

Walking With God in a Pandemic

Here's Some Courage for the Next Few Months

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning men. Please turn in your Bibles to Joshua Chapter One, Verse One. I hope you are surviving the pandemic, the COVID crisis and that your family is safe and if you or some of your loved ones have been affected, I do pray for good health and speedy recovery. We're going to continue today in our series **Walking With God In a Pandemic**. Last time out we talked about worry. Today we're going to talk on the subject of courage, the title of this message, **Here's Some Courage for the Next Few Months**. So if you have not already, let me encourage you to go ahead and download the handout and on the right hand side are some discussion questions. For those of you who are not familiar with this yet, on the left hand side are the circles that we typically use with PowerPoint. And I've numbered the circles here and I'll give you the information to put in those circles as we go along. So if you're doing this on the iTunes or YouTube, you can go to mimbiblestudy.com and download the handout.

So here's some courage for the next few months as the title, as I said. If you would write in the first circle, *the next few months will be hard*. So over these next few months, we're going to be having to combat COVID, we're going to have to be restarting our economy, in fact, we're going to have to restart our entire culture. And then we're also going to have to reinvent the way that we interact socially, or at least until we've come up with some kind of a vaccination for COVID. And no doubt some of those changes will be permanent too.

I did read a story this week that before the Spanish flu in the early 1900s, it was not uncommon for people in an office or in a classroom to all drink out of a single cup. So there will be some, obviously some permanent changes. And if you're in one of those affected industries or areas, our hearts go out to you and just pray that God will give you grace and mercy for these times. And some of the more obvious areas are the entertainment, motels, hotels, cruise ships, theaters, parks, restaurants, retail, even office workers are going to be obviously affected, schools and churches. And so it's going to be a time that requires both bravery and courage. So what is courage?

Well, it's something that is often unique to men, not exclusively of course, but men tend to step up when the times are tough and when they're needed. I was reading a story about a Marine recruiter who along with an army and a Navy recruiter, were speaking to some high school students and they were each given 15 minutes to talk. Well, the army and the Navy recruiters went a little long. And so there were only two minutes left when the Marine recruiter stood up. So he stood up, a very striking man and he stared at the students for 60 seconds, half of the time that he had. And then he said this. He said, "I don't think that there would be more than two or three of you who would have what it takes to be a Marine. But for those two or three of you who would, meet me in the dining hall after this meeting." And after the meeting, many students flocked to the Marine recruiter because of that call to be brave, that call to be courageous.

So nothing is to be more admired in a man than courage and nothing is more reviled in a man than cowardice. So what is courage? The dictionary says that "courage is that quality or state of mind or spirit that enables one to face hardship or disaster with confidence and resolution."

So C. S. Lewis had a quote that ... Many of you know that I'm a big C. S. Lewis fan. Actually have been to his home in Oxford and stood in the room where he wrote some of his books and stood in the room where he actually passed away. And he says of courage, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the point of testing." So, in other words, patience is a virtue, but it takes courage at the point of testing to actually have patience. And so this COVID-19 crisis, so having faith that you're going to get through this will be a virtue. But at the point of the testing of that faith, courage is what's going to be needed. And so that's what we're going to be talking about today. I just had a few of these things that I jotted down.

What if Abraham would have said, "I like my life the way it is. The place I'm living is like Scottsdale, I'm not going to go anywhere." What if Moses had said, "I really am impressed by this burning bush, but there's no way I'm going back to Egypt. You're going to have to get somebody else." What if Joseph had said, "When you, my brothers sold me away, you meant it for evil and now it's time for payback." What if David had said, "You know that Goliath, he's really a big guy. I think I better go back home. My dad needs my help." What if Nehemiah had said, "I give up. There's just too much opposition. I just can't build this wall." And what if Paul had said, "You know, I thought these people would be more receptive. I just give up. I give up."

We get it, don't we? That it does take courage. And this morning we're going to look at the story of Joshua and that you should be at Joshua, Chapter One, Verse One. And I'm going to go ahead and give you the Big Idea right now if you want to write this down. **I can be courageous because the God who will never forsake me will be with me wherever I go.** I can be courageous because the God who will never forsake me will be with me wherever I go. And where do we get that from? We get that from Joshua. At Verse One, after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, "Son of Nun, Moses' aid, Moses is dead now then you and all these people get ready to cross the Jordan into the land I am about to give them."

Verse three. "I will give you every place where you set your foot as I promised Moses."

Verse five. "No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you and I will never forsake you."

