

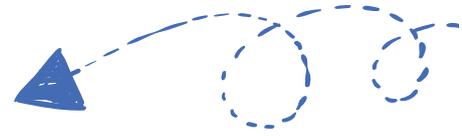
# 7

## Lord, I will go! *Strengthen Me*

(Joshua 1:9)

### INTRODUCTION

**S**l of us, on some occasion or another, have been victims of fear. And fear, believe it or not, can prevent us from attaining the ideal to which we were destined. Because of fear, some people have changed jobs; or they have moved elsewhere in the country, locked themselves in their homes, or entered an asylum. It's unbelievable, but fear prevents the seller from offering their merchandise; the young man in love, from asking for the hand of a young woman; the one who is looking for a position, from talking to the manager; to the executive, from making a fundamental decision; and the one who seeks the truth, from giving his life to God.



Dear friends, fear does not discriminate people and disregards age. It hits the weak and the powerful. It haunts the young and the old, the rich and the poor. Even those who seem to have it all; celebrities, heroes and leaders confess to having a wide variety of fears.

Who could imagine, for example, that Caesar Augustus, the great Roman emperor, was afraid of the darkness? Or that Napoleon Bonaparte, the great military strategist and genius, was afraid of cats. That Richard Nixon was afraid of hospitals, and that George Washington was terrified of being buried alive. But moreover, who might think that Johnny Depp, the actor who has starred in some of the highest-grossing films of recent years, has confessed to fearing clowns. That Michael Jordan, the basketball superstar, possesses the rare fear of going underwater; and that Oprah Winfrey, one of the most recognized women in the world, is afraid of decision-making.

## DEVELOPMENT

It is incredibly striking that the Bible, the book par excellence, deeply addresses the theme of fear. According to scholars, the term “*do not be afraid*” appears about 365 times throughout all the scriptures, thus being the most frequently repeated commandment. On the other hand, the word “*fear*” appears more than 200 times, while “*fear*” and “*terror*” more than 100 times each. And so that you don’t think the heroes of the Bible were fearless, the scriptures says that more than 200 individuals were afraid.

The Old Testament presents the story of a man named Joshua, who was a recognized leader in Israel. This man, as described by a respected Christian author, was a warrior “courageous, resolute and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests in his care for those committed to his charge, and, above all, inspired by a living faith in God.”<sup>1</sup>

But, despite all his heroism and courage, Joshua struggled with fear. The scriptures tell us the Lord once said to him:

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen White. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 481



Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. <sup>4</sup>Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. (Joshua 1:2-4)

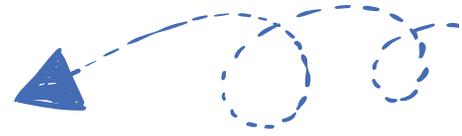
Great challenges stood before Joshua. The first of these was to replace Moses. Replacing someone is never an easy task but replacing a leader of the likes of Moses complicates things a little more. Moses, as the Bible shows and confirmed by history, is ranked among the greatest men the world has ever known. As a statist, warrior, leader, emancipator, writer, poet or prophet, he had no peer. But it is important to add that the Bible also tells us that “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.” (Exodus 33:11). This was the kind of leader Joshua was called to replace. Indisputably, the task was not easy at all.

The second challenge Joshua faced was “crossing the Jordan.” The Jordan river is the most important river in Palestine. It divides the country into two countries: Western Palestine, the most important and rich part; and the Transjordan. Normally, crossing the Jordan was not a challenge, however, by the time Joshua received this command things were different. It was spring and by this season the river overflowed, being almost impossible to cross it. We must remember that Joshua was leading a multitude of about two million people. Humanly speaking, crossing the Jordan seemed like an impossible mission.

Finally, Joshua had to “*conquer the earth.*” To own the land, Joshua had to lead Israel’s armies against unknown peoples who outnumbered them in people and weaponry. Aside from that, the cities of Canaan were walled fortresses, towering and impossible to collapse. As a result, Joshua was going up against great and challenging circumstances: replacing one of the most exceptional leaders in history, organizing the crossing of the people through the overflowing waters of the Jordan River, and facing formidable towns, armies, and cities. I ask you: How do you think Joshua felt?

Joshua was afraid. The same fear that a single mother who has to raise her children alone feels. He felt the same fear an immigrant experiences when





arriving in an unknown country. He felt the same fear faced by a student who does not have the means to pay for their college studies. He felt the deep fear of failure. But just as fear touched the door of his heart, the Word of God came to him saying:

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.” (Joshua 1:6-9)

As he faced tremendous challenges, God told Joshua *“don’t be afraid.”* He also gave him three special guarantees that would enable him to overcome the fear of failure. The first guarantee God gave him was the assurance of His promises. The land Joshua was to conquer had been delivered many years ago. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, Joshua should not fear his challenges, for divine promises guaranteed his triumph.

The second guarantee God gave him was the certainty of His presence. The Lord said unto him, “ Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go “ (Joshua 1:9). When God’s presence accompanies us, fear has no reason to be. No matter how many challenges were presented along the way, Joshua was guaranteed that God would be by his side giving him the victory.

Finally, God gave him the power of His Word. Joshua was told:

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. (Joshua 1:8)

For Joshua to be able to overcome his fears, he had to accept, believe, meditate, obey, and live the Word of God. Only the Word of God would give him enough strength to defeat fear.



Thanks to the power of God's Word, Joshua received the strength to face his fears and fulfill the mission the Lord had entrusted to him. My friend, only the Word of God will give us the strength to face the challenges ahead with courage and strength. A famous writer, speaking of the power of God's Word, said:

The Bible is the largest source of encouragement that is currently available. When we read it, we are transformed, because it is a living book. When we are afraid of failure or feel that we are a failure, the Word of God should be our absolute priority. The words we find there will fill our hearts and minds with strength and courage. The more we focus on God and His Word, the less room there will be for fear."<sup>2</sup>

But, for the power of God's Word to become a reality in our lives, we need to take three actions:

- *First: Accept its authority.* We must remember that the Bible is the supreme authority of truth. The prophet Isaiah expressed it well as he wrote, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20).
- *Second, internalize your teachings.* It is not enough just to accept the authority of the scriptures, it is necessary to assimilate their teachings. We must spend time reading God's Word and pondering its great truths. King David was aware of this when he wrote: "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2).
- *Third: Apply your principles.* It is completely useless to accept the authority of the scriptures or internalize their teachings, if we are not willing to apply their principles. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22).



## CONCLUSION

A while back I saw an interesting interview with a famous baseball player. This man recounted that for years he had lived a completely empty life. To compensate for his situation, he took refuge in alcohol and parties. But one day, he said, he was impacted by the power of God's Word and his life changed completely. What struck me most about the interview was when he was asked: What is the greatest achievement of your career? The interviewer was surprised to hear the former player say, "Getting to know Christ and make him known to others."

My friends, when the power of God's Word impacts our lives, we will be strengthened and say that the greatest thing we can achieve is to make Jesus Christ known to others. When you receive the power of God's Word in your life, like Joshua, you too will say, "Lord, I will go."

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What were the challenges Joshua faced?
2. What were the three guarantees of victory God gave Joshua?
3. What did Joshua have to do in relation to the Word of God?
4. What are the three actions in relation to the Word of God that we must do?

