

COURAGE: THE X FACTOR FOR LEADERS

Courage is an attribute that God appreciates, and believers must demonstrate. A wise person said, "Courage is not the absence of fear, it is ability to persevere in spite of it." Courage is key to success. This has been true through the ages but is particularly true in these last days. What follows are a few thoughts and suggestions to help you develop courage—and inspire courage in others.

Know that fear will magnify a situation, and faith will help you manage a situation:

Fear often makes situations seem worse or more frightening than they really are. Fear is the opposite of courage—perhaps that is why it is one of Satan's favored weapons, for if through fear he can weaken our faith, he is more than halfway to a victory. Faith is the firewall for courage. If we pray for and work to strengthen our faith, then courage is guarded, and we are better positioned to stay on track. It is when we let our mind wander, and move from peace to panic, that we lose focus, heart, drive, and the ability to carry-on.

Fear and worry are cousins that feed off each other and inflame situations:

Know that allowing fear and worry to grow will never help, and will always hurt. Yes, fear and worry are natural emotions that have some value, but allowing these emotions to run roughshod in your psyche will steal your joy and compromise your witness. When you begin to worry, begin to worship. Praise God. Sing, quote scripture, pray for others, and study the Word. Give worry no ground and try to squelch the embers of fear and worry before they spark flames that are difficult to extinguish.

Don't play the *what if* game:

Satan has a way of making this game sound attractive and helpful. After all, he will say, "Is it not wise to consider all options and possibilities?" Yes, the wise will consider options and establish contingency plans—but continuously asking, "But *what if* this happens?" or "*What if* that happens?" is a no-win scenario. We never fill-in the blank *what if* with, *I win a million dollars*. It's often more like, *what if* a tragedy comes my way tomorrow. Satan knows this, and he loves to attack our minds. He loves to introduce doubt and despair. Give him no ground. Guard against moving toward that slippery slope.

Redirect thoughts:

Satan attacks the mind ([2 Cor. 10:5](#)), so we must learn how to guard the mind. The best defense is to, as Paul wrote to the Philippian Church, focus on

that which is good pure, noble, and helpful ([Phil. 4:8](#)). A few suggestions are noted below:

Pray: Remain in constant prayer. "*Make your **every** need be known to him.*" ([Phil. 4:6](#)). "*Cast **all** of your cares upon Him...*" ([1 Peter 5:7](#)). The more you focus on prayer, the less Satan will be able to steal your joy, focus, and courage.

Don't go it alone: God has designed such that we are *better together*. Two working together can accomplish more than two working independently. Find a believer who will be your brother or sister in the Lord—someone who will serve with you, learn with you, pray with and for you, and encourage you. Courage, and fear, are contagious, and no one is strong all the time. Find one (or more) who will provide counterbalance when the tough times come.

Know the Word: In Luke 4, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Satan attacked by skillfully tempting the Lord. Jesus overcame each temptation by **quoting Scripture**. Scripture is living and powerful ([Heb. 4:12](#)). Meditating on Scripture eases stress and can guard your focus. Responding to challenges and temptations by recalling and quoting Scripture shows wisdom, and honors God.

Take the long view: The long view is, the struggles of today will not last, but the Kingdom of God and the glory of heaven will. Consider this, if you were to measure-out time, and you presented one million years as one yard, then the thinnest line you could draw to bisect the yardstick of time would be greater in width than the space representing your entire life. And that is just for one million years. Our time in heaven will be millions of billions of years. Paul said it well when he said, "*The troubles all around us will soon be gone, but the joys to come will last forever*" ([2 Cor. 4:18](#)).

Focus on the positive: Track blessings. Journal answered prayers. Share testimonies of God's goodness and working. Rejoice in every blessing, no matter how small. It is said that during WWII, a young Corrie ten Boom and her sister were arrested by Nazi's and put into a concentration camp. Many gave up and perished in that camp, but Corrie ten Boom did not, and there is a reason why. Corrie focused on the positive. At one point, when food was scarce, rats were prevalent, and guards were entering dorm areas day and night and beating inmates at random, Corrie sat on the floor with her sister and listened to her share her hurts and fears. Certainly, they were justified, but Corrie turned the conversation by saying, "Let's take a minute and think about what we can thank God for." Silence. It would be easy, thought her sister, to talk for hours about their many hurts and needs, but what was there to thank

God for? Finally, Corrie offered, "Let us thank God for the fleas." Yes, they were horrible and made life uncomfortable, but the camp guards knew that their dorm was infested, and fear of the fleas kept them relatively safe at night (which was not the case for the other dormitory areas). As they thanked God for the fleas, it became easier to see and thank God for other blessings—they had each other, they were still alive, they had their faith, etc. In time it became easier for Corrie's sister to see the positive, which is what believers are called to do. Paul challenged, "*In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you...*" ([1 Thess. 5:18](#)^L). Note that believers are not called to thank God **for** everything, but **in everything**, that is, in every situation, for God (and His many promises) are never far from His people.

Have the right goal: Your goal should not be to live long—but to live well, and finish well. There will be temptations (and perhaps opportunities) to compromise. Be strong. Goals centered on living for God, serving God, and being a witness for God are achievable, and achieving goals yields a deep sense of satisfaction. If a football player's goal was to score a touchdown every time he held the ball, or to be the MVP of every game, that player would soon become disappointed and discouraged. The wise player sets wise goals. In the same way, your goals must be in line with God's will for you. The world is about to encounter hardship as never before, but when hardships are encountered as spiritual goals are being achieved, there can be a peace, joy, and satisfaction that no one and nothing can take away.

Be mindful of the reward: Some may say the future is bleak, and from an earthly point of view this may be true. But believers are called to see with eyes of faith ([2 Cor. 5:7](#)^L). Do not focus on the pain of the moment, but on God's glorious promises for the future. Some believers may lose their home, job, or life, but the Christian who *finishes well* will receive an eternal and wonderful reward. Remember, Paul said, "*To die is gain*" ([Phil. 1:21](#)^L). The faithful will hear Jesus say, "*Well done my good and faithful servant*" (Matthew 25). Those who place their faith in Christ will reign with Him during the Millennial Reign. The courageous Christian will not be found lacking when their life's work passes through God's holy and evaluative fire ([1 Cor. 3:13-15](#)^L). Great things await the courageous and faithful. Therefore, be bold. Be strong. Keep your eye on the prize. Satan may have his day, but eternity belongs to the Lord. Be comforted in this Scriptural promise: "*...No eye has seen...no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived—the things God has prepared for those who love Him*" ([1 Cor. 2:9](#)^L).