



feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading. (Isaiah 40:11)

July 30, 2013

Dear church family,

Thank you for listening on Sunday as I explored the life and legacy of Joshua, whose steady, faithful, obedient, and humble—yet ridiculously courageous—life inspires me.

It's not a stretch to say that the theme of courage runs throughout Joshua's life: You can find the famous instructions to Joshua to "be bold and courageous" twice in Deuteronomy 31, four times in Joshua 1, again in Joshua 8, and finally in Joshua 10.

Merriam-Webster defines courage as: 1. The attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult, or painful instead of withdrawing from it. 2. Fearlessness. 3. Mind, purpose, or spirit. (From the French *coeur*, "heart") As in, the courage of one's convictions, the courage to do what one thinks is right.

Joshua qualifies, then, as someone who possesses courage. He first demonstrates his ability to face difficult and dangerous situations in Exodus 17:8-14, fighting the Amalekites while Moses stands on the mountain with his arms raised. He shows the mind, purpose, and spirit to do what is right when he and Caleb offer the only positive report after spying out the Promised Land, despite great personal risk. "The entire congregation threatened to stone them," the scripture says. (Num 14:10).

Where does he get all this courage? How does he face tough situations without running away? How can we get this courage?

I suggested a few possible sources: perhaps the knowledge that God is with us (Josh 1); or perhaps our experiences—seeing God work in our lives. While these things can certainly add to our faith and courage, by themselves they will not necessarily transform us. Seeing God part the Red Sea didn't transform the other 10 spies into courageous men...

A couple of places in scripture suggest that, almost unnoticed, Joshua spent a huge quantity of time alone in the presence of God. Exodus 24 and 33 contain stories about Moses, but when looked at through Joshua's eyes add another dimension to our understanding of him. When Moses and God finished talking face to face at the tent of meeting, Moses would go back to the camp, but "his young assistant Joshua son of Nun would not leave the tent," the writer tells us. (Ex 33:11)

Perhaps this is another clue to the source of courage: time spent alone with God—almost unnoticed by others, but of enormous importance in gaining knowledge and understanding of God's character, which leads to our ability to trust Him, which leads to our ability to face difficult situations with courage.

After Moses dies, Joshua has to get out of the shadows of scripture and move front and center (perhaps not the most comfortable place, but Joshua does it without complaining). He leads the people across the Jordan River, and then he is responsible for leading Israel to conquer the Canaanite cities. First stop, Jericho.

God's plans for capturing Jericho are patently ridiculous by human standards, but perfectly reasonable when viewed through the eyes of faith. You can download the audio and listen to a story about a time when my life-plans looked patently ridiculous by human standards but perfectly reasonable when viewed through the eyes of faith.

Jericho falls, but in the next chapter, so does Joshua. And so did I. Joshua and I were both missing some information when we faithlessly wailed to God (see Josh 7:6-9). Neither one of us knew that there was hidden sin. The sin in Joshua 7 was someone else's. The sin in my story was my own (listen to the audio for an explanation of how I had fallen into the sin of presumption). In both cases, we had to face the sin and get rid of it, not hide from it.

But getting rid of sin paid off in both cases—Joshua got his victory at Ai (Josh 8), and the Lord answered my asking so graciously that I have never forgotten it.

I didn't have time to talk about Joshua 9 and 10, which record Joshua's only other fall and God's gracious (and miraculous!) help. It's worth a read.

In the end, Joshua's faithfulness, obedience, and courage influenced the entire nation of Israel, not only for his generation, but also for the next generation (Josh 24:31). Joshua started well, and he finished well. I want to be like him.

Have a great week with God. Be bold and courageous, because He is with you always.

In Christ,
Elizabeth.