seem impossible, that we will not turn away, but that we will confront that bully or that abuser, or we will take that step of faith for prosperity for many or for generosity.

We ask, Father, that you so free us up and make us at peace with you, that in your presence and by your word, we will do those hard things with strength and courage.

And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.