



Pastor Kyle Mercer
Courage in the Land

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Series: Taking Ground
Joshua 1

BIG IDEA – WE MUST WELCOME AND WALK IN THE PROMISES OF GOD

Do you guys remember that movie *Jaws*, the first one of them, when the captain of the boat sees the shark for the first time? Do you remember what he says to everybody else? He says, "We are going to need a bigger boat." That's how we felt last weekend. We are going to need a bigger building, and one is coming, but right now we have capacity issues.

If you were here two weeks ago at our Vision Weekend, we had over 2,000 people here, and we thought, "Oh my goodness." Then last week, we had over 2,200 people on campus. One of the reasons... You're like, "They're pushing this Saturday night thing hard." I know what some of you are thinking. "Other people should definitely go to Saturday night."

Here's the thing, guys. We are out of seats, and we are out of services. We bought the smallest legal seat possible for a church. Any guy in here over 200 pounds goes, "I know." Some of you would be a little more charismatic in your worship if you weren't worried about poking your neighbor in the eye.

Well, guys...you didn't even notice it probably...we added 70 more seats in this room at the beginning of the year. We have almost 100 seats in the lobby, and our lobby is seated every service. So, we're out of seats, and then we're out of services. We've thought about a 3:00 a.m. "Vampires for Christ" service. I don't know how successful that would be.

We had a service last night. We have a service tonight. We have two services this morning. That I know of... There are 1.8 million people in the Triad. There are only two churches in the Triad that run four live services in one location. So, we are trying

to leverage and steward this building the best we can. What we're asking is, if possible, can you move to Saturday nights or to Sunday nights?

But we don't want a culture of guilt. It's interesting. I was at my son's basketball game a week or two ago, and I met this young couple. They came up to me and said, "Hey, Pastor Kyle, we go to Two Cities." I said, "Oh, it's so nice to meet you." I said, "I don't recognize you. What service do you go to?" They sheepishly said, "One of the morning ones." We don't want a culture of guilt. We want a culture of grace and gratitude.

We are in a season where, for the next year, we're trying to figure out... I'm going to give you a big building update next week. We are trying to get into this building as quickly and as responsibly as possible. In the meantime, we're asking if you can move for the sake of mission.

Here's the truth: when we don't have a seat for somebody... Most people who do come for the first time (if you're new and you're a guest, welcome) come Sunday morning. That's what they're used to. If you move to Sunday night or Saturday night, it opens up more seats in the morning.

Let me just say this too. I hope you know this. We're not just about attendance here. I celebrated the 2,000 and the 2,200 people, but how we know we're not just about attendance is we're always trying to get people deeply connected to our church through the Weekender. By the way, if you've been coming around for a while or you're just checking us out, let me encourage you to go to the Weekender. It's going to be this next weekend.

If you're new and go, "What is the Weekender?" it's a massive DTR. Do you remember DTRs in high school? "Define the relationship." There have been two people. They've been talking, and the girl is like, "What are you trying to do here? What are your expectations? Are we committed?" That's the conversation we're having at the Weekender.

It's an opportunity for you to find out more about us and our church and us to find out more about you, and, if you're married, it's a free date night. For some of you, your wife has been asking you and begging you for weeks to take her on a date night. This is a free one. We're going to give you a free meal and free childcare and a hot breakfast the next morning.

So, let me just encourage you guys. We're growing. This is a unique season in the life of our church, and we want to take as many people with us into the future as we can. So, let me pray for us, and then we're going to dive into Joshua 1.

Lord, I'm grateful for the stories we heard on that video of people moving to nights. We know it's not for everybody. We know that not everybody can, but if there are people in this room who could, for a season, get their family or get their Community Group or get some of their friends and begin to go to Sunday night or Saturday night, Lord, we just pray that they would do that.

Lord, I pray against what they call the *bystander effect*, which is where everybody thinks everybody else is going to do something. I pray you would give us the grace to continue to steward and leverage this facility over the next year as we look toward our future home and hub. We pray this in your name, amen.

A question people sometimes ask is...*What type of person does God use?* I don't know if you've ever asked that question. You may ask, "Does God use smart people or does God use simple people?" If you read your Bible, the answer is *yes*. You may ask, "Does God use old people or does God use young people?" Then you read your Bible, and you're like, "He uses old people *and* young people."

