

Strong and Courageous

IT IS TIME TO BREAK FREE FROM THE CROWD AND
BECOME THE PERSON GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO BE...

Clint Rutledge

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What Others Are Saying...

"I love this book! It delivers great lessons for living a purpose driven life in a creative and easy way. I couldn't put it down!

Jack Canfield

Coauthor of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul*® series

"I thoroughly enjoyed Clint's first book The Classroom! His new book Strong and Courageous delivers another important message that young people and parents need in today's challenging world."

Matt Rhule

Head Coach Carolina Panthers

"Clint is an exceptional writer, a remarkable storyteller, a coach. He is coaching us through this incredible book. Sit at his feet and learn."

Dr. Derwin L. Gray

Co-founder & Lead Pastor of Transformation Church

Author of, *How To Heal The Racial Divide: What the Bible Says, and the First Christians Knew, about Racial Reconciliation*

“Teens and parents of teens are faced with a lot of challenges in today’s world. The good news is God uses those challenges to make us stronger when we look to Him. *Strong and a Courageous* is a heart warming story that reminds us of this truth.”

Robert Lewis

Author of *Raising a Modern Day Knight*, *Men’s Fraternity*, and *The Better Man* curriculum.

“As a university president I witness the daily grind of life that our young people experience in today’s world. Our children and young adults face a complex array of pressures impacting their sense of identity, purpose, and belonging. In his book “*Strong and Courageous*” Clint Rutledge offers a modern-day parable to provide practical wisdom and encouragement for overcoming today’s challenges and orienting life around God and His Word. Every teenager should have this resource close for help on the journey.”

Dr. Steven D. Mason, Ph.D.

President

Letourneau University

"Strong and Courageous is a story of hope and encouragement. It will inspire you to take on life's challenges with a strength and conviction that anything is possible when you do things God's way rather than the world's way."

Adam Tarnow

Host of The Better Man Podcast

"Strong and Courageous is nothing but the Truth. I'm a firm believer that our young people today are the most important ministry in America. The most important part of that ministry is to build a solid foundation of leadership that embraces servant leadership. There is no better moral compass to build servant leadership than the Bible. Clint has courageously taken the Truth from the Bible and has applied those teachings in this book so that today's young people can easily relate to and become strong and courageous enough to apply them to their lives. Well done, Clint!"

Stan Laing

Executive Director of Athletics

Northside Independent School District

“Clint has done an excellent job in giving us Biblical tools to put in our tool boxes for building a Christian life in an ever changing landscape.”

Ray Still

Executive Pastor – Oakwood Baptist Church

"Strong and Courageous is a book that shows you how to take on life's challenges with the proper perspective and then use your gifts to make a difference on your team, in your school, and in the world around you. If you coach a team or run a select organization, I urge you to put this book in front of your players. They will be better for it!"

Cade Griffis

D-BAT Sports CEO

“As a teenager, from a young age you have had multiple influencers in your life ask the question, “What are you going to do when you grow up?” You have been trained to think, to plan and to dream about your job and career. What you do is important, but is it the most important question to be considered? Strong and Courageous will make you consider a deeper and more driving question that will direct your entire life - “Who are you?” I encourage you to dive into this book and discover who God has made you to be.”

Scott Heider

Lead Pastor at The Grove Church

Contents

Introduction	11
1 – The Unexpected Teacher	17
2 – Fighting Back	27
3 – Be Strong and Courageous in Your Convictions	35
4 – One out of 100	53
5 – Be Strong and Courageous in Times of Discouragement	63
6 – Get out of the Boat	69
7 – How to Handle Criticism	81
8 – Called Out	91
9 – Be Strong and Courageous in Times of Leadership	103
10 – Be Strong and Courageous – Do the Work	119
Study Guide	133

Foreword

I will forever be grateful for Coach D.W. Rutledge. He was my high school head football coach at Converse Judson from 1986-1989. To me, and to so many young men, Coach Rutledge was much more than just a coach. He was the father many of us did not have. He was our motivator, teacher, our example. He and his staff taught us so much more than football. He gave us tools to live life. I'm the man I am today because of his love and tutelage.

When I was a 17-year-old running around the football fields at Converse Judson High School, there was always a little boy around. He was always laughing, always helping. That little boy was Clint Rutledge, Coach Rutledge's son. Wherever the Judson

Rockets team was, Clint was there. Not only did Clint go on to play quarterback and win two state championships under his father's leadership, he also drank from the deep well of knowledge and wisdom of his dad. In the pages of this book, you will see that Clint has not only taken what he learned from his father, he's made it his own.

