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Bridgeway Community Church
Series: BOLD
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BOLD:
“Courage”

I. **SERIES INTRODUCTION**

You will remember at the turn of the year that I mentioned the devotional quiet time that I had reading in Joshua 1. In that passage Joshua was being encouraged by God to “*Be strong and courageous.*” Remember that?

We learned that Moses was dead and God instructed Joshua to lead the Israelites into the promised land.

God told Joshua to “*be strong and courageous*” three times in Chapter 1!

- **Be Strong & Courageous** (Joshua 1:6)
- **Be Strong & Very Courageous** (Joshua 1:7)
- **Be Strong & Courageous** (Joshua 1:9)

After reading these verses about being “*Strong and courageous,*” God was speaking to my heart about going to the Middle East shortly thereafter.

I listened.

I followed what God was speaking into my heart and within a few weeks, I was on the ground in Israel at the Gaza border.

The inspiration for this entire 4 week series called **BOLD** started with this passage in Joshua and it has grown a fire inside of me since then.

- TODAY, I want to talk to you about **COURAGE.**
- Next week, **STRENGTH.**

- Then, **HOPE**.
- Followed by **FAITH**, which one of our Bible teachers and committed partners, ***Kevin Turpin II***, will be teaching on Palm Sunday here in Columbia. Minister Juan Delgado will be bringing the word on FAITH to the Owings Mills Reisterstown stage.

Let's pray!

II. SERMON INTRODUCTION

In my first message of the year on January 7th, I declared to you that you will be facing some new challenges for those of you who *step up*, *look up*, and are *strong and courageous*.

I mentioned 4 declarations that I still believe will come to pass for many of you, so be on the lookout.

DECLARATIONS (*For those who Step Up*)

1. **YOU WILL SEE MORE IN 2024! (*High Definition Discernment*)**
2. **YOU WILL FACE HIGHER LEVEL CEOs (*Challenges, Enemies, & Obstacles*) THAN YOU HAVE FACED BEFORE**
3. **YOU WILL FEEL SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH AND COURAGE THAT YOU HAVE NEVER FELT BEFORE**
4. **YOU WILL SEE THE GLORY OF THE LORD IN YOUR SUCCESS**
5. **YOU WILL DEVELOP A NEW “*WHEREVER I GO*” FAITH MENTALITY this year.**

Having said all of this, what courage *will* you need?

Question:

What courage do you need right now?

I believe that God will be building courage inside of some of you as I preach.

No one sitting near you has any idea what you are facing, but you know. God knows. And I want you to know that God sees you and hears your cry today!

God is calling courage to awaken within you! Someone said that “*Courage is grace under pressure.*” When someone says to be courageous, you might wonder, “How do I do that?”

I’m glad you asked 😊

- Do I simply make the choice to be courageous?
- Do I apply for courage and then it is sent to me in an Amazon box?
- Do I purchase it from somewhere or order it online?
- Is there a pill, a burger, a liquid?
- Some even have a special name for alcohol. You know what it is? Liquid courage!

Does anyone remember the cartoon called POPEYE? Not Popeyes chicken!!

In fact, this character didn’t eat chicken. On the contrary, he ate what? SPINACH.

Sorry, young people, this was before Dora the Explorer and Blue’s Clues...

This was before Paw Patrol and Peppa the Pig. This was before Bluey and Barney.

These were the days of Aquaman, Road Runner, Speed Racer, Wonder Woman and the Flintstones. When Popeye ate spinach *he got stronger*. While we will talk about STRENGTH next week, courage is not strength.

Physical strength like Popeye is *not* what we’re talking about either.

However, the ATTITUDE that came with that newfound strength IS what we’re talking about.

- You see, COURAGE is a *mindset*!
- An attitude.
- A decision to stand up against the bully.
- A sense of grit that will make you face your fears even though you are afraid.

You may not have gained an ounce of strength and you may not have *eaten spinach, taken a pill, or drank liquid*, but you have made up your mind that you will do what courage is requiring you to do! To have courage when you are strong like Popeye is one thing. But to have courage when you are weak is another!

You realize that your strength is in *the Lord*.

Your courage comes because the fire in your belly is causing you *to stand up, show up, speak up!*

Courage is truly “*grace under pressure!*”

III. COURAGE VS. COWARDICE

The opposite of COURAGE is *cowardice*...