Does God use rich people or does God use poor people? You look over your Bible and go, "He uses all types of people." So then you may think, "Okay. I know what God does. He randomly chooses people. Is that what he does? He just says, 'I'll work through *that* guy' or 'I'll work through *that* girl.'" Well, he may occasionally do that, but there are patterns we see in the Bible. Who does God use? Here's the answer: the person who wants to be used. Who does God use? The person who cares.

Do you ever wonder, "Who does God use to reach people who are far from God, to reach lost people?" People who care about lost people. Who does God use to disciple others? People who care about discipling others. Who does God use to care for the unborn? People who care about the unborn. God comes where he's wanted. God comes where he's welcomed. We learn from Joshua that God cares a lot more about our availability than our ability.

What I want to do today... The last two weeks, we were in the book of Deuteronomy. Today, turn to Joshua, chapter 1. We're going to pick up in Joshua. Let me introduce you to him. Turn to verse 1. ***"After the death of Moses..."*** By the way, we said Moses isn't going to be forgotten. He's mentioned over 50 times just in the book of Joshua. ***"...the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant..."***

Let's talk about who Joshua is, and let's talk about what the book of Joshua is about. This is kind of an introductory sermon to understand the person of Joshua and the book of Joshua. Let me give you three words for Joshua, because we don't have time to go through everything. If you go, "Okay, who is this guy...?" How does God prepare

people to be used? Well, Joshua was three things. He was a *son*, he was a *soldier*, and he was a *spy*. They're all S's, easy to remember.

First, he was a son. Do you see that? He's the son of Nun. Here's what this means. We find out in 1 Chronicles that he was the firstborn son of Nun. This means that at the Passover, Joshua was saved because of his parents putting blood over the door. Let's not forget this. If you're going to be used by God, you have to be a believer. Joshua believed in God, and more importantly, early on, his parents believed in God.

I really believe the greatest gift God gives children outside of salvation is believing parents. Most children in our city (we love our whole city, and when we say we love our city, we mean we love the kids of our city as well) have no access to the gospel in their home. Zero. They have no access to the gospel in their school.

Because most people are either out of church or most churches have gone theologically liberal, most people show up to a church, and there's no gospel there. The first thing we see about Joshua is he had godly parents. Let me encourage parents. You never know how much what you're doing matters to your kids.

The second thing God used in his life... Joshua was a soldier. If you want to know, "When was the first time Joshua's name shows up in the Bible...?" That's always an interesting thing. The first time his name shows up in the Bible is in Exodus 17. Joshua is fighting the Amalekites. It's kind of mentioned briefly. It's a small battle, but here's the principle: if you're going to fight bigger battles later in life, you need to fight little battles early in life. We all know this.

Here's what happens. I see this all the time. People get married, and then they have all of these, what they call, *marriage problems*. Let me help you out. There's no such thing as a marriage problem. There are individual people problems that people bring into marriage. Here's what happens in marriages. Sometimes it happens on the honeymoon. Sorry. Other times it happens in the first year. It certainly happens in the first three to five years.

Normally, people realize, "Oh my goodness. We're having all of these problems, and if I'm really honest with myself, these problems are happening because of battles I was unwilling to fight when I was single. Now they're showing up because I'm in constant close proximity with another person."

I don't speak to middle schoolers or high schoolers a lot anymore, but I used to have opportunities to, and every time I would speak to middle schoolers and high schoolers... I tried to do this in appropriate ways. I'd say, "Guys, everything I've ever struggled with and everything I'm still tempted to go back to I started when I was

your age." The best thing you can tell a middle schooler and a high schooler is "There are only bigger battles to fight, and the battles you don't fight don't go away."

So, the first thing is Joshua is a son, a saved son with a godly family. The second thing is he's a soldier who's willing to fight battles. The third thing, and most famously, is he was one of the 12 spies. If you want to know where *that's* at (you can read this with your Community Group), it's Numbers, chapter 13. Remember, Moses has the promises of God, and he sends out 12 spies, and they go and spy in the land.

