

COURAGE Bible Study

LIVE WITH COURAGE

June is a month for courage. Graduates are getting their first big job, and maybe moving cross-country to do it; newlyweds are embarking on their new life together; kids are going to summer camp, learning new skills and making new friends; families are taking adventures into the great unknown; people are gathering for reunions after so much time apart. Letting go of comfortable people, places and practices can be scary sometimes, especially when one doesn't know what lies ahead. In our study this month, we'll be focusing on courage, what it is, why it's important, how to get it, and how to give it. So if you're brave enough, let's begin.

WEEK 1

Define courage.

Recall a time when you needed courage.

Who or what gave you the confidence you needed to forge ahead?

What was the result?

What did you learn about yourself in the process?

The Hebrew word often translated “courage” comes from the word “hazak” (pronounced khaw-zak’), which is also translated as “strong”. Courage comes from quiet strength, and should not be confused with bravado or bluster, which comes from loud insecurity. Bravado is fear acting tough; courage is being strong in the face of fear.

I don’t think courage is something one is born with. I think it is a choice one makes and develops over a lifetime. I came to this way of thinking because the Bible tells us over and over, “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid.” To me, that says that we can choose to be strong and courageous or we can choose to be afraid. In situations where I have had to show courage, I have often done it with knees knocking. I resolved that what I wanted was more valuable than the fear that kept me from it.

In the following verses, note the present stressful situation, the command of God, the reason the people could have courage (assurance), and what the outcome would be if they were able to move forward courageously. Also note any verse that stands out to you that could be an encouragement to you in your present situation.

SCRIPTURE	PRESENT SITUATION	COMMAND	ASSURANCE	DESIRED OUTCOME
Deuteronomy 31:1-8; esp. vs 6, 7, 8				
Joshua 1:1-9; esp. vs. 6, 7, 9				
2 Samuel 7:22-29; esp. v.27				
1 Chronicles 28:19-21; esp v. 20				
2 Chronicles 32:1-8; esp. v. 7				

What do these scenarios have in common? How can we take courage in the challenges we are facing? Which verse encouraged, challenged or inspired you? Meditate on that verse this week.

We need courage whether we need to make big or small changes in our lives, to face a challenge, to deal with difficult people, undertake a seemingly insurmountable task, or step out on faith to obey God when it seems risky. Is there a place in your life today that invites you to put fear away and stand with courage?

From the above passages, what was the reason most often given as to why God's people could have courage?

Do you have the confidence that God is with you today? How does that give you courage?

PRAY: *God, sometimes I am overwhelmed by the things I hear and see in the world around me, and it makes me feel powerless, helpless and afraid. I know stress is destroying my body, my mind, my soul, and my relationships, and I don't want to live like that any more. Please forgive me for not trusting you. Remind me of Your presence and promises when I am fearful, and help me grow in confidence so that I can stand strong when troubles come. Help me to have the courage to obey you, to take on the challenges you lay before me, and to lead others boldly just like the heroes of old.*

WEEK 2

Last week we observed that God's people could have courage because they had His assurance that He would be with them. Courageous people have discovered that God is bigger than any person, power or problem that comes up against them. Recall a time when you felt God's presence with you. How did His presence give you courage?

In the New Testament, the Greek words most often translated “courage” come from two similar words, *tharseo* (pronounced thar-seh’-o), and *tharreo* (pronounced thar-hreh’-o). Both words, though similar, bring different aspects of courage to the conversation. *Tharseo* has sometimes been translated as “comfort” and “cheer”. *Tharreo* can be translated as “boldness” and “confidence”. How can having courage in the Lord give you comfort, cheer, boldness and confidence?

Let’s look at the words independently in context to give us a better appreciation for the kind of courage we can have in Christ. First let’s consider *tharseo*, the courage that brings comfort and cheer. As in last week’s study, note the present stressful situation, the command of God, the reason the people could have courage (assurance), and what the outcome would be if they were able to move forward courageously. Also note any verse that stands out to you that could encourage you in your present situation.