Clint is an exceptional writer, a remarkable storyteller, a coach. He is coaching us through his incredible book. Sit at his feet and learn.

Dr. Derwin L. Gray

Co-founder and Lead Pastor of Transformation Church

Author of, How to Heal the Racial Divide: What the Bible Says, and the First Christians Knew, about Racial Reconciliation

Introduction

It is tough being a teenager today.

The feelings of insecurity and the hormones are the same as they have always been and questions like *Where Do I Fit In* and *Who Do I Want To Be* are still floating through high school hallways. But, in today's world the stakes seem higher. Kids not only have to know how to navigate the physical world where they live (their home, their family; their school, locker room, etc.). They also must navigate a cyber world that is much bigger, more addictive, and more connected than the world has ever known.

How is a teen supposed to do it? How do they make good choices and make a difference? If they are bold enough to stand for something, then how do they handle the

naysayers who will inevitably pull out their phones and “bravely” criticize from behind their screen protectors? Most importantly, amidst all the negative things vying for their attention, how do they discover their purpose and live a successful life?

The more we think about it, these questions aren't just relevant for teens. They are relevant for all of us. Even though they seem like modern questions with modern challenges, the answers come from age old wisdom. Satan has been shooting his same darts of doubt for centuries. He just has new tools to use in today's world. Have you ever felt the sting as one of his darts hit their mark with you?

- Am I the right person for this?
- Do I look the part?
- Am I smart enough?

- Who says I have the right to lead?
- What if I mess up?
- Why do I have to deal with this challenge?

Sometimes those darts hit at just the right time and in just the right spot where they become debilitating. It is in those moments that we need divine encouragement.

In the Bible, Joshua was there. He had to have been. Moses had died and Joshua was the one who was supposed to lead them into the Promised Land. Just like us, he had to face moments of doubt and moments of fear. Why else would he have continually been told to be strong and courageous? If only Moses or God had told Joshua when, where, and how to be strong and courageous. Maybe then we could apply those same lessons to our own lives.

Well, guess what? I have some good news. They did tell Joshua when, where, and how to be strong and courageous and we can do the same.

So, if you are a teenager trying to find your way, a newly wed, a brand-new parent, an empty nester, or a new grandparent, pull up a chair. If you are wondering if you have what it takes to overcome your doubts and fears, how to make that big decision, or how to approach life's newest challenge, grab some coffee and find a quiet spot. Bring your worries, your concerns, and your fears, and let God speak to you just like he spoke to Joshua all those years ago.

Maybe through the story of our young hero Josh, and his mysterious teacher Mo, we can all discover just what it means to be Strong and Courageous...

The Unexpected Teacher

It seemed as if every eye in the room was on him. Tristan was at it again. Every mistake Josh made in the game last night was brought to light. Tristan couldn't beat Josh on the field for the starting quarterback position, so he tried to beat him mentally by tearing him down. Josh, who was quiet by nature, had no idea how to handle this kind of criticism. He wanted to be the quarterback and he loved playing the position, but he wasn't sure if it was worth it. Every time he made a mistake, he knew Tristan was watching, waiting, and hoping for him to mess up.

Never mind the fact that they were undefeated until the championship game. Josh

had thrown two interceptions the night before and they had lost their final game of the season. Any little mistake and Tristan would surely bring it up. Unfortunately, these weren't little mistakes. They were big ones and Tristan was more than happy to point them out.

So, there they were again: Josh sitting quietly while Tristan criticized his play in front of the rest of the class. Sure, there were times Josh wanted to say something, to fight back, but what would that gain him? He would only be taking the bait and playing the game Tristan wanted him to play. Josh refused to give him that satisfaction.

Later that afternoon as they turned in their equipment, the criticism continued in the locker room. Tristan never said much in front of the coaches. As soon as they were out of the

room though, he was off and running his mouth.

Mo quietly observed the scene as he always did. Even though his back was to the boys, he could still see what was going on. No one noticed him. No one ever did. Day after day he would clean the bathrooms, mop the floors, and wash the towels. Kids would walk by him without ever thanking him or even acknowledging him. They stared at their phones and lived self-absorbed lives while he served them quietly. It was better that way. He had been sent for a special purpose, and now as the scene in the locker room unfolded, he knew the time to fulfill his purpose had come.

One by one the boys left the locker room laughing and joking with Tristan. Josh sat quietly as they left. His blood was boiling. He had wanted so badly to lash out, but he never

did. Now as he sat alone with only the low hum of the lights and the squeaking of the huge fan in the corner. He punched his locker.

