

COURAGE

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

I. YOU NEED COURAGE

- A. God Gives Courage
- B. You Need Examples of Courage
- C. Stand up for your convictions, not personal preferences

II. WRONG SOURCES OF COURAGE

- A. Numbers and alliances
- B. Intellect and imagination
- C. Resources
- D. Assumed Holiness

III. SOURCES OF TRUE COURAGE

- A. You must have a sure knowledge of God's word
- B. An acceptance of God's appointments
- C. No fear of the consequences

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

Joshua 1:1-9 says, *"After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 'Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them — to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates — all the Hittite country — to the Great Sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their fathers to give them. 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 where ever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have not I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."*

God had special instructions for Joshua. He had a plan. He had a scope of the work of Joshua. God was able to predict the results, and yet He knew that Joshua felt very insecure. He felt very uncomfortable. He did not really know where to begin. Yes, he was trained. Yes, he had had help. Yes, he had had a good leader. Yes, he had been a disciple. He had been disciplined. But now, his leader was gone, and he had to do it!

I. YOU NEED COURAGE

A. God Gives Courage

God emphasizes several times in this passage the need to be courageous. The need to be strong. God knew that this was what Joshua was lacking at this time. God gave this courage to Joshua at the time of a new _____. The wanderings in the wilderness were finished. A new thing needed to be accomplished. God reminded Joshua of how He had helped Moses in different circumstances.



B. You Need Examples of Courage

You need courage. New church workers who are going to start ministering need courage. Some who have not been as successful as they had hoped, they need courage. They need examples of courage. You, as leaders, should have a little notebook with a page where you write down examples of courage. People need these examples. They need this flesh-and-blood element attached to the word “courage”. So, always be ready to give examples of courage to people that need it. You must also show courage yourself.

C. Stand up for your convictions, not personal preferences

You must show courage in your convictions. There are going to be some churches thinking that preferences or personal prejudices should be listened to, and you may have to stand up to say, “That is only a preference or a personal prejudice. That is not a conviction.” There are people who want to emphasize and encourage a stationary educational program. And if your discipleship program is only a preference, it will not exist very long. But if you have a conviction, then you will need to stand up for your conviction for this form of discipleship training in the local churches.

Standing up for your convictions and showing your courage is always needed when there is opposition and confrontation. That is when you need it, and that is when you cannot afford to back down.

II. WRONG SOURCES OF COURAGE

A. Numbers and alliances

"Oh! If we just had more people. Then we could really do something." Just read the Book of the Kings; what was the most common tactic they used when attacking each other? King so-and-so came with King so-and-so and with King so-and-so. The King of Israel said, "I want to fight Moab. King of Judah, will you go with me? King of Edom, will you go with me?" They were looking for numbers and for alliances.

Maybe, if we just had another _____ helping us. Maybe they could store literature for us. Maybe they have office space. Maybe if they have some finances or other things. Then we could really do a job. Or, if only the main church in our province would get behind our program. **No**, that is not the answer.

I just read in Kings the story of the evil kings from Damascus and other places coming against the King of Israel. The armies of soldiers were just everywhere in the valley. And then there is a very interesting phrase there. On the side of the valley there was Israel's army, and they were divided into two little camps, like two little flocks of lambs before the enemy. The next day, it was completely different. The two little flocks of lambs were still there, and the vast army was destroyed. There are many such examples like that in the Bible. The answer is not in numbers and alliances.



B. Intellect and imagination

We look to the intellect and imagination. Oh! But he is so smart! And we immediately think he is spiritual. We immediately think he is the best student. We immediately think he will be one of our future leaders. Or we may look to somebody who has imagination. We talk about something, and they take our words and our plan, and they start running with it. "Okay, that is great! And then we can do this, and then we will do that, and so-and-so will help us, and they can give us money, and we can use that building, and we can, and they... boy!" The imagination has the whole thing organized, planned, taken care of right now. And we are convinced that now something is going to happen. There have been a lot of people like that who have great imaginations — and have accomplished very little for the Lord Jesus Christ.



