

Community Group Discussion Guide

Joshua 1:1–18 | Be Strong and Courageous

Passage Summary

Joshua 1 opens a new chapter in the story of God's people. Moses is dead. Israel is standing on the edge of the Promised Land. A generation has wandered in the wilderness, and now Joshua has been called to lead the people forward. This transition raises an important question: **Can God still be trusted when circumstances change?**

For years, Moses had stood as the visible leader of Israel and the one through whom God often spoke. It would have been easy for the people to associate God's favor with Moses himself. But in Joshua 1, God makes clear that His promises were never dependent on Moses. The same God who had been faithful in the past would remain faithful in the future.

The first movement of Joshua 1 centers on **God's promise**. God tells Joshua that the land has already been given to His people. The gift comes before the command. Israel is not earning the land through obedience; they are being called to take hold of what God has graciously promised.

That pattern is important. Scripture repeatedly gives us an indicative before an imperative: God tells us what He has done before calling us to respond. Grace comes first, then obedience. So God says, in effect, "I have given. Now arise and go." This challenges the idea that faith means passively waiting for God to do everything while we do nothing. God is sovereign, but His sovereignty does not remove human responsibility. Joshua must actually step forward. Israel must actually enter the land. They are called to live courageously because they trust the promise of God.

But what kind of success are they to pursue? Verses 7–8 redefine success according to God's wisdom. Joshua is told to meditate on God's Word, to obey it carefully, and to order his life according to it. Success is not defined by comfort, wealth, achievement, or ease. Success is faithfulness to the God who has spoken.

That brings us to the importance of **the present**. God has not only given His people promises; He has given them His Word so they may know Him, remember His character, and live in communion with Him. Joshua is told to meditate on it day and night. Psalm 1 and Psalm 119 give us the same picture: the person rooted in God's Word is like a tree planted by streams of water. We often want God's guidance without dependence on God. We want strength without weakness, confidence without need, and maturity without hardship. Yet God often uses difficulty to bring us to the end of

ourselves so that we learn to depend on Him. The question is not merely whether we want God to make our lives easier, but whether we genuinely desire to be near Him.

Finally, the chapter rests on the promise of **God's presence**. Again and again the Lord tells Joshua, "I will be with you." Joshua's courage does not come from personality, ability, or self-confidence. He can be strong and courageous because God has promised to remain with him. That promise continues through the whole story of redemption. God dwelt among His people in the land. Then He came near in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ bore our sin, gave us His righteousness, and reconciled us to the Father. And now, through the Holy Spirit, God dwells with and in His people. So when we face suffering, uncertainty, cancer, grief, job loss, fractured relationships, or an unknown future, our courage is not rooted in the belief that everything will go according to our plans. Our courage rests in the promise that God is faithful, His Word is true, and He will never leave or forsake His people.

Theological Highlights

1. God's Promises Rest on His Character

Israel's hope was never ultimately in Moses. It was in the God who had made covenant promises and had proven Himself faithful.

2. Grace Comes Before Obedience

God says the land has been given before He commands Joshua to go and take possession of it. Obedience is a response to grace, not a way to earn it.

3. God's Word Is a Means of His Presence

Through Scripture, God forms His people, reminds them of His promises, and teaches them to depend on Him.

4. Courage Comes From God's Presence

"Be strong and courageous" is not a call to self-reliance. It is a call to trust the God who says, "I will be with you."

5. God's Presence Finds Its Fulfillment in Christ

The promise of God dwelling with His people ultimately points forward to Jesus and to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection Questions

His Promise

1. Israel had to trust that God's promises were still true even though Moses was gone.
 - What changing circumstance in your life has made it harder to trust God?
 - Where are you tempted to wonder, "Did God really say?" or "Is God holding out on me?"
2. When life becomes painful or uncertain, what tends to define the "good life" for you?
 - Comfort?

- Success?
- Financial security?
- Health?
- Control?

How does Scripture challenge that definition?

3. God had already given the land before Joshua was commanded to go.

- Why is it important that grace comes before obedience?
- What happens spiritually when we reverse that order?

His Prosperity: Living by God's Word

4. Joshua is told to meditate on God's Word day and night.

- What currently shapes your thinking most strongly: Scripture, culture, social media, fear, success, or something else?

5. Do you approach the Bible primarily for information, guidance, comfort, or communion with God?

- What would it look like to read Scripture with a deeper desire to know Him?

6. Psalm 1 describes the person rooted in God's Word as a tree planted by streams of water.

- What has helped you become more rooted in Scripture?
- What tends to pull you away?

7. The sermon raised the idea that hardship can teach us dependence.

- How do you react to the thought that God may use difficulty to deepen your need for Him?
- Have you experienced a season where hardship drew you closer to Christ?

8. If you are a parent, grandparent, or someone who influences younger people:

- Is your greatest desire that they be comfortable, successful, and protected from difficulty?
- Or that they learn deep dependence on God?

What makes that tension hard?

His Presence

9. God repeatedly tells Joshua, "I will be with you."

- Which is more comforting to you: the promise that God will fix your circumstances, or the promise that He will be with you in them?

10. Where do you most need courage right now?

- What would it mean to face that situation not with confidence in yourself, but with confidence in God's presence?

11. How does the coming of Jesus deepen the promise, "I will be with you"?

12. Biblical courage is not the absence of fear.

- What is the difference between courage rooted in self-confidence and courage rooted in God's faithfulness?

Closing Prayer Points

1. Trust God's Promises

- Thank God for His faithfulness throughout Scripture and throughout your own life.
- Bring before Him the places where you are tempted to doubt His goodness or promises.
- Ask for faith to believe His Word even when circumstances are difficult.

2. Receive Grace Before Obedience

- Thank God that His grace always comes first.
- Confess the ways you have tried to earn His favor through performance.
- Ask for obedience that flows from gratitude rather than fear.

3. Grow in Love for God's Word

- Ask God to give you a greater hunger for Scripture.
- Pray for discipline to meditate on His Word regularly.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to use the Word to reshape your desires, priorities, and understanding of the good life.

4. Learn Dependence

- Bring areas of weakness, fear, or uncertainty honestly before God.
- Ask Him to use difficulty to deepen your dependence rather than harden your heart.
- Pray for humility to recognize how much you need Him.

5. Rest in God's Presence

- Thank God for the promise that He will never leave or forsake His people.
- Thank Jesus for reconciling you to the Father.
- Praise God for the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

6. Live Faithfully in the Present

- Ask God to help you define success according to His Word rather than the expectations of the world.
- Pray for faithfulness in your work, relationships, parenting, friendships, and responsibilities.
- Ask that your everyday life would reflect confidence in the God who is always with you.