

The Courage to Walk in Freedom

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[0 : 0 0] is Joshua chapter 1, which is on page 216 in the Bibles and the seats. So Joshua chapter 1, page 216.

After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant, is dead. Now then, you and all these people get ready to cross the River Jordan into the land I am about to give to them, to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, from the great river, the Euphrates, all the Hittite country, to the Mediterranean Sea in the West. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life.

As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. So Joshua ordered the officers of the people, go through the camp and tell the people, get your provisions ready. Three days from now, you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land your God is giving you for your own.

But to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, Remember the command that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you after he said, The Lord your God will give you rest by giving you this land. Your wives, your children, and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan. But all your fighting men, ready for battle, must cross ahead of your fellow Israelites. You are to help them until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the Lord, your God, is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your land, which Moses, the servant of the Lord gave you east of the Jordan towards the sunrise. Then they answered Joshua, Whatever you have commanded us, we will do, and wherever you will send us, we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with

[3 : 2 5] Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous. Amen.

Cheers, Graham. Good evening, everyone. I get told I don't do the welcome bit, so I'm going to welcome you and say thanks for everybody coming. I'm Darren, and I work for the Navigators in Glasgow.

And as Jamie said, we're going to be starting a new series in the book of Joshua tonight. So I'm going to pray, and we're going to launch into it. There's some sermon points in here if you want to follow along. Don't worry, although there is five points, we're not going to do a 45-minute sermon.

Some of them will hopefully be a bit short and punchy. So I'll pray, and then we'll get into this. Father, we thank you that you're a God who's faithful to his word, faithful to his people, and that very rarely, if at all, is that ever based on our perception of ourself.

It is based on who you are and who you say you are. And so I pray tonight, as we look at your word, would you speak to us of who you are and what that means for us to be people of courage today?

[4 : 36] I ask that in Jesus' name. Amen. So yeah, the book of Joshua, it's not just the sixth book in the Bible, which we happen to look at.

It's a sequel to the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. So in my mind, one of the ways I think about Joshua is a bit like what the book of Acts is to the Gospels. You've had the Gospels where you hear about Jesus, his life, his resurrection, his promises, and what he tells us of who we are, and Acts is the so what bit. And Joshua is not identical, but it's got similar kind of implications.

The people of God have been rescued. They've been led through the wilderness. Moses has given them the commands and the law. And now you're at this juncture where they're about to enter into the promised land. And so we think about the promised land, we think about this idea of it being a place, but it also represents, which is what the first couple of verses are talking about, this idea of freedom, which is the story of the promised land. So the story so far in the scriptures is that God, in the book of Genesis, he chose Abraham. He said to him, I'm going to bless you and I'm going to bless your descendants. I'm going to make them as numerous as the stars. And the nation that you will become will also be a blessing to the nations round about you. The blessing was never to terminate on them, but to extend to all the nations round about them. These people would then go on to grow in number and become the nation Israel. And if you're familiar with the Old Testament at all, you know they end up in slavery in Egypt. And through Moses, God rescues Israel miraculously and makes a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. And he leads them through the wilderness as they are ready to have their inheritance, this promise that God gave them long ago of not just being a people, but a people in a place under his rule and his protection and his blessing. And so chapter one deliberately starts with kind of presenting Joshua as the new Moses. He is going to inherit this role that Moses had of leading the people. It's now his turn to lead the people into the new promised land that they had been given a promise about long ago. The Passover had happened. They'd been set free from slavery, but here they are now poised and ready to go for this thing that has been in their minds and in their hearts for a long time now. They'd known life under Pharaoh, under the rule of slavery, and they were about to cross the river to the other side to build their own civilization, a new kind of people, a people the world had not seen before. To borrow a phrase from the New Testament, they were about to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. They were to figure out now what it means to be the free people of God, because the freedom is associated with God himself, as opposed to just to go and do what they want. So crossing the Jordan was supposed to represent the move from slavery to new life, from Egypt to the promised land. And this starts by God reminding Joshua and his people, not just what the land represents, but who is the giver of this land. So I told you that's point one. We're done with point one already. Point two is promises. The promises of God, which you read in verses three to five, are the foundation of what this freedom is. So verses three to five, I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon and from the great river to the Euphrates, all the Hittite country to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. And no one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. You're starting to see the fruition and the reality of these promises come true. Now it's pretty obvious, but a promise, when you think about what a promise is, is an invitation to trust a statement.

