

MORAL COURAGE

March 30, 1981 just 69 days into President Ronald Regan's first term as President, John Hinckley Jr. fired a revolver six times in 1.7 seconds at President Regan and his entourage as they were leaving the Washington Hilton. The first shot hit White House press secretary James Brady in the head. Another hit a DC police officer in the back of the neck. Another hit Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy. And one bullet hit the intended target President Regan, lodging in his lung just 1 inch from his heart. Usually when the sound of gunshots go off everyone's natural instinct is to protect themselves by taking cover. And on this occasion that is exactly what they did, everyone except the Secret Service agents who had been trained to do the exact opposite. You see when the gunshots started Agent McCarthy instinctively did what agents do, he went into a spread eagle position making himself as large as possible to create a human shield that he might take any bullet intended for the president. McCarthy is one of just four agents who have ever done so. He took a bullet in the abdomen, quite possibly saving the life of the president. That is what I call COURAGE!!

You know what? 2000 years ago, Jesus went spread eagle for you and I when He took the wrath of God intended for us on the cross. He could have bailed out but because of COURAGE and His love for us HE made Himself the target and took the bullet for us.

Welcome to **Week 2** of "**Say It With Your Chest**" where we are looking at **5 Virtues of Biblical Manhood**. These are simply virtues that we all should have as followers of Jesus, and as men who are ordained by God as spiritual leaders of our families, we should be modeling these virtues for our wives and our children. Last week we looked at the **1st Virtue of Biblical Manhood and we said that a godly man should Have a CLEAR VISION for his LIFE**. The one thing Jesus had as he walked on this earth in human flesh was a CLEAR VISION. He knew exactly WHO He was and WHY He was here. In life there are going to be storms, difficulties, and distractions that we will all face. If you do not have a CLEAR VISION of WHO you are and WHY you are here you will STEP BACK instead of STEP UP. **This week I want to introduce the 2nd Virtue of Biblical Manhood: TRUE MEN maintain MORAL COURAGE in the face of an ever changing CULTURE.**

Courage comes in many shapes and sizes. Courage is a firefighter running into a burning building when everyone else is running out. Courage is a soldier willing to stand in front of enemy fire to help protect the freedoms of others when it is under attack by tyrannical dictators. Courage is putting yourself in harm's way to protect others. And that's what Jesus did for us!

Romans 5:6-8 (NIV) 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. **8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

It took real physical courage for Jesus to endure the beating and flogging that He received. But the most difficult part of the cross wasn't the physical pain. It was enduring the wrath of God toward sin for the first time. This took great MORAL COURAGE!

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV) God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. The idea that Jesus who knew no sin became sin for us that we may be absolved from our sin while He would absorb our sin upon Himself.

Up until the time that Jesus did this, sin debt was paid for by offering an animal sacrifice once a year on the Day of Atonement. Jesus became the one time payment for all. Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? It isn't easy to sit there and take responsibility when you didn't do it. Well, imagine doing that for the whole world. That takes more than just courage. It takes MORAL COURAGE! You see, courage is the basic ability to put ourselves in harm's way in order to protect others. But MORAL COURAGE is the ability to put yourself in harm's way because of a moral conviction to do what is right and true. God's wrath had to be satisfied, that was the righteous requirement of the law. If Jesus didn't offer Himself we would have had to face the wrath of God toward sin on our own. But because of His deep love for us and because He had great conviction to honor what was right and true regarding God's law He stood in harm's way guided by MORAL COURAGE.

C.S. Lewis, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point."

In other words, every virtue of manhood will be tested over time, and when it is, MORAL COURAGE will be required to pass the test - a firm conviction to maintain your course no matter what it may cost you because it's right and true. So, what must we do to strengthen our moral courage or to keep our moral courage from fading against the onslaught of an ever changing culture?

Let me give you 4 ACTION STEPS to strengthen and foster MORAL COURAGE in your life.

ACTION STEP #1: Be quick to WASH FEET like Jesus instead of WASHING HANDS like Pilate

On the night Jesus was arrested He had gathered with His disciples to celebrate the Passover meal. It was at this same meal that Jesus would institute what we all refer to today as COMMUNION or THE LORD'S SUPPER. As was custom when you had guests over for a meal you would as an act of courtesy wash their feet. Remember they walked on dusty roads with open toed shoes and if you have ever walked in the yard barefooted when it is dry your feet can get pretty filthy. Here is what Jesus said to them when He was finished

John 13:12-17 (NIV) **12** When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. **13** “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. **14** Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. **15** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **16** Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **17** Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

The task of foot washing was usually reserved for the lowest servant in the house. It needed to be done and even though it wasn’t Jesus’ responsibility to perform he washed his disciples feet anyway and used it to teach them what it looks like to humbly serve one another. Now let’s compare this with Pilate, the exalted Roman governor.

