

ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM: LIVING AND LEADING COURAGEOUSLY

Introduction:

Theme verse: I Corinthians 16:13 - 14 – *“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men [and women] of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.”*

- The Kingdom of God is the rule of God.
- Who is ruling my life? Is it God or self?
- It is very easy to submit to the desires of my flesh and my own self will. Doing so requires no courage.
- It does require courage to submit to the Lord and walk and live in absolute obedience to God in my life.
- God's Kingdom will not advance unless we as believers live and lead courageously!
- Research by George Barna on Christian character and conduct in America has revealed that the culture in America is having more impact on Christians and the church than the church is having on the world. This is not God's will!
- It takes courage to take a stand for righteousness in a society that is rapidly changing and where Christians are being ridiculed for basic beliefs concerning family, marriage and other issues.
- Often Christians with spiritual convictions are perceived as negative for taking a stand for what they oppose. In expressing our deeply held convictions, it's very important that we as courageous believers and leaders also offer hope through the Good News of the Gospel. WE MUST LIFT UP JESUS AS THE ANSWER!

Objectives for this teaching:

1. Define courage
2. Give specific examples when courage is needed
3. Learn biblical foundations for courage and its results (How can courage be developed?)
4. Observe what hinders courage
5. Give additional biblical exhortations concerning courage

1. COURAGE DEFINED

-Courage = “mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, difficulty.” – Webster Dictionary

-“**Courage** is a quality of mind or spirit that enables us to meet danger, opposition, or the challenges of life with fearlessness, calmness, and firmness. Someone who has courage may still *feel* afraid but--through the power of God--can *act* with **confidence.**” – Charles Stanley

-“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the **courage** to continue that counts.”
Winston Churchill

-Christopher Columbus once said, “You can never cross the ocean until you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.”

-“**Courage** doesn’t always roar. Sometimes **courage** is the quiet voice at the end of the day that says, **tomorrow, I will try again.**” – Mary Anne Radmacher

2. SPECIFIC EXAMPLES WHEN COURAGE IS NEEDED (not listed in any specific order of priority except for point “a”)

a) **Overcoming fear – How is it possible?**

-Psalms 46:1-3 – Know that “*God is our Refuge and Strength.*”

-Psalms 91; Isaiah 35:1-10 – Rest in the fact that God is our shelter and protection.

-**Psalms 112:7-8**; Proverbs 3:25-26 – Place our full trust and security in God.

-**Isaiah 41:10,13** – Enjoy God’s promise to “uphold you with His righteous right hand.” 1) God is with us; 2) The Lord is in control; 3) God will strengthen and help us; 4) God gives security.

-Isaiah 43:1 – Be encouraged that God has a personal interest in you, “*I have summoned you by name.*”

-Isaiah 51:12-13 – Rest in God’s comfort and the fact that He will deal with those who rise up against you.

-**Lamentations 3:55-57** – Know that God hears your cry for help when you are “in the pit.”

-**Romans 8:15** – Receive the Spirit of Sonship, which drives away fear.

-I Timothy 1:6-7 – Activating our spiritual gift is an important step to overcoming fear.

-I John 4:18 – Having “perfect love for God” drives away fear.

b) **Taking a godly stand for what is right when others oppose you.**

-Daniel & Hebrew friends – Daniel 1:8 – “*Refused to defile themselves with the King’s food and wine.*”

-Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow to the image – **Daniel 3:16-18**

-I Peter 3:13-14 – Suffering for what is right results in blessing.

c) **Living a life of moral integrity and purity. Genesis 39:8-10** – It took courage for Joseph to withstand the pressure that Potiphar’s wife placed on him.

I Corinthians 6:18.