Ten of them come back and go, "Too big. Too hard. Too much." Only Joshua and Caleb say, "Guys, we could do this. Let's go!" Do you remember any of the other names of the 10 spies? No, because the fearful are always forgotten. One of the names of the other spies was Shaphat. You should remember that name. That's an interesting name. We don't remember him, because the fearful are always forgotten.

So, who does God use? God uses the person who cares. God uses the person who wants to be used, and God uses many things in our lives...the battles we're willing to fight early. Fight the addiction in your life now. Cultivate the godly attributes in your life now, and then be a person of faith. This is what Joshua is.

All that's setting up to say *this*. Look at what he says here. Let's go to verse 2. He said, "**Moses my servant is dead.**" Now, if you're Joshua, you go, "I know! I just heard his farewell speech, and we just had the big funeral, and he went up on the mountain. You've already told us this. Why are you telling us this again?" Because sometimes we need to hear that things are over.

How many people in our city need to hear this: "The pandemic is over"? Some people need to hear *this*: "Your kids are gone. They're not in the house anymore." How many men need to hear, "You're not single anymore. You're married." My brother one time... They were newly married. (They have a great marriage.) He came home, and he brought takeout. His wife was like, "I cooked dinner." He was like, "Oh, this is what I've done." She was like, "You're married now. We eat dinner together."

Some people need to hear, "Your career is over. You're retired. You're an empty nester." It's hard, right? Part of what's hard is to accept the season and stage you're in and to accept the season and stage that's over. Why that's hard is because most things in your life you only get to do once.

Moses is dead. Here's what he says: "**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.**" If there are two words I want you to remember from this sermon, it's in that text. It says, "Go over." I've been praying for myself and for you guys the "Go over" spirit. This is what the whole book is about.

The whole book is about there's this Jordan River that nobody has crossed for 40 years, and it's time to cross. In fact, the whole book of Joshua in a phrase is "Stop complaining and start conquering and claiming." The entire books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are a bunch of people complaining. By the way, whatever you're complaining about is what you need to conquer. I'm going to give you a chance at the end of the service.

Some of you are complaining about your marriage, and it's time to conquer it, to claim the promises of God in it. The whole book of Joshua works like *this*. It's a metaphor for your life. You need to *enter* (that's "Go over"), you need to *engage the enemy*, and you need to *enjoy God's promises*. Like no other book in the Bible, the book of Joshua is the abundant Christian life pictured. It's the vibrant Christian life. It's the victorious Christian life.

It's telling us that so much in our Christian faith we live in between promise and fulfillment. God has made promises, but we need to fulfill them. I'm praying for the "Go over" spirit in your life. Where do you need to go over? Anywhere you're complaining, anywhere where you've accepted defeat, anywhere where you're making excuses, and anywhere where you have been in the same place.

We're going to get to this. If you don't go over, what do you do? You stay in the wilderness and wander. I've met people like that, and so have you. For some of you, that describes all of medical school. You didn't go over. You didn't make any progress. It describes your whole college experience. It describes all of your single years. Since you've had kids, you've been in the exact same place.

Now, this isn't self-help. I want you to see how we go over. He tells us how to go over. Look at how this is written. Verse 3: ***"Every place that the sole of your foot will tread..."*** I'm not really good with English, but that's future tense. You *will* do this. ***"Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses."***

Wait a second. God uses future tense and... Is God not good at grammar? Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, "You need to go and take this land, but I have already given it to you." This is a New Testament principle. What has the New Testament said? One of my favorite verses in the whole New Testament is Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare his only Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?"

How much of Christ do you want? How much of the Christian life do you want to live? I'm going to tell you how to do it. If you're new, we try to be two things here: biblical and very, very practical. Do you notice what motivates the "Go over" spirit, the spirit

that says, "I want to walk in and welcome the promises of God in my life"? It's the promises of God.

So, let's talk about the promises of God. There are, roughly, 7,500 promises from God to people in the Bible. There are more promises than that if we're just talking about people making promises to each other. Guys, there are only 32,000 verses in the Bible. That means 25 percent of your Bible is promise.

When you're reading your Bible, as a general rule, God speaks three ways. He speaks in *principle*. That's mostly the proverbs. These are generally true statements of how you should live. Then he speaks in *command* or *law*. That's the most common way he speaks. Then he speaks in *promise*.