Matthew 27:21-24 (NIV) **21** “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor.

“Barabbas,” they answered.

22 “What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify him!”

23 “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

Pilate did the exact opposite of Jesus and rather than take responsibility, which in this case he had every right to do because the responsibility was his, he chose to wash his hands and say, “I am not responsible.” Pilate knew Jesus was innocent but lacked the moral courage to let Jesus go. He wanted to satisfy the crowd rather than perform his responsibility and advocate for a just man. Pilate was a people pleaser. [Here’s the thing, will you live for the applause of men or for the applause of Jesus and His nail-scarred hands?](#) When situations come up in life are you going to shirk your responsibility and wash your hands of the matter or are you going to take responsibility and wash someone's feet by serving them?

Men, when we expect our wives to carry more than their fair share of the parenting responsibilities we are washing our hands rather than washing feet. When we are not pulling our weight in the workplace, we are washing our hands instead of washing feet. Is there a situation in your life where you are shirking responsibility by washing your hands when you need to be

taking up a towel and washing someone's feet? If you want to strengthen moral courage **Be quick to WASH FEET like Jesus instead of WASHING HANDS like Pilate**

ACTION STEP #2: SPEAK up and CALL sin SIN

The dark pages of human history are the results of times when good men stood silent in the face of great evil. MEN, we have to speak up and stop remaining silent when we see something that is wrong dominating our lives, our children, our community or our nation.

On April 16, 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote a letter from a Birmingham jail cell challenging white clergy to step up and speak out on the issue of racial discrimination. King accused the white church of being more cautious than courageous, remaining silent behind the security of stained glass windows. When the church cowers like that, it becomes as King said, "the archdefender of the status quo."

Jesus was not afraid to speak up and take action when He saw something that was wrong. One such example is when he rebuked the money changers in the temple courts.

Matthew 21:12-13 (NKJV) 12 Jesus went into the temple courtyard and threw out everyone who was buying and selling there. He overturned the moneychangers' tables and the chairs of those who sold pigeons. 13 He told them, "Scripture says, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you're turning it into a gathering place for thieves!"

This was actually the second time Jesus did this. John 2 gives us the other account. What was the problem? The Temple (where God's people would come to worship and seek the face of God) had become more of a market place than a house of prayer and the merchants and money changers were charging extremely high prices and taking advantage of those coming to worship. In some cases they were hindering people from being able to come, especially the poor who could not afford these prices. Not only was the poor hindered by the activity taking place in the Temple court but it was also hindering Gentiles from being able to worship Yahweh because the Temple court was the only place Gentiles could go if they wanted to worship God. Jesus made reference to the Temple being converted into a den of thieves because greedy merchants and money changers were in essence stealing from people by charging way more than their items were actually worth and they took advantage of the moment for their own selfish gain. Jesus saw the injustice and what was going on and He called it what it was. He didn't sit idly by and remain silent. And neither should we. As the old saying goes, "*The only way for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.*"

Another aspect of this action is that we need to be willing to speak up and call SIN sin in our own lives. We need to have the moral courage to confess and confront sin that is plaguing our own lives. The ability to confess sin and call it out is essential to achieving real cleansing.

Proverbs 28:13 (NIV) Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Psalms 32:5 (NIV) Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

If you don't want your moral courage to atrophy you have to **Be quick to WASH FEET like Jesus instead of WASHING HANDS like Pilate and #2: SPEAK up and CALL sin SIN** when the opportunities present themselves.

ACTION STEP #3: Be TRANSFORMED by what is TRUE instead of CONDITIONED by what you SEE.

A half century ago a psychologist named Albert Bandura did a series of studies designed to help children overcome their extreme fear of dogs. He would show the children short videos of other children encountering dogs. The children in the videos didn't display any fear of dogs as they moved closer and closer, finally petting the dogs. After a month of conditioning, the kids were placed in a similar situation to the one they watched on video. The visual conditioning gave them new found confidence with the dogs. Most of them were able to approach the dogs and pet them. [What Bandura's research discovered was that we have a tendency to be conditioned by what we SEE more than what we KNOW.](#) Whether we like it or not we adjust our behavior to mirror what we see others do. We see this in fashion and fads all the time. For those of us with little children we know this to be true for much of the things our children do they take from us as their parents concerning certain behaviors. We tend to imitate the behaviors we see in others.

