

Lesson 3

Developing Spiritual Courage

Over the course of our spiritual life, courage plays a vital role. It is what enables us to face challenges, overcome obstacles, and stand firm in our beliefs. In this lesson, we intend to explore the biblical principles and stories that can inspire and guide us on the path to growing and developing spiritual courage.

The concept of moving in courage is tightly bound with a deep sense of abiding trust in the presence of God in one's life. David under great duress famously wrote, *the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?*, Psalm 27.1. David is certainly a case study in courage, especially as we see him battling Goliath, 1 Samuel 17, and trusting in God as he fled from Saul.

And of course, who could forget the story of Joshua who, as he became Israel's new leader as they approached the promised land, was told to *be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go*, Joshua 1:9. Reading through Joshua, we are encouraged by his commitment to obeying the Lord... which only built and strengthened his courage.

We could examine a number of New Testament passages that also teach the necessity of spiritual courage: Jesus' words in Matthew 10:28 exhort us to not be afraid of anyone or anything that can kill the soul. Paul urged the Corinthians *to be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, and be strong*, 1 Corinthians 16:13.

When we speak of developing spiritual courage, we are describing the strength and resolve to uphold our faith, values, and beliefs, even in the face of adversity, opposition, or fear. It involves a deep and unwavering commitment to live out one's spiritual convictions and principles, regardless of external principles or challenges. When we demonstrate spiritual courage, we possess a willingness to face difficult circumstances, make moral choices based upon the word of God, and stand firm in our faith. The courageous Christian is one who is guided by a higher sense of purpose and trusts in the divine help and support of our God. Having a courageous faith is a vital component for demonstrating the authenticity and integrity of our spiritual commitment.

How Do We Build Spiritual Courage?

Prayer

When we pray, we are seeking guidance, wisdom, and understanding from our heavenly Father who promises to provide clarity and direction in our life. His guidance is a sure help in bolstering our confidence and courage when we face difficult decisions or uncertainties in life. Prayer also provides us with a sense of strength and empowerment as it connects us with God. It helps us fight back against fear and doubt, and allows us to face our circumstances with confidence. On top

of this is God's promise of peace, Philippians 4.6-7. God's peace serves as a guard over our hearts and minds, fighting back against anxiety and fear, enabling us to act courageously during difficult times.

Prayer also goes along way in helping us develop the necessary resilience to bounce back from any setbacks. We know that with God we have someone whom we can pour out our hearts, expressing our concerns, fears, and hopes.

Fight Back against Fear and Doubt

When these arise, they must be challenged head on. This can be done by lining up our negative thoughts and squaring them directly with the truth of God's word. Only when we shine the light of truth properly will we see our doubts and fears for what they really are. Paul wrote, *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*, 2 Corinthians 10.5. Times of fear and doubt are also opportunities to seek wisdom from the Lord, James 1.4-5. He warns that *the one who doubts is like the waves of the sea, and should not expect to receive anything from the Lord*. Fear and doubt lead to instability, so they must be resisted at all costs.

Surround Yourself with Other Believers

Accountable relationships can encourage and sustain spiritual courage. When we are around one another we receive encouragement, 1 Thessalonians 5.11. There are also opportunities to:

- receive help in carrying our burdens, Galatians 6.1-2.
- develop a deeper knowledge of spiritual teaching, Acts 2.42.
- be challenged by other brothers and sisters to spiritual growth, Proverbs 27.17; Hebrews 10.24-25; Romans 12.4-5.

Gathering with brothers and sisters in Christ, sharing in fellowship, supporting each other, and working together as a united body of believers is vitally important in the development of spiritual courage. It will encourage you as you receive mutual support in your spiritual journey.

What Does This Look like in Everyday Life?

- **Staying true to biblical principles.** Spiritual courage involves unwavering adherence to godly principles - even when it is challenging or unpopular.
- **Facing adversity with faith.** It means trusting in Jesus and relying on Him as a source of strength when encountering difficulties or hardships.
- **Resisting temptation.** Spiritual courage can be demonstrated when we resist temptations or pressures that go against what God has said.
- **Speaking the truth with love.** Spiritual courage may involve expressing God's word with kindness, while respectfully responding to the beliefs of others.
- **Helping others.** Spiritual courage can be displayed by helping those in need. We can be selflessly motivated by compassion and the desire to serve.

- **Forgiving and seeking reconciliation.** This would include the courage to forgive others and seek reconciliation, guided by God's principles of forgiveness and love.
- **Facing fears with faith.** Spiritual courage empowers a person to confront their greatest fears, anxieties, and uncertainties in life with trust in God... knowing that they are never alone.
- **Being humble and open to growth.** This involves acknowledging one's imperfections, seeking personal growth, and being open to learning and growing one's faith.
- **Facing loss and grief.** It means coping with loss, grief, or tragedy with faith, hope and resilience; trust in the comfort and guidance of the Spirit.
- **Embracing Change:** It may involve embracing changes in your life... even when things are uncertain or challenging, trusting in God's direction and care.

Spiritual courage in everyday life is simply about living out your faith consistently. It means that you will try to make choices that are aligned with the will of Christ, Colossians 3.15, and demonstrating love, compassion, and strength through your actions and interactions with others. It is a courageous commitment to a life guided by your faith trust in God.... even when faced with challenges or uncertainties.

For Discussion

1. How would you personally define spiritual courage, and why do you think it's important in our spiritual journey?
2. Can you share an example from your life where you had to exhibit spiritual courage? What were the circumstances, and how did you find the strength to face them?
3. What are some key biblical stories or characters mentioned in the lesson that exemplify spiritual courage, and what lessons can we draw from their experiences?
4. The lesson mentions prayer as a means to build spiritual courage. How has prayer helped you personally in developing courage in your faith journey?

5. How can we effectively challenge our doubts and fears in our spiritual walk, as discussed in the lesson? Do you have any personal strategies for doing so?

6. In what ways have you experienced the benefits of being part of a community of believers, as emphasized in the lesson? Can you share a specific example of how this support has impacted your spiritual journey?

7. The lesson suggests that spiritual courage involves staying true to biblical principles. Can you share a principle from the Bible that you find particularly challenging to uphold in today's world, and how do you navigate that challenge?

8. How do you think spiritual courage can positively influence the way we interact with people of different faiths or beliefs, as mentioned in the lesson?

9. Are there any practical steps or habits mentioned in the lesson that you would like to incorporate into your daily life to develop your spiritual courage further?

10. In your opinion, how does spiritual courage contribute to a more authentic and fulfilling spiritual life, and what steps can we take to cultivate it in ourselves and our communities?