

The Secret to Finding Courage When You Don't Feel Courageous

For much of childhood, my life was ruled by fear and timidity. It was pathetic.

Fear caused me to quit about everything I started, including my first year of preschool and every sports team my parents persuaded me to try. In kindergarten, I was so afraid to read aloud that teachers thought I had a learning problem. I once even ran out of the hospital just before a surgery! I could go on and on.

Unsurprisingly, this childhood fear had very negative effects that lasted into my early adulthood. Afraid of rejection, I often avoided certain people, situations and opportunities. As a result, my relationships were few and often kept at a distance.

When God called me to ministry, I immediately realized that I couldn't bring this root of fear along on the journey. Somehow—somehow—I needed to eradicate the dread and trepidation that ruled me for so long.

When I sought God for help, He revealed something that revolutionized my life. He zeroed me in to the instructions He gave to Joshua to enter the Promised Land (Josh. 1:1–9).

To get the full picture, you must understand what Joshua faced in this moment. After the death of Moses, the Lord tasked Joshua to lead His restless people into an unknown land that was earlier reported to be occupied by giants. To add difficulty, in order to get there, they'd have to cross the Jordan River at flood stage. This meant stepping into water over their heads. With so much stacked against him, I doubt

Joshua was immune to feelings of fear.

But here's what caught my attention: Three times in His instructions, God encouraged Joshua to "be strong and courageous." Notice that God never said to "*feel* strong and courageous." No, He said to "*be*." And there's a big difference between the two words. You see, feeling is an emotion that comes and goes. The word "be," however, means to "occupy a position." In other words, God instructed Joshua to make a decision to take a position of courage, despite whether or not he felt courageous.

I took God's words to Joshua to heart and began to apply this concept in my life. To do so, I had to keep God's Word running through my mind and my mouth. Declarations of verses such as, "I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:15, MEV), were especially effective to help me deny my feelings and take the position of courage. And my life today is a testimony that it works.

Do you feel afraid or timid about something? You can't wait to feel strong and courageous. No, in whatever you face, it's essential to use God's Word to lead your feelings and decide to *be* strong and courageous. {eoa}

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