If I say I promise to do something, I'm asking you to implicitly trust something about what I'm saying. And all faith, regardless of what type of faith, whether you describe yourself as a religious person or not, is based on something you believe. And for the Christian faith, key component of who we are as people is our faith is based on promises. Promises that we are given about who we are, promises about God who he says he is and what he will accomplish and what he will do. And if you study the scriptures at any length, you will find the scriptures are loaded with promises. There's not just one or two of them, there are hundreds of them. God has promised many things to me and you about who he is and how he is continuously faithful to those who follow him. The Bible is full of the promises of a good father to his children. But promise is only as good, obviously, as a promise giver, isn't it? And a promise giver has to be able to have two things, the kind of character that will follow through. So if somebody who you don't trust says, I promise to do something, then you probably don't trust the promise, do you? But equally, if somebody says they might have all the great intentions, but you know they don't have the resources or ability, then what's the point of believing the promise?

Probably like most of you, I don't know, well maybe not most of you, I constantly have the American office and repeat in the background in my living room. And I don't know if you've seen the episode Scott's Tots, have you seen this episode? Where Michael Scott, the manager of the office, in the past, 10 years ago, makes a promise to a group of high school students that he will pay for all their college tuition. And then 10 years later, he's brought to kind of come up with the promise and come up with the money. And he obviously has not become a millionaire, because in his delusion, he thought he would obviously be a millionaire at this point. And you have this excruciatingly painful, funny episode where he's trying to kind of let them down gently while they're celebrating him, because they think our future is based on something you said to us 10 years ago.

[10:23] Now, it's ridiculous and it's silly, but one of the things is he's got good intentions. He's got great kind of loving, silly character, but he just does not have the resources to follow through on what he said he was going to do. Joshua is telling us God is not like that.

But equally, some of us may believe that God definitely has the resources and the power. Is he actually going to do anything? Is he really good? He might have the power, but he probably won't do anything unless we get things quite in order. And that's a picture of God I had for a long time as well, that he's got all the power, but he's got no willingness. It's the very same lie the devil attacks Adam and Eve with. He's got all this power, but is he really good?

You should take this stuff for yourself because he's not going to follow through on it. And in Joshua, you're starting to see the culmination of stuff that God has promised. He is both full of character and he is both full of power and ability. So the promises aren't just nice ideas that hang in the ether. They are fueled and have the foundation of God himself as both full of character and full of power. He is both of these things. And not only has he got both these things, but his promises continue. That's what he says in verse 5. This promise to Abraham long ago has a direct impact on the people here. He says, 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.

Like I guess if you don't listen to anything else I say all night, I'd encourage you to go away and dwell on what that means for you. The God of all things says to you, says to me, I will not leave you. I will not forsake you if you're my people. What does that mean for our day-to-day lives? God says that as a promise. Not as just like a little thing to stick on a fridge and make you feel better at the beginning of a day. But as something that's true, that's something that changes the direction of who we are and who we're becoming. And in trusting this, we realize actually when we look at the New Testament, it is full of many promises as well. Because to claim the promises of God, God says these things. He's like, I've promised you this stuff to Israel. Joshua, I've promised you this land. But now you need to go and claim these things for yourself. Trust in the promise giver. We need to move forward and claim what has been promised to them. The promises of God have an action component to them. Joshua and the people have been like, I've promised you this.

Now move forward with the promises. They need to lean into the promises. They need to claim them. And the same is true of us. When somebody says, trust God, you need to know what you're actually trusting him for. For many believers, I guess it's been my experience, the Christian life can become a kind of mediocrity, one of mediocrity, maybe a bit of dullness. The reality of a personal or dynamic relationship with an intimate, loving, powerful Jesus day-to-day can seem to have little impact on my daily existence. Prayer can be a bit of a formality unless something big is really happening.

[13 : 32] Reading the Bible can be a bit like going through your news feed. And if you bump across something interesting and new, then maybe it'll catch you. The Christian life starts and continues with the promises that God gives us promises about who we are. And we're told to lean into them, to claim them.