SCRIPTURE	PRESENT SITUATION	COMMAND	ASSURANCE	DESIRED OUTCOME
Matthew 9:2				
Matthew 9:20-22; esp.v. 22				
Matthew 14:22-33; esp. v. 27				
Mark 10:46-52; esp. v. 49				
John 16:29-33; esp. v. 33				
Acts 22:3-23-11; esp.v. 23:11				

Are you in need of forgiveness, healing, peace, sight or insight, perseverance, or bravery? Identify a place in your life where you could use some comfort or cheer. Invite God to meet you there. What comfort or cheer can you claim from the above verses?

According to the following verses, in which the word *tharreo* is used, identify ways we may have courage that shows itself in confidence and boldness.

- 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 (home in the body, home in the lord)
- 2 Corinthians 7:16 (confidence in you i all things)
- 2 Corinthians 10:1-2 (bold toward you)
- Hebrews 13:6 (the lord my helper)

What would it take for you to be able to boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”?

PRAY: Lord, I need You to be my helper! Sometimes I can be my own worst enemy, especially when I get tangled up in fear, failure, and foolishness. I’m a pendulum that swings from inadequacy to pride, and back again. I need Your forgiveness, healing, comfort, peace, wisdom, cheer, boldness and confidence. I need courage to face the powers, people and problems that keep me off balance. Help me to obey You by casting out fear and walking in holy boldness, as you keep telling me to do. And then help me to be courageous for those around me who are desperate for your forgiveness, healing, comfort and peace too.

WEEK 3

In Week 1 we discussed what courage is and why it's important. In Week 2, we discovered it's easier to have courage when we have confidence in the Lord, His promises, His work, and the people who live in obedience to Him. This week, let's look at some of those promises.

The following verses describe terrifying circumstances, and the reason we can be people of courage. Identify the fearful circumstance(s) and the reason for courage in each of the passages below:

- Psalm 3:6
- Psalm 27:1-3
- Psalm 46:1-3
- Psalm 91
- Isaiah 8:12-13
- Isaiah 41:11-13
- Isaiah 43:1-2
- Isaiah 51:7

How can we live free from fear?

- Psalm 15

- I John 4:18

Over and over, in the scariest of circumstances, we are told emphatically, “Do not fear!” There is only one thing Scripture tells us to fear. What is it? And according to the verses, what is it in contrast to?

- Exodus 20:20

- Leviticus 25:17

- Proverbs 3:7

- Ecclesiastes 12:13

Allow me to get a little into the weeds here, and stick with me, because I’m going somewhere good. The Hebrew word most often translated as fear is *yare’* (pronounced “yaw-ray”). To me, that sounds an awful lot like Yahweh, the Hebrew nickname for Yahova (we say “Jehovah”) God. The Hebrew people, fearful of misusing the Lord’s name (Exodus 20:7), created the nickname Yahweh, by spelling Yahovah without the vowels, resulting in YHWH.

From the beginning, Yahova/YHWH was the Provider. He provided the heavens and earth (Genesis 2:4), a helper for Adam (Genesis 2:22), atonement for sin (Genesis 3:21), land for the people of Israel (Genesis 12:7), a covenant of blessing through Abraham (Genesis 12:2), and a ram for an offering instead of Abraham’s son Isaac (Genesis 22:14). Abraham named that place Yireh, which means “Yehovah will provide”, and he worshiped God there. Yireh, sounds a lot like *yare’*, sounds a lot like YHWH. My point here is what if we called every place of fear a place to

trust God for His provision? What if we worshiped God in that place? How would that change the way we see fear? The way we see God?

Worship today with this classic hymn that has encouraged believers for centuries:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBhVuCcz9GI>

Finally, The Bible uses the following phrases when speaking of courage. What do these phrases mean to you, and how can you...

- Be courageous (Joshua 1:9, I Chronicles 22:13, I Corinthians 16:13)

- Take courage (Mark 6:50)

- Keep up your courage (Acts 27:22-25)

PRAY: Lord, I don't want to live in fear. I want to be able to see every fearful moment as an opportunity to see You more clearly, and see how you will provide for me in my time of need. Like Abraham, help me to worship you in my most desperate moments, and leave those dreaded places as memorials of how You showed up and gave me courage to persevere. Help me to take courage, be courageous, and keep the courage You give me not only for Your name, but for myself and those who look to me to be strong and brave in scary circumstances. I admit that sometimes You scare me. You are far beyond what I can think or imagine, and I don't know what hard things you will ask me to do, or to endure, or how they will change me. Yet I know You use all things for my good and Your glory, so I yield myself to You. I praise You because nothing surprises or terrifies You, and when I am with You I have no need for fear.

