

# Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

## Subject: COURAGE: Deuteronomy 20:1-4

COURAGE(kur'-aj): Hebrew chazaq, "to show oneself strong" (Numbers 13:20; 2 Samuel 10:12; 1 Chronicles 19:13; 2 Chronicles 15:8; Ezra 10:4; Psalms 27:14; 31:24; Isaiah 41:6); ruach, "spirit," "animus" (Joshua 2:11 the King James Version); °amats, "to be alert" (physically and mentally), "to be agile," "quick," "energetic" (Deuteronomy 31:6-7,23; Joshua 1:6,9,18; 10:25; 1 Chronicles 22:13; 28:20); lehabh, "the heart," and figuratively, "person," "spirit" (Daniel 11:25); Greek tharsos, "cheer" (Acts 28:15). A virtue highly esteemed among all nations, one of the four chief "natural" (cardinal) virtues (Wisdom of Solomon 8:7), while cowardice ranks as one of the mortal sins (Ecclesiasticus 2:12,13; Revelation 21:8).

### WHAT PART DOES CULTURE PLAY IN OUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD?

KEY BIBLE VERSE: At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. (Daniel 1:15)

### CULTURAL CHANGES REQUIRE CREATIVE ADJUSTMENTS.

The Babylonians were trying to change the thinking of these Jews by giving them a Babylonian education, their loyalty by changing their names, and their lifestyle by changing their diet. Without compromising, Daniel found a way to live by God's standards in a culture that did not honor God. Wisely choosing to negotiate rather than to rebel, Daniel suggested an experimental ten-day diet of vegetables and water, instead of the royal foods and wine the king offered. Without compromising, Daniel quickly thought of a practical, creative solution that saved his life and the lives of his companions. As God's people, we may adjust to our culture as long as we do not compromise God's laws.

### REAL EXCELLENCE IS RECOGNIZED IN ANY CULTURE.

Daniel and his friends learned all they could about their new culture so they could do their work with excellence. But while they learned, they maintained steadfast allegiance to God, and God gave them skill and wisdom. Culture need not be God's enemy. If it does not violate his commands, it can aid in accomplishing his purpose. We who follow God are free to be competent leaders in our culture, but we are required to pledge our allegiance to God first.

KEY BIBLE VERSE: The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" (John 4:9)

### CULTURAL PRACTICES MUST BE EVALUATED BY CHRIST'S STANDARDS.

This woman (1) was a Samaritan, a member of the hated mixed race, (2) was known to be living in sin, and (3) was in a public place. No respectable Jewish man would talk to a woman under such circumstances. But Jesus did. The gospel is for every person, no matter what his or her race, social position, or past sins. We must be prepared to share this gospel at any time and in any place. Jesus crossed all barriers to share the gospel, and we who follow him must do no less.

COURAGE- The strength of purpose that enables one to withstand fear or difficulty. Physical courage is based on moral courage-a reliance on the presence and power of God and a commitment to His commandments (Joshua 23:6; 2 Chronicles 19:11).

**Joshua 23:6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; 2 Chronicles 19:11 And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good.**

Courage is the ability to act on what we know is right and good, to dare to do what we should or must. Fear paralyzes; courage is what helps us move ahead. Courage does not conquer fear, it simply renders fear ineffective. It gives us a confident assurance that we can succeed. Christians recognize that they have an extra resource in God's promised help in time of need. This should bring about a boldness to face any situation that comes our way.

It should be noted that sometimes the courageous thing to do is run, if that is what will bring about the greatest good. The Bible speaks of courage to stand firm against evil, to remain strong in our faith, to resist temptation, to do the right thing. The more we learn to rely on God, the more courageous we will become.

#### **WHERE DO I GET THE COURAGE TO GO ON WHEN LIFE SEEMS TOO HARD OR OBSTACLES SEEM TOO BIG?**

Deuteronomy 20:1 . . . The Lord your God . . . is with you!

Psalm 27:1 . . . The Lord is my light and my salvation-so why should I be afraid?

Isaiah 41:10 . . . Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Joshua 1:9 . . . Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

True courage comes from God, understanding that he is stronger than our mightiest foes and that he wants to use his strength to help us.

#### **COURAGE IS LIKE A CHAIN-WE GAIN OR LOSE COURAGE BY WATCHING OTHERS, AND OTHERS GAIN OR LOSE COURAGE BY WATCHING US.**

Deuteronomy 20:8 . . . Is anyone terrified? If you are, go home before you frighten anyone else.

#### **WHEN GOD IS WITH US, WE DON'T EVEN NEED TO BE AFRAID OF DEATH.**

Luke 12:4 . . . Dear friends, don't be afraid of those who want to kill you. They can only kill the body; they cannot do any more to you.

#### **HOW DO I FIND THE COURAGE TO FACE CHANGE?**

Genesis 46:3-4 . . . Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will see to it that you become a great nation there.

Change may be part of God's plan for you. If so, what you are headed into will give you joy and satisfaction beyond your expectations.

Exodus 4:13 . . . Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send someone else."

