

Joshua 1:1-10

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Date: 12 April 2026

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[0:00] My name's Tim, I'm part of the team here. We are going to, in a moment, be beginning a new series in the book of Joshua. So if you've got a Bible with you, if you want to turn there, that will help you. The words will be on the screen, but it generally helps you to have it open.

I just want to very briefly lay out the scene. We're going to dive in at the start of a story, at the start of a book, that's actually in the middle of a story told over several books of the Bible.

So if you're new to this, you might not be quite sure what I'm talking about, but there was a time when the people of God, the Hebrews, were enslaved in Egypt. Under a man called Moses, they were led out of that slavery through the mighty hand of God, but then ended up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.

And they've been told there was a promised land that God was taking them to. In fact, it was promised to a man called Abraham way back before Moses, about 500 years before Moses, was told, one day you will have this land, it will be yours.

And so they're wandering in the wilderness, roughly on the way from Egypt to that place, but it takes them 40 years and what should have taken them about six months or something like that, because they're not ready and the Lord leads them around to teach them things.

[1:10] And in the end, it actually says to the whole generation, except for two men, you won't go in, but your children, the next generation, will enter the land. And so all of that generation who left Egypt, apart from two men, who had previously gone in to spy out that land and said it's good, when everyone else had said it's scary, everyone else apart from those two men died.

Their names are Joshua and Caleb, and as I open the story, Joshua is 84 years old, and Caleb is 79 years old. They're the two oldest men around, because the rest of the generation has died, and they are going to lead them into this promised land that God has promised them.

What we're going to see over the book of Joshua is that story of, we're going to start, they're not in the land, they're outside, start there, they'll get into the land, they'll do some things, they will end up taking it, and then they will establish themselves and have rest in it.

And that will be the story that kind of takes us through, I guess, to the summer holidays or so, the next sort of 12 weeks or something like that. It's a story of transition, or at least at the very beginning it is, from Moses to Joshua.

We could massively overstate the parallels between what's happening between me and Andrew, and really most of the book is not about that, but there is a little element of someone passing their baton to someone else.

[2:32] It's also a book full of really hard things. As they take the land, they kill lots of people. Some of us will find that quite challenging.

We are going to try and deliberately in the series look these things in the face, and go, what is going on, and why is God's word to tell us this? But, and there are other things, again, some of you might know the book and think, ah, it raises this question and that question, particularly for the modern world today.

We're going to try and, we're going to do our best to look them in the face when we come to them. But what we do need to do is come to scripture humbly, with the expectation not that we judge the Bible, but that it judges us, and that this is the word of God to us, even when we find it challenging.

Okay. Let me read to you. Joshua, I'm going to read from chapter 1, I'm going to read the first 11 verses. 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.

This is why the parallels with Andrew and me are not that strong. Now, therefore, arise. Go over this Jordan, that's a river, you and all these people into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.

[3:56] Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to 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, towards the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and 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. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate 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 way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

[5:17] And Joshua commanded the officers of the people, pass through the midst of the camp, and command the people, prepare your provisions, for within three days, you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.

This is the word of the Lord. So we meet Joshua, Moses' assistant, the one who'd sort of, you might look at an 84-year-old man and not expect him to have been called someone's assistant, but that's what he's been for most of his life, the kind of, the guy who followed Moses around and did what was needed for him.

But the thing, if we've been reading the Bible up to the point of the book of Joshua, and we've met Joshua a few times, mostly in the background of scenes where Moses is doing a thing, and it's like, and Joshua was there.

Like, he's there when lots of important stuff is happening. He's kind of at Moses' side, but not maybe in the center of the action. But I'd like to draw your attention before we get into Joshua 1 to one thing in Exodus chapter 33.

So Moses is in the tent of meeting where the presence of God is. Moses has an encounter with God. He's got some stuff to do. And at the end of it, it says, Exodus 33 verse 11, Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend.

[6:32] Wow. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent. Joshua was a man who lingered in the presence of God.

That was his training for everything that he's going to do in this book that we're going to read together over the next however many weeks. He was a man who lingered in the presence of God. Moses would have an encounter with God and go do what he was told.