- Cowardice is letting fear win
- Cowardice makes you shrink back and not do, or say, or resist like you should
- Just like courage is a mindset, so is cowardice.
- Cowardice means that you have been DIS-couraged!
- DE-couraged
- If you are going to be a bold believer then you need to be EN-couraged!

When you see the word ENCOURAGEMENT, what is that word stuck in the middle of that big word? COURAGE! I have come here this morning to EN-COURAGE somebody...

Question:

Is there anybody here that could use some EN-COURAGEMENT?

I want to INSTILL COURAGE into you today!

If we are going to be BOLD BELIEVERS, then we must be courageous when called upon to do so. COURAGE is not about having more muscles, more strength, more power, more money, more advantage, or more spinach like Popeye.

It is about having MORE HEART!

- **E.G.** Cowardly Lion in *Wizard of Oz* who needed a heart
 - Dorothy, Tin man, Scarecrow and Lion going to see the Wizard of Oz
 - The Lion will ask the wizard for “Courage”
 - We don’t need the Wizard of Oz when we have the *Wonders of GOD!*

Turn with me one of the coolest passages on courage in the scriptures that I know. In fact, I know one young man who has it tattooed on his shoulder. Here is what it says:

- “*The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.*”
(Proverbs 28:1 NIV84)

Question:

Do you notice the contrast between the wicked and the righteous?

One is as BOLD as a lion. That’s the righteous one. The other flees.

Main Point:

Fear causes us to flee

There’s nothing wrong with fleeing if there is something to run from, but this kind of fear is one where no one pursues!

Fear will make you flee, even if there is NO pursuit! Just like courage is a mindset, fear is a mindset too.

Even though NO ONE pursues, *your mind is creating a scenario that causes you to run.*

Truth be told, some of us are afraid of our own shadow.
We’re afraid of something or someone who is *not* there.

We often fear what COULD happen in the future...

- What might happen
- What we imagine *will* happen

This is why I like that phrase: “*Let’s cross that bridge when we get there.*” This phrase doesn’t mean that you don’t think ahead, nor does it mean that you shouldn’t be prepared.

But, it also reminds us that there are a lot of hypothetical situations that will never come to pass and we need to stop running from hypotheticals that our minds create!

- **F.E.A.R.** stands for *False Evidence Appearing Real*

Question:

Do any of you know what I’m talking about?

Instead of embracing F.E.A.R. (False Evidence Appearing Real), I want you to embrace another 4 letter word - **B.O.L.D...**

- *Brave*
- *Obedient*
- *Loyal*
- *Determined*

IV. BECOMING BRAVE BELIEVERS (PSALM 23)

What does it mean to be brave?

Being brave means that you are facing your fears and not allowing them to get the best of you.

As believers we don’t just face our fears, we “faith” our fears. God teaches us to “Fear not.”

In fact, He *commands* us to “Fear not”!

DID YOU KNOW:

It is the most repeated command in the Bible!

God commands us to “Fear not” 365 times in the Bible (One for each day of the year!)

I guess you could say that this is not just a sermon about COURAGE, but one about KICKING FEAR TO THE REAR!

- “*The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will FEAR no evil.*” (Psalm 23:1, v.4 ESV)

Why?

- “*For thou art WITH ME; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*” (Psalm 23:4-5 KJV)

This means that I can sit in front of my enemies and enjoy the table of God.

Now, that is bravery!

God is with you and will *sit with you*, even in front of your enemies! IMMANUEL, God *with* us!

God is with you (His presence) and will prepare a table for you (His provision), *providing for you*, even in front of your enemies!

- “*You anoint my head with oil...*” (Psalm 23:5b NIV84)

In the dark valley you have *His PRESENCE, His PROVISION, His ANOINTING, His COVERING, and His ABUNDANCE!*

- “*My cup overflows...*” (Psalm 23:5c NIV84)

Question: **SAY WHAT?**

In the midst of my fear...

- *I have his PRESENCE?*
- *I have his PROVISION?*
- *I have his ANOINTING?*
- *I have his ABUNDANCE, too!?*

Hallelujah!

I don't have to fear scarcity, because I serve the God of abundance!

I serve the God of OVERFLOW...

- Does anyone need the OVERFLOW of God?
- Does anyone need the ABUNDANCE of God?

