

MEN OF COURAGE

Men who are part of the kingdom of God look radically different from what the world values in men or teaches men to become. The world often tells men to be courageous by being outspoken, willing to fight, willing to take risks, dominant, and physically strong. Yet, Jesus calls us to a different kind of courage. Jesus does not measure people by their physical strength or by whether they never experience fear. He calls us to act in faith and conviction to obey Him regardless of what that obedience costs or requires. After all, He is the King and those in His kingdom must stand firm for Him. Therefore, kingdom men are men of courage!

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14

The apostle Paul had written a challenging letter to the Corinthian church. In it, he exposed error in their practices, condemned divisiveness, rebuked sin, and corrected false teaching. Now, Paul's encouragement in this passage called them to be faithful to Christ! This required them to be courageous (literally, "act like men"). Paul, however, was not urging fearlessness, physical toughness, combativeness, unwillingness to change, self-confidence, determination to speak their minds, hiding weakness, etc. Rather, he called them to be fearful of God's judgment on sin, admit when they were wrong and repent, confess wrongs to one another, depend on God, obey whatever God commands (even when it is difficult), refuse to compromise in the truth, etc. Kingdom men today must learn how to develop this same type of courage and strength!

NUMBERS 13:26-33; 14:6-10

God wanted to give Israel the Canaan land. After twelve spies were sent into the land (Numbers 13:1-25), they returned and reported what they had discovered. All the spies saw the same things, including a great land, lots of fruit, prosperity, fortified cities, and giants. Ten of the spies were afraid and concluded the Israelites would be unable to conquer the land. Joshua and Caleb, however, urged the people to trust God and go up to take possession of the land, based on God's promises! They were courageous enough to face their fears and obey God. They also stood firm in their faith

despite the opposition of the other spies and the entire nation holding strongly to a different view (Numbers 14:1-4). Therefore, courage isn't pretending challenges and opposition don't exist. Rather, it means standing for and obeying whatever faith in God demands regardless of them! Later, after God punished those who rebelled against Him in fear, Joshua and Caleb helped Israel conquer the land (Numbers 14:26-35; Joshua 1:6-9)!

DANIEL 3:4-6, 12-18

Sometime after Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image and ordered everyone to fall down and worship it at the appointed times. Violators would be killed by being thrown into a fiery furnace. Clearly, these Jewish men who believed in and worshipped the true God faced a serious choice. They could compromise their convictions and worship the image in order to comply with the king's decree and spare their lives, or they could remain faithful to God and face being thrown into the fire. Their courage resulted in the latter! They refused to take the easy path, even if it cost them their lives. Interestingly, although they knew God could deliver them from the fire (which He did, Daniel 3:24-30), they did not have assurance of that happening when they chose to be faithful! In the same way, true courage does what is right and stands firm even when fear is present and the consequences of obedience may be severe.

MATTHEW 10:16-39

Jesus was preparing His apostles for the challenges they would encounter, and what other followers of Jesus would also experience. It would often not be easy or pleasant, involving imprisonments, beatings, being dragged before courts and rulers, betrayals, persecutions, fleeing, divisions, and rejection. Yet, Jesus commanded His followers not to be afraid of those who can harm their physical lives. This does not mean a person will never experience the emotion of fear; only that fear must not keep people from obeying Christ! Even when things hurt deeply (physically, mentally, emotionally) during the time you live on earth, caving into the pressures of life rather than standing for Christ will ultimately be short-lived and result in devastation (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Instead of fearing what people can do to you, you must fear God, who can cast your soul into Hell (Revelation 21:8)!

Choose to follow Christ courageously, no matter what the earthly consequences may be, so you will gain your spiritual life eternally!

ROMANS 8:31-39

Your courage to do what is right regardless of the cost or consequences should be strengthened by the knowledge that God is with you. No matter what you experience in life, He will never leave or abandon you (Hebrews 13:5-6). He has sacrificed His Son so that your soul can be saved. Therefore, if God is for you, it does not matter who or what is against you! Even when you may be outnumbered and the stakes are high, or you face being slaughtered for your faith. If you courageously stand in faith and conviction to obey God, you will emerge as an overwhelming conqueror over any and all the enemies you face spiritually! Although people can do many things to hurt your physical life, they cannot separate you from the love that is in Christ Jesus and your eternal reward if you remain loyal and live in submission to Him!

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

You are fighting in a spiritual war, and you will need courage to fight against the enemy and his forces. When you're tempted, you must resist. When you are persecuted, you must refuse to compromise your faith. When you are discouraged, you must not surrender. Rather, you must continue to courageously stand and fight. However, you will only accomplish this if you trust your Commander and seek to please Him (2 Timothy 2:3-4). Although you will face many uncertainties and challenges, you must have courage because the One who is with you is greater than the ones who are against you (2 Kings 6:8-23)! Confidently and courageously fight using the armor God has given you. If you do, you will emerge victorious in the war!

CONCLUSION

Men in God's kingdom are men of courage. Rather than the worldly ideas of courage, they answer any fears and apprehensions with faith and conviction to do whatever King Jesus desires. Backing down or disobeying the King for any reason is never the answer. This courage stands when others compromise, speaks when silence would be easier, obeys when obedience is costly, admits when he is wrong, repents when he has sinned, protects those entrusted to him, and trusts God when he cannot see how things will turn out. No matter the consequences of your faith, true courage trusts God enough to obey King Jesus!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What does it mean to act like men?

What kinds of things are involved in acting like men?

What can you learn about courage from Joshua and Caleb?

What can you learn about courage from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

What can you learn about courage from Jesus's message to His apostles?

How can you be courageous but still experience the emotion of fear?

How should God and His promises help you be courageous regardless of the circumstances you face?

What should your courage look like in your spiritual war?

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