- d) **Seeing God's perspective in facing severe trials** - Genesis 45:4-8 – It took courage for Joseph to give God's perspective about his being sold as a slave by his brothers. *“So then, it was not you who sent me here but God.”*
- e) **Praising God in difficult situations and overcoming anxiety** – Philippians 4:4-7 – Praising God and allowing His peace rather than anxiety to dominate our lives will release courage.
- f) **Serving as a Christian leader** – I Thessalonians 2:11-12; I Timothy 3 & 4; II Timothy 2:1-3, 15. Courageous Christian leaders will inspire followers to be courageous.
- g) **Facing fear in light of God moving in power** – Luke 8:37. Sometimes in face of God's power being manifest, it causes fear in some people. Courageous leaders will seek God's help in facing those fears and dealing with them.
- h) **Confronting sinful living** – Jeremiah 11:1-5. Jeremiah needed courage to bring people back to God's Covenant.
- i) **Living in harmony in your marriage** – Ephesians 5:22-33; I Corinthians 13. Courageous couples will not run from their problems but with God's help face their issues with love and grace.
- j) **Being a parent and training your children** – Ephesians 6:1-4. Godly courageous parents will have the courage to raise their children with godly love and discipline. Proverbs 22:6, 15, 23:13; 29:15.
- k) **Giving generously to the Lord** – II Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:6-11. It takes courage to be faithful in giving tithes and offerings in face of economic challenges.
- l) **Having the right attitude in facing difficult challenges in one's life – finances, health issues, etc.-** II Corinthians 4:16-18; 12:7-10; James 1:2-4. A courageous believer and leader will maintain a positive attitude in the midst of trials.
- m) **Following God in obedience to do His will – Jesus is our example** – Philippians 2:1-11. Courageous believers and leaders will take the risk to follow God in absolute obedience. Obedience always brings blessing!
- n) **Facing persecution and severe trials** – Hebrews 10:32-39; James 1:12. Courageous leaders and believers will face persecution and trials with confidence knowing that a special reward awaits them in eternity.
- o) **Facing unfulfilled expectations** – Hebrews 11:13. Courageous believers never lose hope!
- p) **Praying boldly** – Acts 4:28-34; Hebrews 5:7. Bold prayers release courage!
- q) **Believing God for a miracle.** Mark 10:46-52. Jesus didn't go to blind Bartimaeus. Jesus required Bartimaeus to rise up in faith and go to him. Courageous believers will pursue miracles!
- r) **Dealing with conflict** – Matthew 18:15-18. Courageous believers and leaders will follow God's prescription for dealing with conflict.
- s) **Confronting leaders who are compromising God's Word** – II Chronicles 26:16-18; Jeremiah 5:5, 30-31; 6:13-15. It takes courage to confront leaders who are not faithful to God's Word.

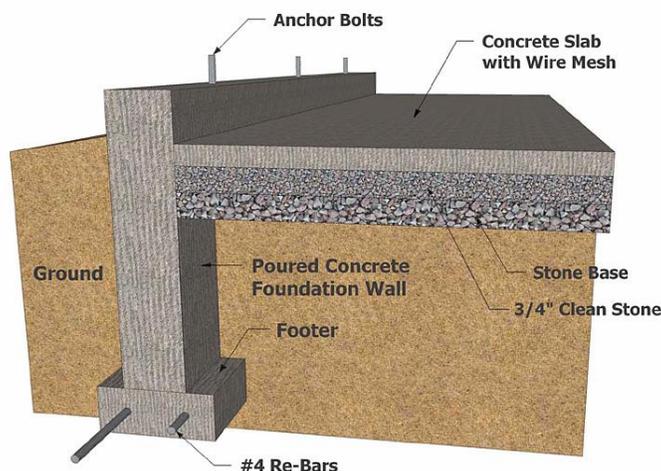
- t) **Forgiving others when deeply offended** – Hebrews 12:14-15 – Courageous believers will be quick to forgive and not allow a “bitter root” to defile them.
- u) **Confronting injustice** – Romans 12:9 – Courageous believers will “hate” those things (*not people*) that are evil and take a stand for righteousness.
- v) **Breaking out of religious patterns and routines that affect the freedom of the Holy Spirit in a believers or congregations life** – Jeremiah 7:9-11 (One example of numerous rebukes by the prophets.) Matthew 23. Jesus confronted the religious establishment. It takes courage to confront religious patterns and practices that hinder the move of God’s Spirit.
- w) **Fighting spiritual battles** – Ephesians 6:10-18. By daily dressing in God’s armor we will have the courage to face spiritual battles.
- x) **Witnessing to others about Jesus and one’s faith** – Acts 1:8. Courageous believers will be witnesses of Christ’s love.
- y) **Saying “No” when necessary – even if it is something good** – Mark 1:35-39. Jesus had the courage to stay no in face of so many needs because he knew God’s will for that day. Living in God’s presence and knowing His specific will moment by moment gives us the courage to say no when necessary.

For reflection and action:

- What are additional areas in the believer and leader’s life where courage is needed?
- After reviewing this list, in what areas do you need to grow to a deeper level of courage?
- What steps will I take to grow in courage in these areas?

3. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR COURAGE – HOW COURAGE IS DEVELOPED

For a building to stand firm in face of storms, it must have a very strong foundation (Luke 6:46-49). In the physical world, the depth and strength of a foundation will determine the height of a building.



The depth and strength of one’s spiritual foundation will affect the believer’s ability to be courageous.

Knowing basic biblical principles and living by them enhance our spiritual growth. Not growing in biblical knowledge greatly limits one’s ability to live and lead courageously.

Examples of spiritual foundations necessary for living and leading courageously.

