



THE LAMPLIGHTER

A First Church of God Newsletter



THE COURAGE TO PRESS FORWARD

As you look back on the past year, maybe you feel behind going into 2024 and like you didn't accomplish nearly the amount you wanted to in 2023. Maybe you look back on the past year and feel bitterness or anger toward things that happened to you or people who hurt you. These feelings are valid, but I believe we can move forward in this broken world and take courage by receiving strength from God. He will sustain us and fill our hearts with joy. I will leave you with a few verses from Psalm 27 to carry us into the new year. Through God alone, we can be brave and courageous in 2024:

“The LORD is my light and my salvation—so why should I be afraid? ... Do not let me fall into their hands. For they accuse me of things I've never done; with every breath they threaten me with violence. Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness while I am here in the land of the living. Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord” (vv. 1,12-14, NLT).

If anybody ever told me at the beginning of the year not to stress out or that it was not a big deal, I would get upset with them because it was almost like they were downplaying the amount of work that needed to be done and the time it would take to do it. As you prepare to begin a new year, and look ahead to what's in store for you, do you feel the stresses begin to pile up by all things you want to be doing like staying healthy, exercising, seeing more of your family, doing more fun things, and trying to balance it all the things you have to be doing, taking care of the house, the kids, the different things at work, or the different responsibilities you have? Does the uncertainty of what the new year will bring cause you to be afraid and discouraged? And yet God tells us in our lesson, “Be strong and courageous.” Today we are going to ask ourselves, “How can we be strong and courageous in the new year?”

I wonder if Joshua asked himself that very question as God told him to be strong and courageous. The responsibility that was laid before Joshua was daunting and a bit frightening. He was the new leader of the nation of Israel at a crucial point in their history. They were seeing the Lord fulfill his promise that he made to Abraham to give them the land flowing with milk and honey. This was the transition from wandering in the desert, to having a land of their own. Not only was it a big transition but Joshua was following in the footsteps of one of the greatest leaders in Israel's history, Moses. I wonder if he was a bit afraid that he could not be as good as a leader as Moses was. I wonder if Joshua was a bit discouraged as he looked back on Israelite history and saw all the problems the people gave Moses and wondered to himself if he would be equipped to handle those situations.

Don't you think Joshua needed some encouragement as he began to lead the nation? That is precisely what God gives to him. Not just once, not twice, but three times God encouraged Joshua saying, “Be strong and courageous.” Don't we need to hear that encouragement every once and while as well? I think all of us at some point have felt the way Joshua did. When we look at the task before us and feel overwhelmed. feel overwhelmed and stressed don't, we begin to feel afraid? Afraid that we won't be good enough, afraid that we can't handle our responsibilities. And isn't it just showing that we are afraid of what tomorrow brings?

But even as we look to the past, we may begin to feel discouraged, discouraged by the events that took place, the mistakes that we made, unfulfilled exceptions like getting the grade we wanted, or that promotion.

God tells us during all those things to “Be strong and courageous.” In fact, he even commands it. What does it say about our trust in God if we are afraid and discouraged? Doesn't it say that we don't trust him to be with us during those difficult times? Doesn't it say that we don't think he can or will help us. Or maybe it's not that we trust him but maybe it is simply that we forget his promises found in his Word. This new year remind yourself everyday of God's Promises in doing so you will have the strength and courage to press forward just as Joshua did.

Staff Retreat
Church Finances
Outreach



Special ANNOUNCEMENT Annual Business Meeting & Carry-In Dinner is coming up Sunday, January 7th. Please make sure you're there!

Contact us

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Sis. Kelise Scarberry	407-270-2357	C

Birthdays & Anniversaries
January

4	Devon Williams
19	Kelise Scarberry
25	Ian Iverstine

If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please let Sarah Aleshire know so we can update our registry.