To experience fear is normal. To be paralyzed by fear, however, can be an indication that you doubt God's ability to care for you in the face of change.

2 Samuel 4:1 . . . When Ishbosheth heard about Abner's death at Hebron, he lost all courage, and his people were paralyzed with fear.

If you take all of your courage from another person, you will eventually be left with nothing when that person is gone. If you trust in God, you will have the strength to go on even when circumstances collapse around you.

### **HOW DO I FIND THE COURAGE TO ADMIT MY MISTAKES?**

2 Samuel 12:13 . . . Then David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you."

To admit our mistakes and sins is to open the door to forgiveness and restoration of relationships.

### **HOW DO I FIND THE COURAGE TO STAND FIRM IN MY CONVICTIONS?**

Esther 3:2 . . . Mordecai refused to bow down or show [Haman] respect.

Courage to stand firm in our convictions comes from understanding where our true loyalties lie. If you are more concerned about what others think than about what God thinks, you will find yourself lacking courage and wavering in your faith.

### **ARE THERE CONSEQUENCES TO A LACK OF COURAGE?**

Luke 23:13-25 . . . Their voices prevailed. So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded. Standing up for what is right can get you in trouble from corrupt people. Failing to stand up for what is right can get you in trouble with God.

#### **PROMISES FROM GOD:**

Joshua 1:9 . . . I command you-be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Job 11:18 . . . You will have courage because you will have hope.

## **EXAMPLES OF COURAGE**

### **WHAT DO COURAGEOUS PEOPLE DO?**

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** Because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king and allowed the boys to live, too. (Exodus 1:17)

### **COURAGEOUS PEOPLE RISK THEIR LIVES TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT.**

Shiphrah and Puah may have been supervisors over the midwives, or else these two were given special mention. Hebrew midwives helped women give birth and cared for the baby until the mother was stronger. When Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill the Hebrew baby boys, he was asking the wrong group of people.

Midwives were committed to helping babies be born, not to killing them. These women showed great courage and love for God by risking their lives to disobey Pharaoh's command. (Note: A delivery stool was the stool upon which a woman crouched when delivering her baby.)

Against Pharaoh's orders, the midwives spared the Hebrew babies. Their faith in God gave them the courage to take a stand for what they knew was right. In this situation, disobeying the authority was proper. God does not expect us to obey those in authority when they ask us to disobey him or his Word. The Bible is filled with examples of those who were willing to sacrifice their very lives in order to obey God or save others.

Esther and Mordecai (Esther 3:2; 4:13-16) and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:16-18) are some of the people who took a bold stand for what was right. Whole nations can be

caught up in immorality (racial hatred, slavery, prison cruelty); thus following the majority or the authority is not always right. Whenever we are ordered to disobey God's Word, "we must obey God rather than human authority" (Acts 5:29).

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph. He was a member of the Jewish high council, but he had not agreed with the decision and actions of the other religious leaders. He was from the town of Arimathea in Judea, and he had been waiting for the Kingdom of God to come. (Luke 23:50-51)

### **COURAGEOUS PEOPLE RISK THEIR REPUTATIONS TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT.**

Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy and honored member of the Jewish Council. He was also a secret disciple of Jesus (John 19:38). The disciples who had publicly followed Jesus fled, but Joseph boldly took a stand that could cost him dearly. He cared enough about Jesus to ask for his body so he could give it a proper burial.

**BIBLE READING:** Acts 4:23-31

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they preached God's message with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

### **COURAGEOUS PEOPLE ARE BOLD IN REPRESENTING CHRIST.**

Boldness is not reckless impulsiveness. Boldness requires courage to press through our fears and do what we know is right. How can we be more bold? Like the disciples, we need to pray with others for that courage. To gain boldness, you can (1) pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to give you courage, (2) look for opportunities in your family and neighborhood to talk about Christ, (3) realize that rejection, social discomfort, and embarrassment are not persecution, and (4) start where you are by being bolder in small ways.

### **LESSONS OF COURAGE**

#### **HOW CAN WE GAIN COURAGE? DEUTERONOMY 33:27**

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you. He thrusts out the enemy before you; it is he who cries, "Destroy them!" (Deuteronomy 33:27)

#### **COURAGE GROWS AS WE TRUST GOD.**

Moses' song declares that God is our refuge, our only true security. How often we entrust our lives to other things—perhaps money, career, a noble cause, or a lifelong dream. But our only true refuge is the eternal God, who always holds out his arms to catch us when the shaky supports that we trust collapse and we fall. No storm can destroy us when we take refuge in him. Those without God, however, must forever be cautious. One mistake may wipe them out. Living for God in this world may look like risky business. But it is the godless who are on shaky ground. Because God is our refuge, we can dare to be bold.

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

#### **COURAGE GROWS FROM THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.**

Jesus summed up all he had told them this night, tying together themes from 14:27-29; 16:1-4; and 16:9-11. With these words he told his disciples to take courage. In spite of the inevitable struggles they would face, they would not be alone. Jesus does not abandon us to our struggles either. If we remember that the ultimate victory has already been won, we can claim the peace of Christ in the most troublesome times.