- a) **Noah** – Genesis 6:9, 22; Hebrews 11:7
Foundation – Living **righteously, obediently** and by faith gave Noah the courage to build the ark in a hostile and sinful environment.
- b) **Abraham** – Genesis 12:1-4; Hebrews 11:8-12
Foundation – Acting in obedience to God’s call and living by **faith** gave Abraham the courage to go to a place where *“he did not know where he was going.”*
- c) **Moses** – Deuteronomy 31:6-8
Foundation – (6) Knowing that God is with us and will never **forsake** us gives courage. Jesus proclaimed the same truth to his disciples (Matthew 28:20). Jesus living in us is greater than any foe we face (I John 4:4).
Foundation – (8) Knowing that God is our leader will (or should) remove fear and discouragement from our lives and give us courage. (David to Solomon in I Chronicles 28:20); (Hezekiah to his leaders in II Chronicles 32:7-8); (The prophet Haggai spoke the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel in Haggai 2:4-5)
Foundation – Exodus 5:1 – Working as a team will help to give courage. Jesus sent out the disciples two by two (Luke 10:1). The apostle Paul worked with a team.
Foundation – Exodus 14:13-14 – Making a bold declaration of what you know to be the truth of God’s Word takes courage but also releases courage. *“Stand firm and you will see the deliverance God will bring to you today!”*
Foundation – Hebrews 11:27 – *“Having faith in the invisible God will carry us courageously through every challenging situation.*
- d) **Joshua** – Joshua 1:6-9
Foundation – (6) – Having knowledge of God’s **will** for our lives gives courage. *“You will lead these people.”*
Foundation – (6) – Knowing that courageous leadership is needed for people under our care in order for them to experience their inheritance is a motivation for living and leading courageously. People under our care can include one’s marriage, home, pastoral care, etc. *“You will lead these people to inherit the land...”*
Foundation – (7) – Obeying God’s Word takes courage. In addition, absolute obedience to God’s Word brings “success” which produces courage. Christian leaders and believers who are living in disobedience will have guilt and won’t have the courage to exhort people to do what they are not doing themselves.
- e) **Gideon** – Judges 6 & 7 (summary observations concerning how Gideon lived and lead courageously)
Foundation – Refusing to allow **limitations** in our lives to restrict us, will allow God to work through our lives and lead to courageous action.

Foundation – Being courageously obedient to what God wants us to do and letting the results to God leads to supernatural results.

Foundation – Courageously believing that God’s logic often defies human logic in order for His will to be accomplished leads to a deeper trust in God.

f) **David’s Mighty Men** – II Samuel 23:8-17

Foundation – Leading courageously leads to **loyalty** and courage by those you serve and lead.

g) **Esther** – (Summary)

Foundation – Taking a courageous stand for truth, no matter the cost, may lead to deliverance of many.

h) **Nehemiah** – (Summary)

Foundation – Living and leading courageously in face of an impossible task, severe opposition and accusation leads to a spectacular accomplishment.

i) **The Apostle Paul** – (Summary)

Foundation – Having an overwhelming confidence in Christ gave Paul the courage to live and lead courageously (II Timothy 1:12).

j) **Jesus** – Hebrews 12:3

Foundation – Considering how much Jesus endured when opposed gives courage to live and lead courageously without becoming weary and discouraged.

Additional spiritual foundations for developing courage:

k) **Purity and integrity** – Proverbs 28:1 - Having a clean **conscience** gives us courage to exercise spiritual authority.

l) **The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us** – II Corinthians 3:7-12. The **presence** of the Holy Spirit in us gives us the courage to do what is right.

m) **God’s abundant provision of grace** – Romans 5:17; II Timothy 2:1. Grace gives us the power to live and lead courageously. How is one strong in God’s grace?

1) Refuse to **give up** when things are tough. I will have courage to endure.

2) Extend love and grace to those who upset me. I will have the courage to express **unconditional** love.

3) See things and situations through God’s **eyes and mind**. I will have the courage to see things from Christ’s perspective.

n) **Mind renewed by God’s Word** – Romans 12:2. Having our mind daily renewed by God’s Word helps us have the courage to see things from God’s **perspective**.

o) **Overflowing hope** – Romans 15:13. Having hope helps us to overcome **discouragement** and despair and live and lead courageously.