In a minute, I'm going to give you promises, and we're going to talk about how to live them out, but let me just say this: There are promises in the Bible for your family. Find them. There are promises in the Bible for your future. Find them. There are promises in the Bible about how God is going to be with you in suffering. Find them.

Let me give you a couple of airbags around this, because I want us to think about this. People make mistakes with promises, and then they get discouraged. I don't want you to get discouraged. I think discouragement is Satan's number-one tactic for the Christian. Let me give you a couple of things to think about as you think about promises.

First of all, make sure that what you're claiming is a promise, not a principle. Again, when you read the proverbs, they're principles. Sometimes people get discouraged because they read the principle that says, "Train your child in the way that he should go, and when he's older he will not depart." That's a principle. It's a generally true statement of how the world works, but it's not a promise.

So, the first mistake people make with promises is they think a principle is a promise. The second mistake people make with promises is they take them out of context. Philippians 4:13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" is not about sports. I hate to break it to you. It's not about studies and getting into a certain school at all.

When you read the Bible, it's the same thing as real estate. What's most important? Location, location, location. If you read Philippians 4, Paul says... That whole context is "God will help me be content whether I have a lot or a little. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." So, if you get a salary cut, you have a promise, and if you get an inheritance, you have a promise, but that promise has a context. So, not principles. Remember the context.

The third thing is to see if it is what's called an *absolute promise* or a *conditional promise*. There are absolute promises in the Bible. An absolute promise always has to do with the character of God. "This is who God will be for you." That's an absolute promise.

But many of the promises in the Bible are conditional. "If you do this..." "I have given you the land, but your foot has to go on it." Do you know what the sad thing is? If you go into the geography, God promised them 300,000 square miles. They only ever took 30,000. Israel only took 10 percent of what God gave them.

So, you have to understand promises, but then there's actually a deeper thing you have to understand. You have to understand the place you're in. I'll show you this. This is a way to think about your life. Look at verses 4-5. ***"From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land..."*** Land is the main theme in Joshua, and it equals life. It's mentioned 87 times in Joshua.

"...all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward 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."

Some of you like outlines. Here's an outline for the whole book of Joshua, very simply. Chapters 1-5: enter the land. Chapters 6-12: engage the enemy. Chapters 13-20: divide the land. Isn't that beautiful? "Let's get it, and then let's share it with everyone we love." What a beautiful picture. Then chapters 22-24: how to live in the land and be committed long term.

So, everything is about land, but here's what you have to understand. This is a paradigm for thinking about your spiritual life, symbolically, for the rest of the Bible. There are four different types of land in the Bible, and every person finds themselves in one of those lands. Let me give you them. There's *Egypt*, there's the *wilderness*, there's *Canaan*, and there's *Babylon*. Let's talk about each one of them.

Some people find themselves in Egypt. What is Egypt? Well, it's a big part of the book of Exodus. Egypt is a place of slavery and false worship, and Egypt is where every person is born into. We are not born into Eden anymore. Only one couple got born into Eden: Adam and Eve. We all long for Eden, but we're born in Egypt.

Egypt is primarily a place of slavery. What is America? It's a place where people are addicted. We don't use the word *slavery*, for many reasons, but the biblical word for addiction is *slavery*. People are addicted to self-medicating. They're addicted to

pornography. They're addicted to alcohol. They're addicted to amusing themselves to death. When you see addiction everywhere, you know you're in Egypt.

Egypt is also a place of false worship. It's interesting. In America, we worship many things. Probably, most, we worship sex and money. Here's what's interesting. Here's how idols work. An *idol* is something we worship instead of God. It's worshipping the creation instead of the Creator. Here's what happens with idols: idols always ask for more and abuse us.

Some people go, "How did we get to transgender reassignment surgery and pronoun conversations?" I know how we got here. We've worshiped sex as a nation for decades. If you were to even go back 15 years ago and try to explain to somebody transgender surgery and pronouns, they couldn't understand it. It doesn't really make sense today either, but it really wouldn't make sense back then. We're not to the end of it yet. I don't know what the end of it is, but when you keep worshipping the idol of sex, it keeps asking for more and abusing you more.

