

Courageous Living *Finding the source* (Part 1)

Intro: Out of all the admirable qualities a person could possess, courage is one of the most important. No one admires a coward. No one aspires to be a coward. No one wants to model their life after cowardly people. Courage is what people respect.

Courage is an indispensable quality for life and a requirement for following Jesus in this broken world. Why do I say this?

- Takes courage to do life: School / Get married / have children / buy a house / teach your kids to drive / let them date / It takes courage to start a business / it takes courage to grow old. “Growing old is not for the weak or the timid.”
- Takes courage to follow Jesus / share your hope / serve / do things you’ve never done before – Guatemala / teach / purchase and remodel an old grocery store. It takes courage to live contrary to culture. Courage is absolutely necessary for life!

We’re going to spend the next 3 weeks looking at what the word of God says about courage.

- Courage is not an optional quality for the believer in Jesus. In fact, courage is a command. Courage is required. Courage is a necessity. Don’t leave home without it.
- Today we’re going to look at where courage comes from. What is my courage rooted in? Do I just have to work it up inside myself, or is there another source for courage besides me?

Courage is founded in our relationship with God. Courage finds its roots in our convictions and experiences with God.

Josh. 1:9 “This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (NLT)

1. Courage Is Knowing God is with Me

For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go

- The first building block of courage is recognizing you’re not alone. This is what God told Joshua before entering the Promised Land. “Joshua...be courageous because I am with you.” (Explain context)
- It’s that feeling of vulnerability, the anxiety of the unknown that can create fear in us.
 - Last May Lisa and I were in Europe. After being in Germany for a week, we traveled for another 12 days by train to 5 different countries. (Share)
 - We had never traveled by train before
 - We didn’t speak the language
 - We had to learn the train systems / change trains / navigate train stations

- Then there is the unexpected stuff – We were heading to Prague and the train stopped – then it reversed – then they put us all on busses – share – It all created a bit of anxiety not knowing what was going on.
- I'm sure Joshua was feeling some anxiety about the unknown and what was waiting for them across the Jordan River. Therefore, God gave Joshua the promise of His presence.

- It was the presence of God that gave Moses the courage to be and do all that God asked him to do. Explain the context: At Mt. Sinai – ready to move the nation out.

Ex. 33:15-16 “Then Moses said, “If you don’t personally go with us, don’t make us leave this place. ¹⁶“How will anyone know that you look favorably on me—on me and on your people—if you don’t go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth.” (NLT)

- Notice the significance of God’s presence to Moses. “God, if you don’t go with us I’m not leaving this place!” Knowing You are with us is the only way I can handle what You’ve asked me to do.
- Also notice that it is the very presence of God with us that sets us apart from all other people on the earth! Others may be alone in this world, but we’re not. God is with us! The very presence of God with us sets us apart!
- Isn’t this the very same thing that Jesus told His disciples after He commissioned them to go out and make disciples? *Matt. 28:20 “...And be sure of this: I am with you always,...” (NLT)* “You’re not going to be alone in this!” Take courage!
- It is the very fact of God’s presence with us that should give us the courage that we are NOT alone in this life. Because if we are unaware and not mindful of this reality, we experience more fear in this life than we should.

How can I be more mindful of God’s presence with me?

- Practice the presence of God daily Choose to be aware of God’s presence throughout the day. Don’t just wait until Sunday – or your devotion time. Choose to be aware.
- Acknowledge the presence of God when you experience fear. When you feel the anxiety begin to rise up within you, acknowledge God’s presence with you.
- Act out of the presence of God. How would you act if the presence of God was with you? How would you act if you knew you couldn’t fail because God was helping you? Now choose to act out of this confidence!

Courage is founded in our conviction of God’s presence with us

2. Courage Is Knowing God’s Power is Enough for Me

- There is a logical and biblical progression when it comes to courage. If God is with me, therefore so is His power. God’s presence is not to be simply an observer in your life. He brings the power with Him!
- I love this story in II Kings. The Syrian King is wanting to capture the prophet Elisha because he continues to tell the King of Israel what the Syrian army is doing. Before they

had spy satellites to watch the enemy, they had prophets. In II Kings 6, the Syrian army has just surrounded the city where Elisha is staying.