- p) **Holy Spirit revelation of what God has given to us** – I Corinthians 2:12. The Holy Spirit gives a revelation of everything God has provided for us, which gives us courage to face life with confidence.
- q) **Spiritual competence from God**– II Corinthians 3:5. One of the greatest tactics of Satan is to make us feel incompetent. Knowing we are competent by the power of the Holy Spirit gives us courage.
- r) **Death to self** – II Corinthians 5:14-16. Dying to self is vitally important for us to have courage. Otherwise, we always end up protecting ourselves out of fear of failure and never have courage to live and lead courageously.
- s) **Believing prayer** – Ephesians 3:14-21. When we have a revelation of God’s amazing love for us, it gives confidence and security that leads to courageous living and leading.
- t) **Spiritual armor** – Ephesians 6:10-20. Applying God’s armor in our life gives us courage to face battles with confidence.
- u) **Looking forward and not backwards** – Philippians 3:12-14. Always looking back leads to defeat and discouragement. “Pressing on” is an act of the will and will lead to courage.
- v) **Being filled with the knowledge of God’s will** – Colossians 1:9. This will enable us to take a stand against the lies that Satan tries to put into our mind.
- w) **Knowing that we have a great High Priest that sympathizes with us** – Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-20. Knowing this fact and that He invites us to come with confidence to His “*throne of grace*” will give us comfort and therefore courage to persevere in our walk with God.

For reflection and action:

- What additional spiritual foundations have you discovered are important in your life for developing courage?
- As you review these foundations, which ones are strong in your life?
- Which foundations need to be strengthened?

4. WHAT HINDERS COURAGE

- a) Fear of man
- b) Fear of failure
- c) Fear of the unknown
- d) Insecurity
- e) Difficult past experiences
- f) Doubt & discouragement
- g) Negative criticism

For reflection and action:

-What hinders courage in your life?

-How is God calling you to overcome it?

-Find principles in this outline or in your own Bible study that will help to defeat these fears.

5. ADDITIONAL BIBLICAL EXHORTATIONS CONCERNING COURAGE

- a) **Courage is needed in face of people who abandon you in ministry – II**
Timothy 1:15-18. This is one of the most difficult experiences a leader will have in ministry. How can a leader courageously face this kind of situation?
- 1) Speak mercy over the person as Paul did.
 - 2) Release the person into God's hand.
 - 3) Surrender the disappointment to the Lord.
 - 4) Accept the fact that this is part of identifying with the sufferings of Christ. The disciples of Jesus abandoned Him.
 - 5) Keep looking forward and not back. *“Anyone who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom.”*
- b) **Courage comes by encouragement.** The writer to the Hebrews exhorts the believers to not give up meeting together and to encourage one another – Hebrews 10:25. We encourage in our church meetings when we...
- 1) Have an attitude of giving and not only receiving. Too often people go to church to get and not give.
 - 2) Be sensitive to the needs of others. Ask the Holy Spirit to give alertness to anyone in need of encouragement.
 - 3) Give genuine words of affirmation to one another. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Especially encourage your leaders.
 - 4) Refuse to listen to any negative or critical conversations, including gossip. These kinds of words and conversations lead to discouragement.
 - 5) Have an atmosphere of praise and worship where Christ is exalted.
 - 6) Preach and teach messages that give Divine truth but in a spirit of godly love that builds up and doesn't tear down.
 - 7) Give generously to God's Kingdom work so that there is more than enough. Where people are giving generously is a sign of the presence of God's spirit and blessing.
 - 8) Provide a safe atmosphere where people have an opportunity in some way (i.e. small groups) to share their disappointments sorrows or doubts.
 - 9) Pray, pray, pray. A praying church will create an atmosphere of encouragement. Why? People are motivated to see and trust God with all their heart, which builds faith. A faith-filled atmosphere brings encouragement.
 - 10) Listen attentively to God, the Word proclaimed, and to each other.

c) I Corinthians 16:13 – Exhortations for courageous believers

- 1) *“Be on your guard”* – Watch your conduct; refuse to open doors to Satan in your life; be discerning with the help of the Holy Spirit. Being on guard helps us to live with integrity. Having integrity gives a clear conscience, which helps us to live courageously.
- 2) *“Stand firm in the faith”* – Depend on God’s Word; Study God’s Word; live in close relationship with God; refuse to allow unbelief and doubt to take root or rule in my life.
- 3) *“Be men [and women] of courage”* – Do what I have to do no matter the cost; overcome fear of man; face any fear with faith; be willing to stand firm on my convictions; refuse to compromise Biblical standards; confront issues, people, or even myself when necessary.
- 4) *“Be strong”* – Rely on God’s resurrection power within me; refuse to give up; depend on God’s grace for every circumstance; have absolute dependency on God.
- 5) *“Do everything in love.”* – Extend unconditional love in every circumstance; make sure all my motivations are pure; allow God’s love in me to overflow to others.

It takes courage to demonstrate these qualities. By doing so will result in courageous living that will bring fruitfulness to our lives. It will bring glory to God and advance His Kingdom!

Conclusion:

-As we approach the end of time, conditions in the world will become more and more difficult and challenging.

-Living and leading courageously will be necessary in order to overcome spiritual darkness and advance God’s Kingdom!

-I DECLARE TODAY THAT EACH OF YOU WILL DRAW ON GOD’S GRACE AND BE MEN AND WOMAN OF COURAGE!

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