The second thing people worship is money. Now money can be a good thing. We're supposed to love people and use money. What do we do? We love money and use people. Here's how you know people worship money. You can always tell. It's hard to know what people worship. If you want to diagnose it, like, "What do I worship?" one of the things you need to look for is where you are sacrificing.

People worship money, and how do we know this? Because they're willing to sacrifice their personal health for it; they're willing to sacrifice the relationships in their life, often their family, for it; and they're willing to sacrifice their personal integrity to get more of it. So, Egypt is a place of slavery and false worship, and it's a place where you need to be saved out of.

In a couple of weeks, we're going to do baptisms. Every time, basically, you go under the water and come out, it's like, "I just went through the Red Sea. I just came out of Egypt." We're here to celebrate that with everybody. The way you come out of Egypt is you admit you're a sinner, you believe in what Jesus Christ has done, and you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord.

Some of you are in Egypt, and I'm going to give you a chance at the end to come out. Many of you are in the wilderness. I meet people in the wilderness all the time. I don't have some supernatural spiritual gift, but I can almost see people when they're in the wilderness. The wilderness is the place you get stuck. It's where you wander. And how do you get in the wilderness? Because you're unwilling to go over.

There are things you've been unwilling to do. There have been ways you've been unwilling to act. There are decisions you've been unwilling to make. Here's the thing

about the wilderness. For most of the Pentateuch, the people are in the wilderness. They spent 40 years in the wilderness. Here's what to remember about the wilderness (this is deep): there are always two generations in the wilderness.

The first generation is the older generation, and they're in the wilderness because of the decisions they've made. You don't feel quite as bad for them because they're responsible for being in the wilderness. Then there are their kids. Do you understand that in the wilderness... If we go back to the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, for most people in the wilderness (because they had a lot of kids), it wasn't their fault they were in the wilderness.

Some of you are in the wilderness because of decisions your parents made. Parents, you're going to need every motivation possible to get out of the wilderness. One of the motivations might be you don't want to keep your kids in the wilderness. Many people were thrust into the wilderness during COVID, and they have not come out. They're still talking about it. The encouragement would be to come out of the wilderness so your kids don't have to spend the last five to seven years in your house in the wilderness.

What happens is every generation of the church finds itself in the wilderness where the former generation would not take ground. I love the church. I'm grateful for all of the leaders who have gone before us, but part of what has happened, why the church is so disrespected in our society (I'm going to talk about this in a couple of weeks) and why it's seen as so small and so irrelevant and so insignificant, is a lot of former leaders took us into the wilderness. It's time for us to go over.

The third place is Canaan. Canaan is not heaven. Canaan is not Eden. The Promised Land is not heaven. Here's what the Promised Land is: it's the place where you fight battles. That's all it was. They would constantly have to fight. There would constantly be enemies. It is not a place where you relax. It is not a place where you take it easy. It's a place where you say, "I'm going to believe God, and I'm going to, at this point, engage the next enemy based on what God has said in his promises."

Here's the danger of being in Canaan. If you're in Canaan and refuse to fight the battles, you end up in Babylon. You meet people in the wilderness all the time. Every once in a while, you meet somebody who's in Babylon, and that person is broken. When you go to Babylon, you're very sad, because when you go to Babylon... Basically, what God does in the Bible is, first, he warns you in the land in Canaan, and then he disciplines you in the land, and then he kicks you out of the land.

I meet people probably once a month who got caught in some grievous sin that they were unable to confess, so they got caught. When that happens, you go to Babylon. Here's what you do in Babylon. In the wilderness the call is "Go over." In Babylon the

call is "Go back." So, if you're in Babylon, here's what you do: you go and do the things you used to do. It's like, "Okay. I used to read my Bible." Go back. This is the language of repentance. "I used to be in meaningful Christian community." Go back. "I used to pray." Go back.

So, we have to know God's promises, we have to know the place we're in (because the way out is the promises), and we need courage. Look with me at verse 6. Here's what everybody knows from Joshua. ***"Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them."***

This is the first of three times he's going to say, "Be strong and courageous." He doesn't say, "You're going to *feel* strong and courageous." He doesn't say, "You *look* strong and courageous." He says, "I want you to act and orient yourself in the world this way."

