

## **BE STRONG, OBEY AND CONQUER THE LAND**

“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.” (Jos 1:7)

Good evening! Anyung Hasimnika! Buenas Noches! Gutten Abend! Dobre Vejer! First of all, I join the entire UBF community in giving thanks to God for using P. Moses Yoon as our General Director for the last four years. He has shared the living words of God with us faithfully, giving us spiritual direction and encouragement during a global pandemic. It has been a great blessing to have served under his leadership and to have become his friend.

As his term is ending, I now stand here to be the next General Director of UBF ministry. The grace of my Lord Jesus Christ is truly amazing. He has saved me from my sins and transformed me from a follower of the American Dream to a shepherd of God’s people with living hope in the kingdom of God. Thanks and praise to my Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus’ grace has been manifest to me through many servants of God whom I also thank: First, the late Dr. Samuel and Grace Lee. Dr. Lee saw me with God’s hope despite my weaknesses and failings. He gave me the privilege to work beside him for 18 years, and loved me like a son. M. Sarah Barry has prayed for me wholeheartedly for over 40 years. Her spiritual support has been vital. I am also grateful to P. Abraham Kim—my original mentor and his wife Sarah, Dr. John and Sarah Jun, Dr. Mark and Anna Yang, M. Isaac and Rebecca Choi, Pastors Mark Vucekovich, Teddy Hembekides and Kevin Albright, the entire Chicago UBF community, and friends in Christ everywhere. And I give thanks for my mentors at Wheaton College—Drs. Scott Moreau and John Armstrong.

Most of all, I am grateful to my loving wife Dervilla, who has supported me for the last 37 years, bearing and raising six children, and building up our family. She has sacrificed herself, allowing me to serve God freely. Without her, I would not be here today. I am grateful to my amazing children: Sarah, David, Rebekah, John, Daniel and Joshua, and to my grandchildren Abigail, Amelia and Penelope, who can cheer me up without even trying to.

As I prayed for God’s guidance, the Holy Spirit impressed upon me Joshua 1:7. God said to Joshua, “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.” At that time, the people of Israel were standing at the entrance of the promised land. Through Moses, God had led them out of slavery in Egypt and then trained them in the wilderness for forty years. Though Moses had been their great shepherd, he would not lead them into the promised land. God gave Joshua the mission of leading his people to conquer and occupy the promised land. God promised to give his people every

place where they set their feet. This would require fighting against strong enemies. God would be with them, but the task would be difficult. So God commanded Joshua to be strong, taught him how to be strong, and gave him a warning and a promise.

First, “be strong and courageous, obey the word of God.” Before Moses died, he had said to all Israel, “Be strong and courageous” (Dt 31:6). Moses also said these words to Joshua twice in the presence of all Israel (Dt 31:7,23). And now God himself repeats these words to Joshua three times in 1:6-9. The most important thing for Joshua was to be strong and courageous. These words were not given because Joshua had been weak and fearful. Joshua had proven to be a man of courage and faith. He had received training under Moses for decades. He knew the faith and spirit of Moses, and God’s vision for Israel. He seemed fully prepared to lead. Yet the Lord knew his heart and said, “Be strong and very courageous.” Most likely, Joshua felt weak and inadequate. Moses had been an epic leader, the founder. No successor could measure up. In addition, being a top leader is a great responsibility. From now on, Joshua would have to make hard decisions and bear the consequences. He could expect many demands and complaints. Most of all, he had to confront strong enemies: enemy armies from without and the subtle temptations of idolatrous cultures from within. It was too much for any human being to bear. Joshua needed strength—heavenly strength. Where would this strength come from?

God said to Joshua, “Be strong and very courageous.” As God’s word instructed Joshua, God’s power entered his heart. He could turn his mind away from the difficulties to the great and awesome God. This was the God who broke Pharaoh’s mighty grip and delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. This was the mighty God, who had parted the Red Sea for his people and then destroyed the Egyptian army. This was the almighty God for whom nothing is impossible. God would be his source of strength.

To rely on God’s strength, there was something Joshua needed to do. God said, “Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you.” How could he do this? God said in verse 8a, “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.” The Book of the Law was the record of God’s words written by Moses in the Bible. God’s words are more than letters on a page. They are inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are living and active, and they reveal God to us. Through God’s words, we can discover God himself—his power and love, his holiness and judgment, his saving grace, his eternal kingdom, and more. From a gospel perspective, the purpose of Bible study is to know Jesus Christ, receive his forgiving grace and to live a new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we have Christ in our hearts, we can obey the will of God, we can speak life-giving words to others and be a blessing. Any kind of person can become strong, courageous and a blessing when the word of God dwells in their hearts. The word of God is most precious—more than any human ideas, people’s advice, or noise of the world. Without the word of God we are mere flesh, weak and prone to sin. This is why it was vital for Joshua to have the word of God always on his lips and to meditate on it day

and night. My first prayer topic is to love and obey the word of God, have Christ in my heart always, and to be strong and courageous to do God's will.

