

Be Strong and Courageous inspired by Joshua 1:1-11

The final school bell rang loudly as students rushed out of the building for summer break. Raymond sat quietly on a bench outside, staring at the football field.

His mentor, Coach Daniels, had recently moved to another state. For years, Coach Daniels had encouraged Raymond, helping him believe in himself when things were difficult. Now that he was gone, Raymond felt uncertain about the future.

"What's wrong?" Flint asked, dropping his backpack beside him.

Raymond sighed. "Everything's changing, Coach Daniels is gone, and next year, we'll be the oldest students in middle school, but I don't know if I'm ready."

Jimmy walked over carrying a basketball. "Ready for what?"

"For all of it," Raymond replied. "People expect us to lead, and coach always knew what to do, but I don't."

Bobby sat down on the grass. "I think you're stronger than you realize."

Raymond shook his head. "I'm not so sure."



That evening, Raymond attended youth group at church. The pastor opened his Bible and began reading from Joshua chapter one.

"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready..."

Raymond listened carefully.

The pastor continued reading.

"Be strong and courageous... Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

The words seemed to jump off the page.

After the service, Raymond approached Pastor Williams.

"That passage was about Joshua taking over after Moses, right?" Raymond asked.

"Yes," Pastor Williams said.

"Was Joshua scared?"

The pastor smiled. "Most likely. Moses had led God's people for years. Joshua had a huge responsibility ahead of him."

"Then why did God keep telling him to be courageous?"

"Because courage doesn't mean you're never afraid," Pastor Williams replied. "It means you trust God enough to move forward anyway."

Raymond thought about that all the way home.



A week later, trouble appeared in the neighborhood.

The city planned a community cleanup project, but very few people had signed up to help. Trash littered the local park, playground equipment needed repairs, and the basketball court was covered with graffiti.

The community center director made an announcement.

"We need volunteers to organize this project because without leadership, it may be canceled."

Everyone looked around, yet no one raised a hand.

Raymond felt nervous.

Then he remembered Joshua.

"Be strong and courageous."

Slowly, he stood up.

"I'll help lead it."

The director smiled. "Wonderful! Can you gather a team?"

Raymond swallowed hard.

"I'll try."

The next day Raymond met with Flint, Jimmy, and Bobby.

"You volunteered to lead?" Flint asked.

"Yeah."

Jimmy's eyes widened. "That's a big job."

"I know," Raymond admitted. "Honestly, I'm scared."

Bobby grinned.

"Good. That means you're taking it seriously."

Raymond laughed.

"I was hoping for a little more encouragement than that."

Flint smiled.

"You've got us, what do we need to do?"

Together they made plans... Flint designed flyers... Jimmy spoke to local businesses about donating supplies... Bobby organized student volunteers.

For two weeks, they worked tirelessly.

Still, obstacles appeared.

A rainstorm delayed their first cleanup day.

Several volunteers canceled at the last minute.

One sponsor backed out unexpectedly.

Raymond began to feel overwhelmed.

One evening he sat on the bleachers at the park.

"This is impossible," he muttered.

Just then his phone buzzed.

It was a text from Bobby.

Don't quit... God's with you... remember Joshua.

A minute later another message arrived from Flint.

One step at a time. We're almost there.

Then Jimmy texted.

Leaders don't give up when things get hard.

Raymond smiled.

Maybe he wasn't carrying the burden alone.



The following Saturday, cleanup day finally arrived.

To Raymond's surprise, dozens of people showed up.

Students picked up trash.

Parents painted benches.

Local businesses donated food and supplies.

By afternoon, the park looked completely different.

The playground was shining.

The basketball court looked brand new.

Flowers lined the sidewalks.

Neighbors gathered to celebrate.

The community center director stepped onto a small stage.

"I want to thank everyone who helped, but especially Raymond, Flint, Jimmy, and Bobby because their courage inspired this entire community."

Everyone applauded.

Raymond felt his face turn into a blush.

Afterward, the four friends sat together under a tree.

"You did it," Jimmy said.

"We did it," Raymond corrected.

Flint nodded. "That's what good leaders say."

Bobby smiled.

"So, what did you learn?"

Raymond looked around at the transformed park.

"I learned that God doesn't always remove the challenge."

"Then what does God do?" Flint asked.

Raymond smiled.

"He stays with us through it."

The others nodded.

Raymond remembered God's words to Joshua.

"Be strong and courageous..."