"Only be strong and very courageous..." This is verse 7. He repeats it. ***"...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."***

He says, "Be strong and courageous." By the way, the number-one most common command in Scripture is some version of "Do not be afraid." It shows up 366 times, which means every day of the year, even on leap year, you have a promise. There you go. Why? Because we tend to be the exact opposite of that.

What are most people, especially in America today? They are weak and they are afraid. What is wrong with us? Do you ever wonder this? Why are we so afraid? Why did our grandparents fight in World War II and we can't ask a girl out? What is broken in us? I think there are several things.

I think, right now, life has been so good it makes us weak. Have you ever seen that thing that says, "Good times create weak men. Weak men create hard times. Hard times create good men. Good men create good times. Good times create weak men"? Where are we? "Good times, weak men." That's where we are. We're so afraid of losing what we have.

I was talking to some missionaries in China. I've been there twice. They're lifers. You meet these lifer missionaries. They're not there for two or three years. They've learned the language. They've adapted to society. They feel more at home in China than they do in America. Actually, to be honest with you, when you talk to them, they don't really feel comfortable either place.

I was amazed. I said, "How are you guys doing it, and what's so hard about it?" They said, "The hardest thing is knowing all we're missing out on." They lived 22 years in America, and they've lived the last 18 overseas. The hardest thing sometimes is knowing all you could lose by being courageous. Why was William Wallace, if you know that movie *Braveheart*, able to be so courageous? He had already lost everything.

There are other reasons we're afraid. We're afraid because we have so much information today. Most of us, I'm guessing, the first thing we did this morning was we picked up our phone, and then we looked at it and immediately were depressed. Right? Because you go two places. Your sports team lost. You're depressed. You got more bad news. You're depressed. You go on Instagram and see how great everybody else's filtered life is. You're depressed.

It used to be you had your local paper, and it came out once a day and told you what went on locally. Now we get breaking news all over the world, and of course there's something going wrong all the time. But there's another thing. I'm oversimplifying, but there tend to be two categories people fear. They fear that something wrong is going to happen or they fear they're going to make the wrong choice. Those are real fears for people.

They fear something bad is going to happen. Let me just tell you: something bad *is* going to happen to you eventually, obviously. The more people you love... Maybe something bad won't happen to *you*, but it'll happen to somebody you love. Is that better? No, it's probably worse. You wish it happened to you instead. So, part of it is, "Okay, I'm going to courageously face the future."

How about *this*? We're afraid we're going to make a wrong choice because we have so many options today...so many options for our careers, so many options for spouses, so many options for jobs, so many options for travel. They say now... There used to be fear of missing out (FOMO). There's a new one: FOBO (fear of a better offer). This is how we live.

What I want us to do... I don't want to just tell you, "Be courageous." I want you to see how he was encouraged to be courageous. Look at this. Verse 8: "***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...***" Which means to be successful in the things that matter. "***...and then you will have good success.***"

What is courage, and how do we get it? Now, we know what courage is. All you have to do is interview people who are courageous, and they all say the same thing: moving forward even though I'm fearful. That's the definition of *courage*. In fact,

here's something interesting. If you're afraid to ask a girl out and you don't ask her out or you ask her out, guess what: you felt the same amount of fear. You might as well ask her out.

I knew a dad who (I'm not recommending this) told his son when he was in high school, "I want you to find the prettiest girl in the school and ask her out." The guy said, "I'm going to get rejected." He goes, "I know, but I want you to have courage. I want you to do courageous things. It'll be good for you to fail forward."

Courage is moving forward even though you're fearful. That's the definition of courage. Here's what courage is theologically: actually believing God and taking your next step. Courage is practicing the sovereignty of God in your life. It says we get courage by meditating on God's Word. That sounds kind of silly. You're telling a military commander to think about a religious text. Yawn, yawn. Here's why this is important.

Many of your problems in life are from meditating on the wrong things. The number-one addiction, outside of maybe substance, would be sexual addiction. What is sexual addiction? Meditating on that which is forbidden. That's probably the greatest problem for men.

What is the greatest problem for women today? Anxiety. What is anxiety? Meditating on all of the problems in my life. Many people who don't struggle with that struggle with unforgiveness and envy and jealousy. What is that? Meditating on what other people have or have done wrong.