C. Resources

"Oh you should see! These people are coming, they are going to bring money, and they are going to give equipment, and they are going to that, and then..." _____ is not in having resources. And that is **not** where your courage should lay.



D. Assumed Holiness

We have all kinds of examples in the Bible of priests and other people that were serving God, but their personal lives obviously were not right. Assumed holiness carries no weight with God. We need to learn to recognize assumed holiness and **real** holiness. Assumed holiness usually knows all the right phrases, and words, and actions, but there is no power in it.

If you look to those four things for courage, you will be very, very disappointed. And just at the time you need it, you will be disappointed, and lose the courage you were trying to gain.

III. SOURCES OF TRUE COURAGE

Now we are going to look at three things that do give us courage.

A. You must have a sure knowledge of God's word

Many false ideas and false plans could be avoided if people understood the Bible better. Many, many prayers go unanswered because they are not Biblical prayers. Your church will never grow above your personal relationship with God. We tend to complain about the preaching; we are unhappy with the elders; the building is in bad shape. We have all these difficulties. But, your church will never grow above your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And once that gets higher, it spills over and affects other people to increase their relationship.

So, the Bible is the book with which you must be in love. Something that you treasure and **enjoy**. Something that you always flee to when you need peace, or courage, or strength.

B. An acceptance of God's appointments

It is interesting to study the Bible and see God's appointments for people.

- a) God did want Joseph to be the ruler of Egypt. But the steps to get there were very interesting.
- b) Jacob was the one to receive God's special blessing instead of his brother. And yet, for twenty years he had to be in another country.
- c) **Daniel** was thinking of a pension. God said, "No, there is a lion's den first!"
- d) God has appointments for **each one of us**. And we tend to think that when it is nice and comfortable and wonderful, "Ah, this must be God's blessings". And when things do not go the way we want, we tend to feel like God has totally _____ us. But Hebrews tells us that God needs to punish us. Sometimes He needs to correct us, and these times are uncomfortable. But in the end, it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. So, those are the times in our lives to say to God, "It is not very comfortable. What are you trying to do? What are you trying to accomplish? Where are you leading me?"



C. No fear of the consequences

Usually fear of the consequences center around us, and not around our Lord Jesus Christ. We fear, "What will happen to me?" or, "What will people think about that?" "What are people going to say? Am I going to lose my job?" "Will I be kicked out of the church?" All these questions relate to fear, but they usually do not relate to Jesus.

We must remember that **we fight in victory**. Why is that? Because Christ already paid the ultimate price on the cross of Calvary. Victory is guaranteed. The fight may be long. The battle may be very uncomfortable. Sometimes it may be discouraging. It may look like you are going backwards instead of forwards. But the victory is already guaranteed.

That is why we read in the Bible that, "*perfect love drives out fear*" (1 John 4:18). Because that perfect love focuses not on you, but on somebody else. It focuses on Jesus. It focuses on all those needy people out there who do not need you, but Jesus. You become totally re-motivated. This courage floods your body and your soul. And where is fear? You can't find it. It is gone. Because, you no longer looked at yourself, but you looked at God and the needs. And you said, "These are the needs, and God wants to meet those needs, and I am His chosen instrument this time to fulfill those needs." Suddenly it is not important what all the other people are thinking, or what is going to happen, because the Lord Jesus has chosen you to meet those needs.

CONCLUSION

People have been asked to do all kinds of _____ things. Noah was asked to build a boat. Well, that was a really weird thing because nothing like that had ever been needed. Abraham had to do simply nothing except wait his whole life for his promised son to be born. Jonah had to go and preach for a few days in an enemy city. So, the thing that God is asking of you is not an ordinary thing, and He is going to give you the victory. He is going to make you victorious and successful. He has all you need: faith, hope, love, and courage as well.

May you be blessed richly when you drink of the courage of God.

Amen, amen.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

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Answer Key

I. A. task

II. A. mission

C. Success

III. B. deserted

Conclusion

weird