

Courage for Tough Times

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In Joshua 1, God repeats “be courageous” four times: *Be strong and courageous..... Only be strong and very courageous.... Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Only be strong and courageous* (verses 6-7, 9, and 18b, ESV).

Merriam-Webster defines **courage** as *mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty*. Courage, then, is not the absence of fear but the choice to move beyond its inherent danger and difficulties—with serene confidence in God, with us.

By consistently choosing to live in God’s deliverance, we can move beyond the three hazy stages of tough times: 1. The tough time begins, 2. The tough time continues, 3. The tough time ends (but you can already see another one on its way). In all times, we need to be alert, **replacing Mind ANTs** (automatic negative thoughts). These pests occur in 10 different forms of distorted thinking, from **Catastrophizing** (expecting the worst to happen), **Should Statements** (internal emotional whips like “I should have done more” or “She should have...”), to **Emotional Reasoning** (accepting all feelings as valid indicators of reality). For more on managing your thoughts, see Chapter Two of *Core Healing from Trauma*.



We do need to notice what we’re feeling, but we don’t need to let feelings govern our lives. As we allow our emotions to inform rather than control us, we’ll eat when we’re hungry, rest when we’re tired, study God’s Word when we’re confused, and reach out to others when we’re lonely.

We can **reframe** life’s challenges with faith, replacing the “frame” of fear—self-talk such as, “This is too hard, No one cares”—with Philippians 4:13, *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*. We can remind ourselves: *With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible* (Matthew 19:26). Because He is with you, you’re never alone! Jesus said, *And everything I’ve taught you is so that the peace which is in me will be in you and will give you great confidence as you rest in me. For in this unbelieving world you will experience trouble and sorrows, but you must be courageous, for I have conquered the world!* (John 16:33, TPT).

Some of the toughest of tough times involve relationship pain—when a child is hurting or a teen is rebelling, when an adult child is estranged or when a loved one leaves. Jesus told us we’d experience trouble in the world. Amidst suffering, instead of being either naively optimistic or harshly fatalistic, we can run to God for deep hope that doesn’t disappoint (see Romans 5:3-5). Like the disciples when their boat was buffeted by waves (and not understanding it was Jesus walking toward them on the water), we might feel terrified at life’s unknowns. But we can train ourselves to hear Jesus’ calm voice, **Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.** (Matthew 14:27).

When someone you know is going through a tough time, you can make a difference by **noticing and showing you care**. That might mean driving a friend or a neighbor to a doctor’s appointment; it could mean providing meals or household help for someone in need, making phone calls—and taking time to listen. When we’re the ones struggling, we can develop courage by choosing to rely on God, letting others know we need help, and living one moment at a time. We don’t have strength for tomorrow’s challenges, but we do—by the grace of God—have strength for today.

For additional ideas, you can work through *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook for individuals or groups, available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/occdejH>). To build on the lessons of Proverbs, you can watch “Strengthening Your Core,” a 12 - video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW> or subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>.

Praying Courageous Affirmations

- Father God, I accept your gift of courage.

Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD! (Psalm 27:14, ESV).

- I can be at peace because You're always with me.

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6, ESV).

- I trust in You, Holy Spirit, to work in and through me.

Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for and hope for and expect the LORD! (Psalm 31:24, AMP). For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear) but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7, AMP).

- Father, thank You for creating me with a purpose.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and in Your book all the days [of my life] were written before they ever took shape, when as yet there was none of them (Psalm 139:16, AMP).

- Jesus, thank You for knowing me and caring about every detail of my life. Your words bring comfort:

For even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:30, ESV).

- Jesus, thank You for keeping me safe in Your love. I will boldly step forward in faith, hearing You say,

Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid. (Mark 6:50, ESV). When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and raised a [deep, throaty] shriek of terror. For they all saw Him and were agitated (troubled and filled with fear and dread). But immediately He talked with them and said, Take heart! I AM! Stop being alarmed and afraid (Mark 6:49, 50, AMP). Lord, relying on You helps me remain joyful amidst adversity.

- Help me live for Your glory, knowing You do all things well.

This is in keeping with my own eager desire and persistent expectation and hope, that I shall not disgrace myself nor be put to shame in anything; but that with the utmost freedom of speech and unfailing courage, now as always, heretofore, Christ (the Messiah) will be magnified and get glory and praise in this body of mine and be boldly exalted in my person, whether through (by) life or through (by) death (Philippians 1:20, AMP).

- No matter what's happening, I can be confident, fully alive in Your strength.

So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective (Colossians 3:1-3, MSG).