I want you to hear there is a power in meditation. This doesn't happen overnight, but it happens over time. If you will begin to meditate on God's Word, here's what will happen: God's promises will get bigger than your problems. But it doesn't happen overnight; it happens over time.

Imagine if you walked into work and were like, "I actually, genuinely, care more about what God has said than what people say"? I will just tell you that will eventually lead to courage in your life, no question. This is a deep one: if you begin to care more about heavenly reward than earthly consequence.

This doesn't happen just in a service. This can't happen on a Sunday or a weekend. This happens as you and I commit to meditating on the Word, which leads to the second thing: beliefs need to become convictions. Christians believe a bunch of things. We need to move from belief to conviction.

Belief is "I would live for this." *Conviction* is "I would die for this." *Belief* is "I'm holding on to this." *Conviction*, at some level, is "It's holding on to me." *Belief* is "I

mark this in my Bible." *Conviction* is "This is marked in me." *Belief* is "I've gotten through my Bible." *Conviction* is "The Bible has gotten through me."

What he says is "I need you to meditate." That meditation will lead not just to belief but to conviction. If you meditate on the Word of God every day, you'll wake up in six months, and your life will be so different you won't be able to understand it. You'll start thinking differently, you'll start speaking differently, and you'll start acting differently, which is why he says in verse 7, "Be careful," which is great advice if you're fighting. What you want to be, as a military leader, is careful.

Here's what *careful* means: "I'm doing what God has said, so my conscience can be clear." As you start to do something courageous at work or courageous in your family... Here's another principle from Scripture: things tend to get worse before they get better. If you start acting differently, everyone in your family is going to be like, "What are you doing?" If you start acting differently at work... "What got into you?" Things will get worse before they get better.

What you're going to need to do is, in your own conscience, you're going to need to say, "I'm being..." Paul talked about this all the time. We don't talk about this anymore. The apostle Paul said, "I live in such a way that my conscience is clear before God and before other people." We need courage.

Verse 9: ***"Have I not commanded you?"*** Final time. ***"Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*** Then I want you to see in verses 10-11 how Joshua is able to respond. ***"And Joshua commanded..."*** It's interesting. Verse 9 just said God commanded him. Now he's commanding others.

"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.'"

When you have heard from God clearly, you can speak clearly to other people in your life. We live in this goofy culture where everybody wants to say, "Kind of. Sort of. I feel. Maybe." We need God's men and women who stand up and say, "I have been with God, and I have heard from God. Here's where we're headed, and here's your role." That's what we need particularly dads to do.

Wives and kids will put up with a lot if they know Dad has been with God and is trying and he says, "I have a plan for our family. I have a plan for our finances. I have a plan for our family over the next decade that we have left with the kids in the house. I have a plan for us to relationally connect. I have a plan for us to grow spiritually

together as a family." He's able to call these things out of people, and look at how they respond.

Verse 14: ***"Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them..."*** Basically, he said, "Guys, we are fighting for our families." That's exactly what we're doing in America. That's exactly what we're doing in this church.

The reason I talk so much about marriage and talk so much about moms and dads and talk so much about kids and families is most of the fight has to happen at the family level and Dad needs to step up. Our value here is we build up men to bless women and children. We want to strengthen men to serve women and children.

Women have their unique role, and don't worry, ladies. I'm coming back next week with Rahab. Hooker turned hero. That's not the sermon title. That would get some interesting searches. But that's next week. Here's the thing I want us to see. When you do that... Look at how they respond. Verse 16: ***"And they answered Joshua, 'All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.'"***

This is the spirit we want in the home: loving leadership of Dad and Mom and desire to obey of children. This is what we want in the church: hopefully humble leaders who hear from God and say, "Here's where we're going," and the church says, "This sounds awesome. We're all in."

This is what they call *moving at the speed of trust*. If you've ever wondered why it takes so long to get things done in your family, it's a lack of trust. If you ever want to know why there's a committee on the committee on the committee, and throw it to *this* committee and throw it to *that* committee in the church... What's that? A lack of trust. When men can say, "I've been with God. I've heard from him..."