Like John 5, 24, I tell you the truth, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He's crossed over from life to death. That is a promise that is also true. It is a promise about who we are and it is made real and true by Jesus. We're to lean into that, to base our lives on it. And the Bible continues, we are forgiven, we're given new life, we're given a spirit that enables us to have this new life. We are now children of God, we are now made alive in Christ. You are now brothers and sisters with Jesus. He is not ashamed to call you brothers and sisters.

What does it mean to not just have these ideas as a starting point, but something we continue go into and claim? We need to, like Israel, go and claim what has been promised because God has already done these things. It's a bit of a to and fro. God is saying, I have done this for you. Now walk in the promises of who I am. We need to be people who claim the promises of God. This means to place our trust in faith in the promise giver and asking him to do for us what he has already promised to do by his word. We need to meditate on the promises, base our prayers on the promises, and venture in faith in our ordinary daily life on the promises that God has given us. And to do this, which I'm sure you'll have heard sticks out as a phrase in this passage, will take strength and courage to live like this.

That's a grasshopper. That will become apparent hopefully in a minute. One of the key repeated phrases you see in this chapter is this phrase, to be strong and courageous.

It's repeated a number of times. Now anytime in the scripture something is commanded, it's because that thing is critical for our well-being and it's for our flourishing. It's an important component of what it means to be fully human in God's good design. God doesn't just command random things for the sake of it. It's something necessary for our life. But usually also that means it's something we're not particularly good at. It's not something that by naturally we are good at doing. It's something we might struggle with. And in this context, instead of courage, Israel would be tempted to be guided by and live by fear. That's what verse 9, which we'll come to later, makes explicit.

[16 : 02] So courage, there's many, many definitions of courage, but biblical courage is living out of your convictions. of what you say you believe in your heart and in your head. So biblical courage is not something temperamental or something you discover in a personality test. It's more like a virtue. It's more like a moral that you can choose to grow in. So it's not whether you're somebody who's risk averse by nature or not, or somebody who sees a burning building, you think I'm going to jump in and save people, or I'll stand outside and phone the fire brigade, and therefore the firemen are the courageous ones. Of course that's a form of courage, but the Bible talks about it more as a virtue.

In the Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis's book about the demon writing to a younger demon, there's a whole chapter on courage. And he says this, this is a letter about a demon trying to knock a young Christian off the path of faithfulness. And he's trying to encourage cowardness, fear, in this young Christian. And he says, courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality. So when you start to kind of have life push against you, a chastity or honesty or mercy, which yields to danger, which kind of means giving into fear, will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions, so when things are right and things are good. Pilate was merciful until it became risky. So what he's saying here, I think it was one of the things C.S. Lewis is saying here, is that in everyday life, when you go about your day-to-day, or you go to work, or you go to work, or wherever you might be doing, there'll be times where you have these points of highest reality, when push comes to shove, which tests your mettle and tests whether you can live out of your convictions or not, of what you believe to be true.

And the point Lewis is making here with Pontius Pilate is that, you know, the story of Pontius Pilate saw through the kind of nonsense trial of Jesus and saw the injustice and wasn't going to do anything until he was threatened with seeing, with being, telling Caesar what was going on. And that's the point that when he's threatened with losing power and reputation and influence, he capitulates, he gives in to fear, and Jesus faces the consequences of that. Pilate was diminished as a person because he did not live out of the courage of his convictions. Now, this scene we have here in Joshua is actually kind of a bit of a repetition of something that happens earlier in the Scriptures, in Numbers 13 and 14.

So in that chapter, Israel have been out of slavery for a wee while, a few months at this point, and they are on their way to the promised land, they're kind of back in a similar area, this is like 40 years before, and they send 12 spies in to check that the promised land is indeed the promised land, and it is everything God said it would be. And they go in and they find that it is, this is it, we found it, we found the promised land. And the 12 spies come back and two of them, which includes a young Joshua, says, great, let's go in, it's time. But the other 10 say no.

It is the promised land, but the promised land is full of giants. And they say, we seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.

[19 : 20] They're consumed by fear. The promised land is right in front of them, but they are consumed by fear of the giants they see in front of them. And the whole nation starts to weep in despair, and they even start to threaten to kill Joshua for suggesting they even go there.