"Careful," came a deep strong voice from the other side of the room. "Do you have any idea how long it takes me to get those dents out?"

The voice startled Josh. He didn't realize anyone was still there. *Has Mo been here the whole time?* he wondered. "I'm sorry, Mo," he said. "I didn't realize you were still here."

"Aw, that's okay," Mo said smiling as he walked over to Josh. "I was just teasing you anyway."

Josh couldn't help but notice how Mo looked so much like Morgan Freeman in one of his favorite movies; *Evan Almighty*. Mo was an older African American man with gray hair and a gray goatee. He always seemed to have a

warm and welcoming smile even when kids were being disrespectful toward him. Josh had always been one of the few who would say hi or at least acknowledge his presence. He may have been the only one who knew Mo's name even though it was written out on the patch on his uniform.

"Forgive me for listening in," Mo said as he sat down next to Josh, "but I couldn't help but hear what was going on just now. It seems like you have got yourself a little bit of a situation."

"It's no big deal," Josh said. "I can handle it."

"Yes, I know you can handle it," said Mo as he looked intently at Josh. "That has never been the question." The two just sat there quietly for an awkward moment.

Then raising his eyebrows, Mo said quietly, "The question is; will you handle it the right way? That is a very important question young man because I can only teach you what you are supposed to learn if you do your part and handle this the right way."

"I'm sorry, Mo, but what do you mean, if I handle it the right way?" Josh said with confusion. "And, what am I supposed to learn?"

Mo smiled slightly and nodded his head up and down, "Questions are always a normal part of this process. Let's just take it one step at a time."

"Take what one step at a time," said Josh. "And a part of what process?"

"We will get to all of that in due time," said Mo. For now, tell me what you know about Joshua in the Bible.

Confused, Josh just looked at Mo for a moment. He had no idea how he had ended up in this conversation or where it was going. The look in Mo's eyes though conveyed that he was genuinely interested in what Josh had to say.

"Well . . ." said Josh, "I don't know a lot about him. I know he was one of the twelve spies that Moses sent to into the Promised Land. It was Joshua and one other guy, what was his name? Caleb! Joshua and Caleb were the only two to come back and say that they could take the land. The other 10 said it was impossible, but Joshua and Caleb believed that with God on their side anything was possible."

"Very good," said Mo. "Do you remember why the other 10 were so scared?"

As Josh thought about Mo's question, the only noise in the room was the squeaking

of the big fan in the corner. "I heard our pastor talk about this one time. I remember him talking about the people of Gath where Goliath came from and how they were huge and must have looked like incredible warriors. Also, the walls of Jericho were so tall that it had to seem that it was impossible to take the city. The 10 who were scared had to be considering at least those two things alone and felt like it was impossible to walk right in there and take the land from those people."

"You're exactly right," said Mo. "They were focused more on themselves than on God. They knew that there was no way they could defeat those giants or climb those walls, and honestly, they were right. What they failed to remember is that in those moments God typically shows up in His greatest glory. When it becomes obvious that we cannot do it on our

own, God has a way of showing up and doing what once seemed impossible. The 10 spies allowed themselves to be limited by their own weaknesses instead of recognizing that where their capabilities stopped God was just getting started. The only two who saw an opportunity for God to take over were Joshua and Caleb. They weren't thinking about their own limitations. They saw an opportunity for God to show up and show off!"

Mo stopped talking for a moment and allowed that to sink in with Josh.

After a few minutes, Josh broke the silence and said, "Obviously, there is a lesson in this. Are you saying that I need to recognize where my ability to handle this situation with Tristan ends and where I need let God take over?"

Mo smiled, "Yes, but don't just let God take over. Just like Joshua and Caleb, be excited to see what He is going to do through this situation and through you."

"Through me?" said Josh. "What would God want to do through me?"

"More than you know, Josh, more than you know." But that is why I have been sent here. That is my mission. My job is to teach you, but I can only do that if you are willing to learn. "Are you willing to learn, Josh?"

"Yes, I am," said Josh. "However, forgive me for saying so, but this sounds a little weird! What do you mean you have been sent to teach me? Sent from where and who sent you?"

Mo laughed, "Those are all fair questions and ones you will discover in due

time. For now, let's just agree that I will be the teacher and you will be the student. Can we agree on that?"

Josh looked at his watch, "Oh no! My mom has probably been waiting out there for 20 minutes." He hurried over to his locker to grab his stuff. "Yes, I can agree to be the student, but when are you going to teach me these things?"

As he turned around to see what Mo would say, the old man was gone.