And then to cap it off, the Psalm ends in verse 6 with this...

- *“Surely, GOODNESS and MERCY shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!” (Psalm 23:6 NKJV)*

Wait. Wait. Wait a minute!

You mean to tell me that in my fear, if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I don't have to fear evil because I have...

- The PRESENCE of God
- The PROVISION of God
- The ANOINTING of God
- The ABUNDANCE of God

And now you are telling me that GOODNESS AND MERCY got my back?

- *“My, My, My,”* as my daddy used to say!

Say what?

THAT'S THE PROTECTION OF GOD!

- *“The wicked flee even though no one pursues!” (Proverbs 28:1 NIV84)*

But I don't have to run because the only ones chasing me are GOODNESS AND MERCY!

GOD'S GOT YOUR BACK! HE IS YOUR REAR GUARD!

Every time your past tries to catch up to you to ruin you it runs into two bodyguards...
GOODNESS and MERCY! Hallelujah!

Question:

Who is in a dark valley today? Who is in a dark season right now?

I have something I need to tell you. You're not going to like it, but God told me to tell you that *you have to walk through it!*

- *“Yea, though I WALK THROUGH the shadow of the valley of death...” (Psalm 23:4 KJV)*

Not AROUND it... Not ABOVE it (at least not this time)...

This time you must walk THROUGH it.

Question:

Have you ever had to go through something?

You had to go through sickness, situations, and storms. Some of you have had to go through sad, sorrowful, and sick situations! This is where YOUR COURAGE must show up.

You must WALK THROUGH IT...

God said that He would never leave you nor forsake you! You are not alone. Be Brave and face your fears. Be Brave and “faith” your fears!

V. **CONCLUSION & APPLICATIONS**

I’m not going to finish my message today, so we will pick up next week with the second point in B.O.L.D: “O” for Obedience. But before I land the plane for today’s service, let me ask you a question...

Question:

What are you afraid of?

Seriously, what are you afraid of?

Tell God right now what it is...

PAUSE FOR A PRAYER MOMENT - Close your eyes with me. Visualize that fear. Now lift it up in your hands and release it to heaven. Give it to God. Now, take a deep breath. Inhale God’s *presence*. Inhale God’s *peace*. Thank God for His *provision*.

To Review:

If we are going to have courage we must be...

- **Brave**
- **Obedient**
- **Loyal**
- **Determined**

The Apostle Paul writes in his 2nd letter to Timothy...

- *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:7 NIV)*

When you are disciplined you grow in confidence. Courage isn't about eliminating fear, it's about elevating your confidence. This requires discipline and self-control.

Question:

How do I become more confident so that I can become more bold?

As I close, I want to give you two practical applications...

- PRACTICE
- PRAYER

1. PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS (2 Timothy 1:7)

You become better at what you practice. That's why some of us are so good at sin!

We need to become better at practicing righteousness, because *the righteous* who are as bold as a lion! Pastor Jared Sorber quotes one of his basketball coaches who says, “Practice doesn't make perfect. *Perfect practice* makes perfect.”

Key Principle:

The more you practice righteousness, the more righteous you will become.

What spiritual practices do you need to integrate into your life to help you become more righteous? (scripture reading, silent meditation, fasting, etc)

Here is one of them, which is Practical Application #2... BOLD PRAYER.

2. PRAY BOLD PRAYERS (Revelation 8:3)

I was struck recently by this verse from the Book of Revelation. I had read it before, but it jumped out at me in a fresh way...

- *3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the PRAYERS of all the saints, on the golden altar before the*

throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. (Revelation 8:3-5 NIV84)

God takes our prayers, mixes them together at the divine throne as an offering to God, and then throws them back upon the earth with power! Think about that next time you hear thunder!

The Lord receives all of your prayers...

- Prayers of *declaration*
- Prayers of *intercession*
- Prayers of *proclamation*
- Prayers of *faith*

A Nigerian Bishop, Bishop Fred Addo, says that “*Faith is the currency that God collects.*”

Key Principle:

God is waiting to answer your bold prayers of faith!

God wants our BOLD prayers...

My prayer is that today's message would instill *courage* within you, and that you would leave this service truly *EN-COURAGED*. Let's close with a time of bold prayer together now...

Amen & Amen!