WEEK 4

This week we'll see how we can help others (and ultimately ourselves) by encouraging others, literally putting "courage in" them.

Where do you go for encouragement?

Recall a time when someone encouraged you. How did their words (or deeds) influence you?

Recall a time when you offered encouragement to someone else. How was that encouragement received? How did it affect you?

What are some of the ways we can encourage others?

The Greek word in the New Testament that is often translated "encourage" is *parakaleo* (pronounced par-ak al-eh'-ho). *Para* means "alongside"; *kaleho* is "to call", so literally, "to call alongside". In the New Testament, the word *parakaleo* appears when one uses the intimacy of one's relationship to come alongside another to offer comfort, encouragement, exhortation or a plea.

In Matthew 5:14, "blessed are they who mourn, for they shall receive *parakaleo*" (comfort). In Acts Paul, Barnabas, Judas, Silas and many of the other apostles and church leaders "*parakaleo'd*" (encouraged) believers who were suffering persecution (see Acts 11:23, 14:22, and 15:3). In fact, Barnabas was so good at encouraging others he earned the nickname "Son of *Paraklēsis*" (Encouragement), Acts 4:36. And throughout the gospels, people came alongside Jesus to *parakaleo* (beg) him for healing (see Matthew 14:36, Mark 1:40, 5:23, 6:56).

In every single one of these examples, *parakaleo* was done in proximity and intimacy. It never happened at a distance. Sometimes you just have to be present to win. If you've been in church for any length of time, you may have heard the Holy Spirit referred to as the Paraclete. Guess where that name comes from! In John 14:25, Jesus told us that He would send the Holy Spirit to come alongside us to be our advocate, to teach us and remind us of everything Jesus said. So basically, when we act as advocates, or plead with God for others, or come alongside them for the purpose of comforting, encouraging, or exhorting according to God's Word, we are doing holy work, reflecting the character and nature of the Holy Spirit. So let's get busy!

Read the following verses to see how we can exercise *parakaleo* in our lives and the lives of others. As in previous weeks, note the present stressfilled situation, the command of God, the reason the people could have courage (assurance), and what the outcome would be if they were able to move forward courageously. You might have to use different translations to find the word *parakaleo* in your version of Scripture (I used NIV and <https://www.blueletterbible.org> in my study). Remember, it often gets translated in different ways like "comfort", "encourage", or "I beg you/urge you/plead with you". Also note any verse that stands out to you that could encourage you in your present situation.

SCRIPTURE	SITUATION	COMMAND	ASSURANCE	DESIRED OUTCOME
2 Corinthians 13:11	Church life	Aim, Listen, unity	God of love will be with you	Love and peace
1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; esp. v. 18	Death of believers	encourage	We will be with the lord	No fear of death
1 Thessalonians 5:9-11; esp. v. 11	Fear of wrath	Encourage	Live in peace	Build each other up
Hebrews 3:12-14; esp. v. 13	Evil world	encourage	Share in christ	Unhardened; Faithfulness to living god

In Week 1, we observed that we can have courage because God is with us. It's our knowledge of His presence and promises that gives us strength to face anything that comes our way. This week we've discovered that we can reflect God's character and nature by coming alongside others, and pouring courage into them by our presence, and reminding them of His promises (and warnings), His truth and grace. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Let's let God's love bring us encouragement, and let's let God's love be poured out of us and into others.

PRAY: Lord, I thank you for the people you have sent to encourage me when I am hard-pressed, and for those you have sent me to encourage. It's amazing how Your body works, and I confess that I am blessed to be a part of it, even when the parts don't always seem to be working together as they should. I am grateful for those who have come alongside me to pour Your courage, comfort, cheer and confidence into me. Help me to set aside my fear of hurt, judgment, rejection, commitment and inconvenience, so I can come alongside people who need to feel Your presence and hear your precious life-giving promises. Help me to sense the presence of Your Holy Spirit as He comes alongside me so that I may have bold confidence to spread Your grace and truth in this dark and desperate world.