And Joshua just sort of stayed there enjoying the presence. That was his training for his later to be told by God, Go and do. That was, if you like, his leadership development program was that he'd hang out in the tabernacle in the presence of God.

Be people who learn to linger. Be people, we need to be people who learn to linger in the presence of God because that will prepare us for whatever it is that the Lord sends us to do where we are or somewhere else.

Let's linger there. And then the other thing to notice before we kind of get into some of the text here is there's someone else with the same name as Joshua in the Bible.

[7:45] Lots of you will know this already, but it's important that we notice this all the way through the book. The Joshua named Yeshua is the same name in Hebrew that Jesus had. Now they come differently to us

because they come through different languages to us, but Jesus' name was Joshua, which just means Yahweh saves.

In fact, Joshua, this Joshua's name, previously I think it was Heshua, which means God saves, and Moses changed it. He said, no, no, the God of Israel saves. Your name should be Joshua.

And we should notice that because when we're reading this Old Testament book, sometimes challenging, and we're thinking, where is Jesus in here? The first question we should always go is, how is he like the guy that's got the same name as him?

So we'll be surprisingly often we'll find that our great Joshua, if you like, who leads us into a promised land, is like Joshua in the Old Testament.

In fact, the command to us is to follow our great Joshua, who will lead us forwards. Joshua was given a very specific strip of land in the fertile crescent of the ancient Near East.

[8:57] Our greater Joshua, Jesus, is given the whole earth. In fact, the whole cosmos, as his birthright upon his resurrection, we read in Philippians 2, he is crowned with honor and given everything.

And so he will lead us into the whole earth if we follow him. What's going on in the story?

Essentially, they've got to this river, the Jordan, which is at the edge of the land that they've been promised. They've been hanging out there for some time now, waiting for the moment when God's going to say, it's time to go.

And in the passage that I've read, God comes to Joshua and he says, it's time to go. And Joshua must have had all sorts of feelings.

We can imagine some of them by the fact that the Lord continually repeats, as he will throughout this whole book, be strong and courageous as a command. So Joshua must have felt a kind of, oh no, am I going to be able to do this?

[10:02] Will the Lord be with me like he was with Moses? I'm no Moses. How's this going to, how's it going to work? And God says to him, I'm with you. Be strong and very courageous. I'm gifting you this land.

You notice that, that the land that he gives them is a gift and it must be claimed. It's often like that with God. He says, I'm giving you this. You still have to do something.

If Joshua and the people of Israel had sat on the bank of the Jordan and just gone, well, we'll just wait for the Lord to put the land in our hands and done nothing with their hands, they would have sat there until they died.

What they had to do as they waited for God to give it into their hands was walk forward. They had to cross the river as we'll see in a couple of weeks' time. They had to go into the land. They had to fight some battles.

They had to do things. When the Lord gifts us, very often we have to walk into it. Now, it's like the gift has to be claimed, but that isn't a sort of, oh, I claim it in the name of Jesus.

[11:04] We don't find that in the Bible, but action that walks us into what God has gifted us. And that will often be the case that the Lord will speak to us in the Bible or occasionally directly and say, I'm giving you this thing.

You still have to walk into it. You have to actually do something in order for it to take action in your life. It's much like when Paul says to Timothy, God has given you gifts through laying on of hands, so fan them into flame.

It's the same dynamic. It's like, I've got the gift. Oh, but I've got to fan it into flame like it's a fire. I've got to make it grow by doing something. And the Christian life is like that.

You didn't come up with this stuff. God gave it to you, but then he's like, take action to grow what I've given you. But mostly what God wants to tell Joshua is, be strong and courageous.

Be full of vim and courage. What kind of courage? Did you notice as I read it, because it's not just generic, be brave, we're going to fight some battles.

[12:16] That's true. But specifically, see, first it's in verse 6, but then into verse 7, he says, only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses, my servant, commanded you.

And then into verse 8, he says, this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night. So courage to be a people of the book.

Courage to do what the law, so this is the, he's talking really about the first five books of the Old Testament at this point. This is book 6, so the previous bit they've already got. Courage to do what it says.