II Kings 6:15-17 “When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, what will we do now?” the young man cried to Elisha.¹⁶ “Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!”¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!” The LORD opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.” (NLT)

- Not only is the presence of God with Him, so is the army of God...the power of God. He is the God of angel armies. God fights for us!
- Do you believe that not only the presence of God goes with you but also His power? Do you believe God’s power is reserved for you? Do you believe God would fight for you? Are you convinced God will come through for you?
- Elisha was so convinced in God’s power and provision that not even the Syrian army surrounding him created any fear. His servant saw one reality, Elisha was aware of another...the one that really mattered.
- How about you? What reality do you see? What reality do you have convictions in? When all we see is what our physical eyes see, we are going to experience a lot of fear in this life. We will be no different than Elisha’s servant.
- Isn’t this what life does to us? Life has a habit of overwhelming us; surrounding us; making our resources look woefully inadequate. What happens when this is all we see? Fear!
- Unfortunately, many followers of Jesus believe they have to live this life on their own resources; on their own power; trusting in their own wisdom. This results in a lot of unneeded anxiety.
- I am seeing and hearing a lot of fear talk in Christian circles / radio / podcasts. Much of it is “end of the world” talk. With all the bad news around the world and the Middle East I’m hearing a lot of fear.
- Last time I checked God is still in control.

How do I develop a greater conviction in God’s power?

- Daily remind yourself of God’s Sovereignty. God is in control no matter what is taking place. God has enough power to be in charge.
- Know promises in God’s word regarding His power . God’s power is available for you to live this life. Even the Apostle Paul understood the need for people to understand this.

Eph. 1:19-20 “I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead...”(NLT)

- Ask God to help you see life through the lens of His presence and power. The problem with so many people is that their reality is distorted just like Elisha’s servant. He only saw with his physical eyes. We must not forget there are spiritual realities at work.

➤ View this world through the lens of Scripture.
Courage is founded in our conviction of God's power with us.

3. Courage Is Trusting God's Purposes for Me

Rom. 8:28 "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." (NLT)

- If you believe life is one big random mess that has no purpose or plan it's pretty tough to have any courage. This belief just makes you feel like a hopeless victim to life and circumstances.
- God is a God of purpose. According to this verse, God causes everything (the good the bad and the ugly) to work together for our good IF we love Him and live according to His purpose.
- This is one of the most misunderstood verses in all of scripture because people neglect the fact that there are conditions placed on this truth. If we do not love God and do not live according to His purposes then all things do NOT work out for our good.
- BUT, if we are genuinely trying to follow Jesus in this life, we have the confidence that no matter what happens, God can use it for our good. God has purpose even in the brokenness of this life.
- How does this give us courage? My pain is not pointless! I am not a victim to this life or the actions of other people! There is Someone navigating my life even during some of the most confusing, random, and seemingly pointless circumstances.
- Without this conviction, despair can wrap itself around your soul and robs you of courage you so desperately need.
- So often I have seen people's courage fail simply because things got difficult. Things get difficult in a ministry...they quit. Things get difficult in a marriage...they divorce. Things get difficult on the job...they look for another. It's as if we associate easy with being right...easy with spiritual...easy with God's will.
- It's because we believe these lies our courage fails so often. I don't expect the journey of life to be easy. It is through the struggles of this life where we learn to be courageous in our obedience and overcome. If there is nothing to overcome why do we need courage?
- Courage results from seeing God's purposes in the circumstances regardless of what they are.

James 1:2-4 "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing." (NLT)

How do I grow in my conviction in God's purpose?

- Stop associating difficulty with something being wrong. Time for some of you to reject this lie. This thinking causes you to doubt your decisions when things get tough. This makes you double minded. It also can be an excuse for rejecting responsibility and being cowardly.

- Stop associating difficulty with being out of God's will. I know these are very similar but it's worth stating. People like to say this for the same reason. "Look, God's not in it because it's not easy." If this is true, the Apostle Paul was the most out of God's will Apostle there was! It also excuses people from courageous obedience.
- Claim God's purpose over every circumstance Sometimes we pray this...sometimes we speak this...Courage comes from the truth of the word of God. When things get tough you don't doubt, run or excuse yourself. You courageously claim the word of God and His purposes in your situation.

I can have courage because...

- I am convinced God is with me.
- I am convinced God's power is enough for me.
- I am convinced of His purposes for me.

When you are convinced you are connected to His presence, connected to His power and committed to His purpose, you will have the foundation of courage within you. Now, you need to learn to act upon it. That is what next week is all about.