And so this in Hebrews Chapter 13, Verse Five, importantly is expanded to include all disciples. Hebrews 13:5 says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Then the other verse that I want to draw your attention to right now is Verse Nine, verses five and nine really are the book ends. So Verse Five, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you." And then in Verse Nine, "Have I not commanded you be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid to not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. The Lord God will be with you wherever you go." So we see in verses five and verses nine, "I will be with you. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I will be with you wherever I go." And so that's why the Big Idea today is **I can be courageous because the God who will never forsake me will be with me wherever I go.**

The second thing that I want us to see here, and if you want to write this in the second circle, *the most important part of courage is the promise of his presence.* So you don't have to do this alone. You're not in this alone. He is with you. He's going to be with you wherever you go. So courage is not ... Well there is one kind of courage for the person who's not a believer. They have to sort of dig deep down into the reserves of their own strength and stare into the abyss of nothingness and be brave. But for you and I, that's not the case. You and I know that nothing that happens to us happens apart from the knowledge

of God. Two sparrows are bought and sold for a couple of pennies, and yet not one of them falls to God apart from the knowledge of God.

So again, the Big Idea today is **I can be courageous because the God who will never forsake me will be with me wherever I go.** Would you say that with me. I can be courageous because the God who will never forsake me will be with me wherever I go. Do you believe that? That's the most important part of courage because it's the promise of his presence.

And then if you want to write in the third circle, write the words, *"Follow God's way and you will succeed."* So in preparing this message, what I did was, is I printed out the Bible passage and I found myself marking some of, as you can see, some of the passages with a yellow highlighter and some with a pink highlighter. And so do what I wrote down here to talk to you about is, do the pink and receive the yellow. So let me read the pink. "Be strong and courageous in Verse Six because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them." And then a second time in Verse Seven, "Be strong and very courageous and be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left." Verse eight, "Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it."

And then a third time, whenever God repeats something in the Bible three times, that means that he's giving it the most emphasis that he wants to give. "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty." Three times, great emphasis. So he said, "Be strong and courageous. Be strong and very courageous." And then in Verse Nine, "Have I not commanded you be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged." So if we do these things, if we be strong and courageous, if we are careful to obey his word, if we don't turn from the word to the right or to the left, if we keep this book of the law, the Bible, always on our lips. If we meditate on it day and night, if we're careful to do everything written in it, then that's the pink.

Let me tell you the yellow. "I will give you every place where you set your foot. You will be successful wherever you go, then you will be prosperous and successful." So follow God's way and you will succeed.

So when we look forward to the next few months, it is scary. I was reading a story about a man named Earl Fleming. He's the state biologist for the state of Alaska and so everybody knows that bears can attack humans and it's quite a frightful thing. I've been hiking in places where there are brown bears and so it's quite a frightful thing, nerve wracking. You carry bear spray and all this. Well, Mr. Fleming decided to do a test to find out just how aggressive bears are in terms of attacking humans. And so he decided to go into the wilds of Alaska and he would not run and he would not shoot.

So during the course of his experiment, he encountered 81 brown bears, 81 different brown bears, and he simply stood his ground. And all those, several of these brown bears staged mock attacks, not one of the 81 bears attacked. A lot of the things that we're afraid of in the future are far less threatening than they are in reality. And so just a word of caution as we think forward, that you can be strong and courageous because this God is with us and he's going to protect us from being ... Well he's going to be protecting us.

"It's not a courage that is going to require you," in the words of Dwight L. Moody, "to be a great man, a learned man, a rich man, a wise man, an eloquent man or a smart man." Moody was once heard a preacher say that, "The world has yet to see what God can do with an in and for and through the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to him." And that's when Moody thought to himself, well, he didn't say a great, learned, rich, wise, eloquent or smart man. He said a man, and it lies within the man whether or not he will make that entire consecration. And brothers, I would just encourage you to receive this word here today from Joshua, that God will always be with you. He will never forsake you. He will never leave you. He will be with you wherever you go.

Again, the Big Idea today is **I can be courageous because the God who will never forsake me will be with me wherever I go.** And so what does that mean? Now what? Well, this means that you can go and confidently be the leader that your family needs. You can go confidently be a leader, the one that your church needs, that your community needs, that is needed in your place of work. In the words that Winston Churchill at a very trying time in his nation's history, he said, "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never give in. Be a man of courage. Step up. Lead in these times."

You and I have a unique opportunity to distinguish ourselves with the courage that at the time of testing presents itself with great faith and the world will see and the world will take note and it will be a better place. And who knows? You may even be a catalyst for spiritual revival and awakening. Let us pray.

Our dearest father, we first of all want to be men of courage. When we hear stories of men stepping up, we are inspired. Nothing's more inspiring than to hear a courageous story. We want to be those men and Lord help each of us to understand that we are those men and we can be those men because you will always be with us. You will never leave us. You will never forsake us. In fact, you will be with us wherever we go. And the most important part of courage is this promise of your presence. And then help us each to follow you, your way so that the success that we see in the book of Joshua and other places in scripture can be ours. That you would help us to obey your word, to meditate on it day and night, to not turn to the left or to the right. But to me, men of your word, to be men of courage.

I pray for all these men and all the men who will ever hear this message, Lord, that you would help us to be the men of courage that are needed for this COVID moment. And we ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Thank you men.