So for all we might imagine Joshua is sort of an element of fear about there's some big blokes in this land, literally, we might have to do some fighting.

God zones in on courage to obey the words he's given them. Courage to follow the law. We read this sentence that I've just read in verse 8 actually right at the start of this year.

[13:23] I was preaching from Psalm 1, some of you might remember and it essentially quotes or alludes to this sentence in Joshua as that someone is about the life of the blessed man who is drawing, like he's like a tree whose roots get into the word of God and draw life from it.

He deliberately alludes to this passage in Joshua. It's courage to do what the word says. Do you have that? Do you do what the word says?

Those of us who are trying really hard to follow God if we're honest with ourselves to be like sometimes that's okay keep going. Some of us probably need just a little bit of oh actually the Lord wants me to do what he says I wonder if I'm not living like that.

It's courageous to follow Jesus. It is courageous to follow the Bible and take it seriously. We might not always feel like it is but it is. I was thinking this week about who are some of the most courageous people that I know.

The first person who popped into my head I can't name her I've probably become clear in the story but you wouldn't necessarily know her anyway but a friend of mine young lady who is predominantly same sex attracted her sexual attraction is towards other women she's a follower of Jesus she takes the Bible very seriously and so she is committed to a celibate life because she would understand these primary desires that she has as wrong.

[14:58] It's possible in the future she ends up marrying a man but she doesn't really imagine that that's the way her life's going to go and as a result she has had to sit down and go well do I believe this or not because the world is telling me this is a very important part of your life that I'm missing out on and I could pretty much just go and get a girlfriend it wouldn't be that difficult that would be fun or I can choose to believe Jesus she's thinking and then that closes that part of my life off to me but I follow him and trust that what he has is better for me what am I going to do and she's picked consistently for years now to be like no I want Jesus and so I believe him that he is better than these desires and she is the most serious reader of the Bible I have ever met because she continually would come to me and say Tim why don't we do this because she's like if I've staked my life on the fact that Jesus says that those desires are wrong then we need to live this why don't we do this which she was always right like she's very serious like she's courage to go this book is the way I must live and she staked her life on it we should emulate her obviously I can't tell you lots about her because this would be very exposing for her though you wouldn't know anyway but she is probably the most courageous person that I know personally she'd roll her eyes to hear me say that but I think she is or closer to home you might think of someone like

Andrew who won't like me saying this but who is saying that God is calling me into I'm not quite sure where now it's become clear when he started talking about where it's going but when he started talking about it months ago he was like I don't know where I'm going but God says it's time to move on like Abraham I'm just going to follow him that's courage courage to follow the word of God or to take the ultimate example the kind of courage that led Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane to kneel down and pray to God not my will but your will having read the old testament scriptures and having understood that they were about him and going right that means I need to suffer and I need to die okay and being willing to courageously submit himself to the word of God for our sake Jesus was strong and very courageous but in that moment in the garden he actually says angels came and ministered to him he needed

God to say to him be strong and very courageous Joshua so that he would go through with all that he was called to for our sake we need to become people of courage like my friend like Andrew like Jesus courage to follow the Bible he should become the kind of people who read the Bible and courage actually comes from reading courage to follow the Bible comes from reading as we read it and reflect and go oh my word this is sometimes complex but wonderful beautiful book that God has given us and it births in us a sense of oh maybe I could live like this too be strong and very courageous why how can Joshua do that well what does God say he says in verse five just as I was with Moses I will be with you I will not leave you or forsake you so how can we be strong and courageous to believe the Bible yeah we read the

Bible we read the promises sure but because God is with us he's with us the fourth century writer church leader Saint Augustine said if a man made such a promise talking about this sentence you would trust him God makes it and you hesitate I will not leave you or forsake you if a man made this promise you would trust him you can imagine it right if your good friend said to you on this journey that you're going on that feels slightly risky for some reason and your friend says to you I'll go with you you immediately just feel a little bit more courage rising in you even if all those challenges are still there it's just that sense of maybe I could do this yet if the Lord God almighty who made the world says to you I will never leave you or forsake you I'm going with you on the journey somehow it doesn't make us feel quite the same way but he is and he will go with us and we can be strong and courageous it's

I don't know if you know the children's story the Gruffalo lots of you will I'm sure I won't well it's a slight spoiler alert for the ending in this I guess but I won't tell you the story but it's about this little mouse who travels through the forest and meets the creatures that eat mice and he tells them a story about this big monster to scare them away he meets the monster at the end and tells the monster that all the other animals are scared of him so maybe he should come with him and at the end the mouse is walking back through the forest and the owl and the snake and the fox who comes across them all and they look at the!