This is important too. Joshua is not *pointing* the way; he's *leading* the way. He's going to be at the front of the battles. Look at what they do at the very end. Verse 17: ***"Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you."*** Look at what they do. This is what the people do. They pray over Joshua. ***"Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses!"***

They end by praying over Joshua, and we want to end this service and begin the new year the way this chapter ends. We want to pray over you guys. In just a moment, we're going to... There's no pressure. There's no manipulation. You don't have to come forward, but I'm going to invite anybody who wants to to come forward who feels like they need prayer for courage in their life. Courage is not a small category. It is a big category that touches every area of our lives.

What we need, by the way... Some of you need a line in the sand. You've been telling yourself you're going to do something and you're going to go over. You need to tell one more person. We're going to have the elders up here in a few minutes. You can trust us. You can give us the fine china of your life. All we want to do is just pray over it. We want to draw a line in the sand with you.

We want to have a little ceremony, maybe a little funeral for the past that has died, and we want to say, "Let's go." We're going to help you. We're not going to just say, "Go over." We're going to say, "We'd like to go over with you." Let me give you a couple of categories to work with.

Some of you are going to need the courage to come to Christ. This is big courage. It's the courage of surrender. It's the courage of admitting "I am a sinner." It's the courage of removing the fig leaf that Adam had to remove and saying, "I can't cover this myself. I need to be covered."

Some of you are going to need the courage to walk away. There's a relationship that's toxic, and you need to walk away. There's a job that's unhealthy that you need to walk away from. There's an addiction you need to walk away from.

Some of you may not come forward, but you need to stay where you are, maybe, and you need to be honest with yourself. You tell yourself you don't have a problem when you have a problem. You tell yourself your marriage is okay when it's not okay. You tell yourself your kids are doing fine, and they're not doing fine.

Some of you are going to need the courage to publicly identify with Christ. That may mean baptism in a few weeks here. For many of you, that means the courage to let somebody else at your work know you're a Christian. Only you and Jesus know you're a Christian. It's time to let somebody else know.

Some of you have gotten bad news, and you need the courage to face it. I was talking to a guy in our church. We're praying over him and his wife. He got a cancer diagnosis. He said, "I'm trying to be strong, but when you have to go to the DMV and sign everything over into your wife's name, it gets a little scary." If you're facing some type of illness or injury, we want to pray for you.

If you have some addiction you need to fight, we're going to pray for you. If there's somebody you need to forgive... You go, "I have to forgive. Forgiving means I'm no longer going to be defined by what they did." There are three spirits I'm going to pray over us, three attitudes of the heart.

The first spirit I've already talked about. It's the "Go over" spirit. "There's something I know I need to do, and I want someone to pray for me, because I need to leave here

and make a phone call. I need to have a conversation. I need to make a decision." That's the "Go over." For some of you it's "Go back." You're in Babylon for some reason, and it's time to go back.

I want to encourage. Many of you, I believe, in this room, need the "Go again" spirit. I know you've heard this. You go, "Kyle, I've been to retreats, and I've heard the... I've struggled with this my whole life. My marriage has always been a 5 out of 10." Listen. There's this story in 1 Kings 18 where Elijah says to Ahab, "God is going to bring a promise. It's going to rain."

Elijah's servant goes out, and he comes back and says, "There's nothing there." Elijah says, "Go again." He goes seven times, and the seventh time he comes back and says, "I see a small cloud." This is what we're saying. We're saying, "Go again." We want to pray for that small cloud to come and for it to rain. I'm going to pray. You stand and sing, and come forward as the Lord leads. Let's pray.

Lord, I thank you for this church. We want to be a church where we impart things. We want to be a response culture, Lord. We want to be a prayerful culture. I'm praying the "Go back" spirit on anyone who needs to turn around. The grace of the gospel is anybody can have a second chance. We're a place where people's lives can fall apart.

Lord, I pray for the "Go over" spirit, conversations that need to be had and decisions that need to be made and lines that need to be drawn. For many in this room, I pray for the "Go again" spirit. Go again and have the conversation. Go again and pray. Go again and share the gospel.

Lord, some people need to come forward for themselves. Some people need to come forward for others. We do all of this because of the power of the gospel. We are told, "He who did not spare his Son but freely gave him up for us, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?" Lord, we know, when we look at the cross, you have already met our greatest need and fulfilled your greatest promise. Now we're trusting you to fulfill the other ones. We pray this in your name, amen.