Second, God's vision. God had brought the Israelites to the promised land to conquer and occupy it according to his own purpose. It was not just for them to enjoy a comfortable life, but to fulfill God's vision as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6). This was a prototype of Jesus Christ's conquest of the dominion of darkness (Col 1:13), and spreading the gospel message through his people. 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." God has such a great vision and purpose for us today. Jesus' final words to his church, in Matthew 28:18-20, were these: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The first generation of UBF leaders accepted this command with faith and obeyed it, sacrificing much. Then God blessed them to send thousands of missionaries to more than 90 countries. These self-supporting gospel workers are now standing firm, like an Army Ranger advance force in the spiritual battle. Thank God for the great victories given to the first generation.

Now, the next generation must carry on—supporting, developing and advancing the mission in each ministry. In many cases our ministries are still on the fringes of campuses and cultures. We must penetrate more deeply to evangelize leaders in the mainstream of each nation. Through a few leaders, the gospel can transform a campus. When university campuses are won for Christ, nations are won for Christ. This can happen in our generation. The book of Acts tells us how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth in one generation. The motto of the Student Volunteer movement was "The evangelization of the world in this generation." With that vision thousands of missionaries from North America went out to the world, including Mother Sarah Barry. Dr. Samuel Lee and early UBF leaders often said, "Bible Korea, World Mission, Expand your tents!" As they prayed and obeyed, thousands of missionaries went out in their generation. Our mighty God can do great things in our own generation. What about now? Every campus where his servants are now standing can be transformed to bless a nation. Let's see the vision of world salvation through campus ministry in our generation. As William Carey said, we should "expect great things from God and attempt great things for God."

The first generation had to overcome many challenges to advance the gospel, and so must we. Sometimes our ministries do not grow as fast as we hope. Among other things, cultural and generational barriers hinder us. We need to break through these barriers by God's power. As we listen to the word of God together, and obey the word of God together, the Holy Spirit will help us. We can experience a new era of the gospel's spread.

It is my prayer to encourage cross-cultural, intergenerational ministry. My motto may be “Working together for God’s mission, crossing cultures and generations.” After becoming GD-elect, I traveled to Korea with my wife and met P. Moses Yoon, P. Moses Kim and many staff members and leaders. They warmly welcomed us and were eager to communicate freely and pray together. There is a tremendous opportunity. To facilitate this I have asked some mature gospel workers to serve together with me for the next four years: Dr. Henry Park (Vice GD), P. John Seo (International Coordinator), P. Teddy Hembekides (NA Coordinator), P. Mark Vucekovich (Chicago Senior Pastor), M. David Kim (World Mission Dept. Chair), Dr. Augustine Suh (Ed. Dept. Chair), and Dr. Ezra Cho (Online Forum Chair). We formed a steering committee and began to pray together for the ISBC 2023. We invited P. Caleb Kim (World Mission Chair) and P. John Lee (N. America rep.) from Korea. God has blessed our prayer and given us wisdom and joy. It is a good beginning.

While the coworking of Korea and North America is vital, we must also work together in many other ways. Headquarters ministry must be closely connected to leaders on all mission fields. I plan to invite the International Executive Board to meet together more frequently to pray for and serve our entire ministry. I will work together with continental leaders to empower new generation leaders and support their spiritual development and ministerial opportunities. I also plan to visit UBF chapters extensively. Next month, I am scheduled to visit seven nations in Latin America, accompanied by my wife. After that, we plan to attend the four regional conferences in Africa. I will try to find ways to strengthen and support our missionaries and native leaders and to mobilize prayer support. May God bless us as we work together to carry out his mission.

Though God has done great work over the past 60 years, in some ways we are still in a pioneering stage of world campus mission. Many nations, cities and campuses are waiting for UBF missionaries and shepherds to come and share the word of God with them. I pray for mission revival, that the Lord Jesus may raise workers for his harvest field. Through the ISBC 2023, titled “His Glory,” we pray that many young people may see Jesus’ glory and catch God’s vision. We welcome anyone from any nation who is able to come. We plan a special leaders conference for missionaries and national leaders, and a vision camp for young people. And for those outside of North America who cannot come in person, we will try to provide an effective online experience. May our mighty God raise a new generation of mission workers!

God’s words to Joshua in 1:7 contain both a warning and a promise. The warning is “...do not turn from it to the right or to the left.” Holding firmly to the gospel message and God’s vision for world mission require spiritual struggle. Evil forces tempt us to compromise through liberalism, nationalism, humanism, and the like. Temptations come from the right and from the left. But we must never, ever compromise the gospel truth, no matter what. We must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, hold onto the gospel truth, and obey the world mission command as a matter of life and death. Then what will happen? The Lord says,

“...that you may be successful wherever you go.” It means that new leaders will be raised in every nation who stand firm in the gospel, proclaiming God’s kingdom, fulfilling God’s vision. We will advance in becoming a royal priesthood and a holy nation that includes people of every tribe and language.

At this time, I ask you to pray for me to serve as the General Director for the next four years, and to pray for our UBF ministry.

Prayer Topics:

1. To love and obey the word of God and have Christ in my heart always
2. To work together for God’s mission, across cultures and generations
3. To reach every campus and nation for Christ in this generation
4. To empower a new generation of leaders
5. ISBC 2023: His Glory
  - a. The glory of Jesus may be revealed
  - b. We may see his glory and renew our faith, spirit and vision
  - c. His glory may spread all over the world through us

May God richly bless us all!