[20:42] brightest thing and thinks they're running away from the mouse and that's what's funny about it but there is something a little bit like that in having God with us because we are little mice in the world and there are foxes and snakes and owls out there but God is with you and it's like we walk in his shadow you can't necessarily see him but they can and God is with us so we can have courage in whatever we might face in the world particularly courage in whatever the Bible calls us to courage in living for Jesus because God is with us it's like his shadow can be seen over us and foxes and owls and snakes will run away we can be strong and courageous because God is with us second final reason that we can be strong and courageous because we're under grace let me explain what I mean by that the church fathers

Augustine some of the others when they were reading this passage love to point out that Joshua takes the land after the death of Moses and the point they wanted to make is that when you read with New Testament eyes in the New Testament Moses is shorthand for the law that shows us our sin but cannot save and Joshua is shorthand for Jesus who rescues us as a gift and they say of course it's after the death of Moses that Joshua takes the land what they mean is after the law has died on the cross that Jesus can gift us the heavens this is how the earliest Christians read the start of Joshua after the law after its power has been pulled it still speaks truth to us it tells us what is right and wrong but after its power has been pulled that grace takes rain and leads us into the heavens because what

Jesus did on the cross by taking the punishment for our sin by taking our guilt and our shame was he meant that the law is no longer stands over us saying you are doing this and instead it turns into a guide that can teach us by Jesus and that truth that salvation is a gift that you don't have to do anything to earn but can receive by trust also gives us courage what I mean by that is if you mess up for Jesus oh well right you have a go and it doesn't go well or maybe you don't have a go which isn't going well or maybe you sin in a stupid way we can come to the cross and find that grace that Jesus free gift to us is eternal unending unmerited that he keeps giving us and giving to us which gives us courage to try things because literally what's the worst that could happen you might die oh well

I mean I know that I'm being very flippant because obviously it's awful death it's evil but we know that after death we end up in the arms of the father so there's an element of grace gives us courage and realistically most things you can try for Jesus in this country are not going to result in your death it's going to result in you looking a little bit silly and even even if you fail Jesus gifts you and gifts you and gifts you so try things try things for Jesus he loves you and we'd like you to have a go and even if you fall flat on your face he's going to pick you up again and say okay let's have another go try things try things in church life when someone says how about you do this unless you actually can't why not think I won't commit long term but I'll try it what's the worst that could happen try it when Andrew and Katie are saying come and bring your prayers of praise in the meeting because it's as we build a bed of praise that we encounter Jesus we enter his courts through thanksgiving and praise and then he speaks to us just think actually all they mean is come and pray into the mic and say thank you Jesus that you died for me I really love you amen because that will do everyone really good maybe have a go what's the worst that could happen Jesus is still going to love you at the end of it he's going to keep gifting you in fact he's going to be so delighted that you had a go be strong and courageous and therefore because we're strong and courageous he says to us take the land see meeting Jesus is only the start of our journey with him our lives are supposed to be about taking the land about doing great exploits for him about life on the trajectory of the

[26:06] Lord about giving your life for the kingdom but I have run out of time to tell you about that but oh well the series is about taking the land so I'm sure we will return to this point but how about we have the bands come back we will worship Jesus in a moment but church is an adventure your Christian life is supposed to be an adventure as we go on a journey with him to do whatever he might put in front of us that might not be the first word that would spring to your head but it is supposed to be and he says to us be strong and courageous for I am with you he ends with this command for them to get ready and he tells them in three days you will cross the Jordan do you notice that in three days you will go from the place lead us over the

Jordan as he died and on the third day rose to gift us all that he has for us forever so friends let's follow our great Joshua into all that he might call us to