This is powerful and important to understand because when we are being entertained with movies and TV we are being more than entertained we are being conditioned. Media can have a real impact on us especially when we consider social media and the number of hours we all spend watching tiktok, instagram, and youtube videos. If it is true that these forms of entertainment are conditioning our lives it also means they are conditioning our moral courage as well. That is why we need to make sure we limit how much we are going to allow the things of this world to condition our minds and hearts. In fact, listen to Paul's remedy for this conditioning.

Romans 12:1-5 (NIV) **1** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. **3** For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. **4** For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, **5** so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Notice a few observations that Paul calls us to in this verse!

- 1) What are you offering yourself to? What do you give your mind and heart over to in order to be influenced? Is it God? Paul says, first **give yourself to God**. (vs.1)
- 2) If you don't want to be conditioned by this world then you need to make sure you are **renewing your mind with God's Word** and not the media influences of this world. Otherwise don't be surprised when you conform and align with the world and its philosophies. I encourage you to do a time audit of your life! How much time do you spend with God as opposed to other activities? Remember these things are conditioning us. What is conditioning your heart and mind? (vs. 2)
- 3) Humble yourself willingly by **placing yourself under the authority of the Body of Christ - the Church**. We need to be exposed to others who are living out their faith because seeing other believers live out their faith can help condition us to live out our faith. **You are not your own but now belong to Jesus!** You and I need the accountability of Body of Christ. (vs.3-5)

There is nothing more true than God himself! If you don't want to be conditioned by the world you need to willingly place yourself in position to be transformed by God's word of truth. If you don't want your moral courage to atrophy you have to **Be quick to WASH FEET like Jesus instead of WASHING HANDS like Pilate and #2: SPEAK up and CALL sin SIN** when the opportunities present themselves. **#3: Be TRANSFORMED by what is TRUE instead of CONDITIONED by what you SEE.**

And last but not least, **ACTION STEP #4: Have a CONSCIENCE informed by the HOLY SPIRIT not VIOLATED by FLESHLY LUSTS.**

There was a moment in scripture when David was on the run from King Saul. If you remember the story, King Saul was jealous of David and his popularity. As a result he wanted to kill David. In 1 Samuel 24, David was given an opportunity to kill Saul.

1 Samuel 24:1-7 (NIV) After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi." **2** So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.

3 He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. **4** The men said, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'" Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

5 Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. **6** He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the LORD." **7** With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

David's men were urging him to take care of Saul once and for all. But David became **conscience-stricken**. Our conscience is our moral compass and it helps us discern from right and wrong. Mark Batterson calls it, "our spiritual operating system hardwired into the human heart." Just like a computer though it is in need of updating and upgrading. That is where the Holy Spirit comes in. We need a conscience that is guided and informed by the Holy Spirit. We need daily updates from scripture where we can allow the Holy Spirit to influence us. Otherwise we will violate our conscience by giving into our fleshly lusts and over time our conscience will become like a gauge that no longer works.

Galatians 5:16-18 (NIV) 16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Moral Courage comes from a conscience that is taken captive by the word of God and that is being led daily by the Holy Spirit. It isn't swayed by public opinion or by whichever way the cultural winds are blowing. A man of conscience is a change agent and an incredible force to be reckoned with. He's anchored firmly to the Word of God and that anchor holds him steady through the ups and downs of life.

Invitation:

Do you possess the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit know you possess Him? Have you trusted in Christ (trusting that He has died for your sins and rose from the dead)? Is their fruit of the Spirit in your life?

If you have trusted Christ are you anchored in the word? Is it part of your daily routine?

In Revelation 21 we are given a description of what the New Heaven and New earth will be like.

Revelation 21:1-8 (NIV) 1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. **2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **4** 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death'^[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. **7** Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

But notice who is listed first when it comes to those who will not be part of God's new kingdom.
8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

If you want to be a man of MORAL COURAGE and not labeled with the cowards then,

Be quick to WASH FEET like Jesus instead of WASHING HANDS like Pilate

SPEAK up and CALL sin SIN when the opportunities present themselves.

Be TRANSFORMED by what is TRUE instead of CONDITIONED by what you SEE.

Have a CONSCIENCE informed by the HOLY SPIRIT not VIOLATED by FLESHLY LUSTS.