Standing on Hope

While the dog days of summer are in full swing for most of us (especially here in the humid southeast), CVM is celebrating a fresh new fiscal year. This means a new annual theme and verse! I want to introduce it to you as I am excited about what the Lord can reveal to each of us as we consider what it means to be Strong and Courageous. The verse supporting our study this year is 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.*

At first glance, I think this verse fills us with confident hope in God and compels us to keep going when times are difficult. This summer, we have many students and professionals heading out on short term mission trips. One of the first tasks they face is traveling to the team meeting destination. In some cases, they fly (to Costa Rica for example) to meet up with fellow vets and students from around the country. This can be a real challenge if you don’t know what your mission host or teammates look like! Recently, one veterinarian had been unable to connect with his trip leader prior to departing for the Navajo reservation. In faith, he decided to still make the drive from Illinois to Arizona, hoping that the Lord would answer his prayer of connecting with the team. Thankfully, that particular day, the Lord used me to answer the vet’s prayer. I “happened” to call him while he was driving. We prayed together over the phone, and I was able to help him contact and meet up with the team. It is always so neat when you can say, “Hey! God just used me in a visible and tangible way!” Please pray for our short term teams serving around the globe as the summer comes to a close. Pray for close fellowship and team unity as together they find that their strength only comes from being close to Jesus.

As I continue to serve in this role, I see that the Lord is giving me His strength on a daily basis. Each summer, my husband Jaime is gone for almost two months as he serves as the livestock coordinator for the San Diego County Fair in CA. During this time, I have a lot of help from the grandparents, but it is still hard to manage kids and home without him here! But, it is a great reminder that not only does God hold my hand and keep my head above the water, He also fills me with courage to thrive during these long weeks. For each of us, we face daily or even monumental obstacles. We must remember that God tells us to pursue our tasks with strength and
courage. Not in our own fortitude, but by relying on His.

In my “spare” time, I have been volunteering at the Roane County Animal Shelter. We live in a fairly rural county in East Tennessee, and this shelter has no veterinarian to medically care for its residents. This is in stark contrast to my old home in California, where our local animal shelter has 2-3 full-time veterinarians. When I heard about their need, I wanted to dive right in, start a surgery suite, and treat all the medical ailments affecting the animals that were staring back at me from the cages. Those of you that know me well know that I am a task-oriented problem fixer! Not so fast, Elizabeth. They don’t have a vet because there is minimal county money budgeted to support this shelter (and that definitely doesn’t include funds to treat the sick ones). What I found when I started was a group of employees and volunteers who made it their daily burden and mission to provide a safe place for homeless animals. They do this with so few resources. There are weeks where sick animals go untreated, or kennel space runs out, but they keep tirelessly striving for favorable outcomes. Time itself is the most precious resource for the animals that pass through the shelter doors. I asked my friend Carmon, who has worked there for 14 years, “How do you stay strong and courageous despite the giant obstacles constantly in front of you?” She replied, “By making the most of each animal’s time here and making every moment count.” This so sweetly reminded me: do not be dismayed or frightened but take an attitude of courage even when the circumstances seem bleak. No, I am not performing surgeries, but I am so honored to walk alongside them and give support where I am able. Please remember my friends at the Roane County shelter in your prayers. Please pray that the Lord would encourage them daily and give them the strength to continue providing care for these animals despite the difficulties they face with space and funding. Their names are Stacey, Jeff, David, Hailey, Carmon, Amber, Audra, Elaine, and Pat.