And the result of this is a wandering in the desert for 40 years. They were free from slavery in Egypt, but in many respects, they had not claimed the freedom that was put in front of them by the promised land. Instead, they wander in the desert. And fear has that kind of component to it. It causes us kind of like wander in a bit of an existential desert. It enslaves us.

I don't know if fear or anxiety has ever overtaken you, but once it does, it grows arms and legs and tentacles into your mind and your heart and grows everywhere. It robs us of our humanity, and it diminishes the promises of God. But fear is not really the issue. Like, fear is obviously part of being human. We wouldn't have gotten very far as a species if we didn't have fear built into who we are.

So fear is not the problem. Fear is often just a self-awareness that we are not in control of our lives, or that there is some sort of perceived threat coming at us. It's what we do with it is the question. When we give in to it, when it rules us, that is when it robs us and robs others of life across the river. Nelson Mandela famously said, courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.

The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. For us, it's not just our ability to overcome fear by ourselves. It's because of the God who is with us as we do it. So how does that relate to us today? We know Jesus died for us. We know he ascended. We know he's given us our spirit. But I guess if you're anything like any normal human, you will have many fears and anxieties day to day of all kinds. Fear of the future, fear of rejection, fear of health, fear of age, fear of relationships, fear of career. There's many, many ones you can pick today.

[21 : 26] And they're all real. The giants are real. The giants were not fake in the promised land. And maybe it's the things that come to you classically when you're in bed at night, and you're lying awake, and everything starts to creep in. And you know that experience? Fear can be exhausting when it comes in like that. We can even think about that when it comes to faith today.

As a Christian, you may feel like a grasshopper in this land. The giants of secularism, or whatever it may be, are huge and real. So it creates a fear inside of us of what it means to be people of faith.

I guess you have to assume when Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel, when he writes that, you have to assume, I guess, that it was an issue, that people were ashamed of the gospel. Why would you write it otherwise? He's making a comment in courage about his convictions and living them out.

But fear doesn't just rob us, it robs other people as well. So the point of Israel, as I said, was not just to go across the river and create a happy little camp, and then that was it. They were supposed to be a blessing to the nations. They were supposed to live out, they would have the courage to live out their convictions, to show the world who God is and what he is like, to show them that freedom wasn't just giving yourself away to other people, but actually living in union under God and who he was.

So when they refused to do that, they were actually robbing other people as well of something that is true and beautiful and good. This is why God commands courage. This is a command. It's an instruction, not a suggestion. Courage looks at the fear and chooses to believe the promises instead.

[23 : 04] But how do you actually do this? Which is what the rest of verse 7 into verse 9 will talk about, how we nurture courage. So in this short little section we have here, we have some of the tools Joshua, and by extension, us have in order to walk in courage. Verse 7 and 8, be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left.

So something about the direction you're facing in, and that is obviously a physical thing. It's about who you make decisions in life. That you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.

So Joshua, in the most basic way, is told to obey the law, which is not a new thing if you've been reading the Bible at this point, up till this point in the Old Testament narrative. But it's a reminder of something we're told over and over again, that obedience to the way of God is the way to union with God, which is the source of freedom. This is how you are to live life in the promised land.

Now obviously this is counterintuitive still today for many, many people, that I can live my fullest and freest life by submitting to all the laws, by following God's design for life. Again, it only makes sense really if you understand how different the biblical story is to every other religion and philosophy I think I can find around me today and for them therein as well. Because both the New Testament and the Old Testament always start with grace first and then the law. God rescues his people from slavery in Egypt and then on the way to the promised land, they stop at Mount Sinai and then he gives them the law before they get to the promised land. It was not Moses, go to the people who've been enslaved for hundreds of years, tell them the Ten Commandments and once they have got the Ten Commandments cracked, then if they've done all that, then I will come and rescue them. If you're good enough and you demonstrate your faithfulness to me, then I will come. That is not the story of God's people. It is the other way around. No, it is I love you. I have rescued you. Now to show my love for you, here is the blueprint for freedom. It is the law. It is my good design for who you are called to be under God's headship and under God's protection. And the degree to which they align their lives with

