

BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

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We praise God that we are on the 6th month of our Knowing God chronological Bible reading. Last Sunday, June 4, we had 120 of our readers join us in our quarterly fellowship with Pastor Lito Villoria. He shared with us how he personally enjoys his time with God so that he can apply it in his life and ministry.

This week, our Bible reading began with the book of Joshua. The historical book of Joshua opens with the commissioning of Joshua as the new leader of the Israelites. His goal is to bring God's people to the land that the Lord had promised since the time of Abraham. Entering the land with a new generation that needs to remember the ways of the Lord can be challenging, much more, to contend with the inhabitants of the land that they had to conquer, just as the LORD commanded. That is why the LORD reminded Joshua of His promises. He assured Joshua of His providence, power and, most of all, His presence. Thus, the LORD said in Joshua 1:9, *"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."*

I am now on chapter 11 of the book, where Joshua had already conquered the southern and northern regions of the Promised Land. Reflecting on what had transpired, Joshua could not have done it without the exhortation from the LORD in the first chapter. For Joshua to conquer both the southern and northern areas, he had to contend with deception and kings who came together to fight against him. But just as the LORD had told him, he cannot do it without His presence, His power, and His promises! And as a leader, he needed to be strong, courageous, and look to Yahweh.

We are all in a battle. We all have wars to fight. What wars are you winning? What areas of your life do you need to conquer? What terrain or challenges do you need to climb and go through? While the passage exhorts us to be strong, courageous, not easily frightened, and not dismayed, these are four traits we cannot live out apart from the grace of the Lord in our lives. With our human thinking and abilities, we will fail and falter in our insufficiency. In our old nature, we will fall and give up. But what will change the course of our lives is the Lord, if and when we allow Him to take center stage in our battles. We

need to learn to completely surrender to His will, for He knows everything. We need to yield to His ways, for all His ways are perfect.

As the Lord fights for us, He allows us the privilege to stand in the battle with Him. As He fights for us, we need to fight for our intimate relationship with Him. As the Lord takes on the battle, we need to labor in our prayer. As the Lord takes on the battle for us, we need to do what we have to do to win against the challenges that are before us!

Just like the Israelites, the conquest did not happen in one day - it took many years. It took a lot of work, labor, and even lives for them to be able to live in the land just as the Lord had promised. That is a life of faith—of active faith and trust in the One whose words are TRUE and FAITHFUL. Thus, in Joshua 11:23, it says, *"So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war."*

Today, as believers in Jesus Christ, we need to be strong and courageous.✱