God, they will experience a freedom and peace only God can give. And so will their neighbors as they see them having the courage of their convictions to follow God. Because freedom, as I said, is a consequence of union with God. Verse 8 tells us we have the Word of God in our lips. They're to chew on them, meditate on them until they become true in their hearts and their minds. They aren't just something to read so you have more knowledge in your head. So if you get a Bible, I don't know if you do Bible tests anyway, but if you do them, you can just give the correct answers. They're supposed to be words of life that you chew on and meditate and speak to one another. You need to claim those things, move into them. This is why the Psalms talk about us communing and speaking to our own hearts, to draw near to God in times of fear. The command to be strong and courageous is lived out by feeling your heart and your mind on who God is and seeking to walk in his ways. Now obviously don't hear what I'm not saying. To be a Christian is not to have no doubt and fear. That is not the point.

[26 : 29] We all have fear all the time. Of course we do. But is it being met by something with someone who God reveals himself to be, who you know him to be? Otherwise the doubt and fear are something we end up surrendering to and it kind of is a new form of wandering slavery. Free but kind of not really free.

So I know this is not easy, but in some respects it's also not complicated because we have a resource far greater than Moses and Joshua ever had. They had the power of new life through liberation of slavery from the blood of the Passover lamb. We have Jesus himself, God himself, going to the cross, being forsaken for us. God says he'll never forsake us here. And himself taking on death for us.

So in moments of fear, not to make fear go away, but to meet it with something stronger, think about what, meditate on, chew on, what the cross means, what the blood means, how it shouts of love, how it shouts of new life, how it screams of a beautiful new future, what it represents. And the cross is followed by resurrection, new life, that Jesus emptied his glory so that me and you can have glory today and in the future. There's a tension of engaging fear with truth and love. They work. And this is, I think, is a part of exercising faith, that when you meet these two together, this is part of what faith is. It's a part of living out of faith. It's saying there's more than simply seeing what we feel in the moment. There's more going on than just the giants in the land. There's a promise of a promise giver at the same time.

I think you see Jesus do this in Matthew 6. So Matthew 6 is, Jesus is, partly Jesus is teaching on fear and worry. And he kind of potentially does a bit of first century mindfulness where he takes the disciples and says, look at the flowers and look at the birds. But he isn't just saying, look at the flowers and birds, they have a moment of peace from their worry. His point is, look at the beauty of them. Now, do you not think God loves you and protects you far more than these things? He says, when you have worry and fear, don't just look at something nice, but look at something true, something better, something bigger. Fear is something we'll all regularly experience.

To the fear of rejection, the cross tells us the answer to whether you've been rejected or not. Jesus is the one rejected so that you and me are no longer rejected. You have to put that on your lips.

[28 : 56] You have to remind one another of it. The fear of being alone. Well, John 14 tells us that Jesus is going to go to a place to prepare for us, to take us there, where you will experience a community of love forever. The fear of failure, which is one I have regularly of imposter syndrome. Like, am I going to be exposed? Am I going to be able to do this? 1 John 3, 1 says, see what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. Present tense, that's what you are. Chew in that. Meditate. These are promises. These are true statements that are also promises. To be strong and courageous, if you take that to mean suppress and deny your fears and put on a brave face, well, I'm sure you'll know that never, ever works. You'll either become depressed, a fraud, or cold-hearted and angry. I definitely know I have been all three of those at times.

Maybe all of them. But to be strong and courageous is instead to meet the fear and choose to step into something bigger and true, and this takes strength. You take this stuff and pray it into your life, asking the Spirit to make it active and life-changing. And this is kind of obviously a three steps forward, two steps back kind of thing. You don't just get it perfect on a linear path, because usually when I address one of my fears and experience some freedom, you then discover you've got 25 new ones as well.

But the death and resurrection of Jesus is always stronger, and he will come again. That's because the word we follow is not just a word, it is a person. It's a person who became flesh.

Given Joshua's responsibilities, this charge to be strong and courageous would be daunting if it were not for the promises of God. And again, verse 9, you have this promise again.

Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. And actually, the phrase, the command to be strong and courageous is sandwiched between these promises. Verse 5, the promise in verse 5 of, I will be with you, I will not leave you or forsake you. And in verse 9, the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

[31 : 09] It's not just be strong and courageous in your own strength, it's sandwiched between these promises. And I, you can challenge me on this later if you want, I struggle to find any commands where God tells his people to go and be a certain way that are not anchored in a promise of who he is and what he will do.

And fortified by these assurances of God's constant presence, Joshua is empowered to receive his commission, his purpose and calling for courage. Which brings us on to our last and brief point.

Community. You need to do this together. Israel needed to do this together. Even the tribes that inherited some of their land. The charge to be courageous to enter the promised land is obviously not a sole command for just Joshua. You see the people in the rest of the verses start to echo this.

They say in verse 18, only be strong and courageous. That's kind of a charge to Joshua, but they're claiming it as well for themselves, I think. All of Israel was to be involved.

Joshua reminds the people that God is going to do what he said he was going to do. And take them into a place of rest. He says word repeated rest a number of times. And it's quite similar to the Old Testament notion of the word shalom, peace, the harmony and wholeness of the garden of Eden under union with God and no conflict. This kind of word rests as similar connotations. Freedom from threat, the enjoyment of one's inheritance, security within the borders of the land and the state of all-round well-being. They now need to trust the promise giver not to be taken over by fear, but instead through a courage that addresses their fears with who God is by meditating and speaking and obeying the laws they are to walk into and claim the promised land. Claim the rest, claim the freedom, because God has said he would do it.

[32 : 59] The author of Hebrews in chapter 4 starts to weave some of these Old Testament threads together in expectation of a present spiritual and future rest. And he urges his readers in chapter 4, verse 11, to strive to enter that rest. When I think of rest, I don't think about striving at all.

It usually is the absence of striving. There's something about work to take this thing that is in front of you, but not because you need to create it for yourself, but because God has already done it. So walk in that reality. Together they are committed, it says in verse 16, to doing all what is being commanded. These are not like, we obviously have a high emphasis on a personal relationship with God, but personal relationship with God is supposed to be done with one another at the same time.

And a lot of chapter 1 is the practicalities of how this is going to work out. Because fear usually leads, in my experience, to the opposite of community. It usually leads to isolation. When you're afraid, you either hide behind a persona, or you remove yourself altogether because of what people might think of you. Or you hide in a kind of little way, just find a little comfort that will make the fear disappear for a little while. But you're in biblically never alone, and that works both ways. You're never alone in your isolation because there's an enemy that wants to encourage that. But you're also never alone in the way that God is talking about here. I have not abandoned you. And so fear, instead, through courage brought into the light, in community, and alongside the character and promises of God, is faith being worked out. And the book of Joshua is about how God keeps his promises and the covenant renewal to follow and to live these promises. Hundreds of years later, back at the River Jordan, you'll see another transfer of leadership, so to speak.

When John passes on to Jesus. And Jesus starts to call people to trust him, to follow him. And then at the end of Matthew's gospel, with the kind of the famous great commission to go make disciples, starts with, when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Some had fear.

I don't know about you, but I take great assurance on the idea that if I saw the resurrected Jesus, I think all my problems would go away. But the disciples are seeing him, and some are doubting. And to that, Jesus says to them, all authority in heaven and earth is mine. So you go and make disciples, and I will be with you always until the end of the age. And for me, there's a bit of a parallel there. All assurance is mine. It's a massive promise. Like, it's essentially, I'm in charge of everything here. I will be with you always until the end of the age is another massive promise.

[35 : 33] You, my disciples, go and make disciples of the nations. It's that command, and that's that promise to the nations. You'll be a light to the nations again. You see, Jesus, I think, pick up some of these themes, which are another themes for me and you. I'm going to pray, and then Peter's going to come up.

Jesus, I ask in your mercy and your generosity, whatever fear may look like for us today, whether it's a very tangible, real thing because of an event, or whether it's the more vaguer thing that hangs around in the back of our minds, would you help us to know what it means to be strong and courageous because we have a God with us who will not forsake and abandon us? We have the promises, not just as nice ideas, but because of the God behind them who has full character and goodness and full resources and power. Would you help us to move into what it means to be people of the future promised land? And Lord, I pray where there's people around us in our lives where fear consumes them, would you help us to hold out the resurrected Jesus that says things that doesn't just dismantle fear, but puts them to death so there may be new life.

I ask that in Jesus' name. Amen.