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FINDING COURAGE



Bishop Gerald Doggett

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FINDING COURAGE

By: Bishop Gerald Doggett

Define courage.....

Great ships aren't built for good weather; they are built with a storm in mind. Engineers, planners, and contractors build a ship to look great on the outside, but it's inside you find systems, which can navigate the vessel through rough waters, and high winds. In a storm, no one cares how the ship looks; they only care about internal systems that are never activated until the ship hits the turbulence of stormy waters.

It's those internal systems that provide safe navigation through the storm. Keep in mind that all the water in the ocean cannot sink a ship, unless it gets inside.

Your life is like a sea going vessel. You were built with systems deep within that can navigate you through any rough season of life you might face. Perhaps others cannot go through your storms, and you can't go through the storms of others, but you were created to get through seasons of turbulence you encounter. One key to victory in the storms of life is to remember, you might be in a storm, but refuse to let the storm get in you. Keep the turbulence external; never permit it to become internal. Simply put, YOU CAN MAKE IT!

Let's take a journey that will provide some insights and illuminate areas of life that have been dormant until now but are needed in this present season. It's not time to pull away and withdraw into a reclusive shell. I have good news. Negative circumstances, which are screaming information of doubt, and fear, can change very quickly. It all revolves around the word, "COURAGE."

By definition "courage" means, "fearless, bold, or unafraid, to make strong, or hearten, and strength in the face of pain and grief." Now, before you tell me that courage isn't part of your DNA, let's take a look at how you were made. To know how you were made, we must go to the manufacturer for specifics. David reveals something about GOD'S thoughts when he writes, *"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well"* Psalm 139:14 ESV.

It's the enemy of your soul that constantly whispers against your real value. His criticism indicates his fear of you waking up to the authentic person GOD created. Before you were in the womb of your Mother, you were in the mind of GOD. When HE placed you in the womb, GOD wrapped you with gifts and talents that would be needed along your journey of life. Qualities you think are not present, really are present, and perhaps those qualities have come to their, "due season." It's those qualities, which have remained dormant until an appropriate season. Perhaps this is a, "due season."

A wise man shared significant words when he wrote, *"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter"* Proverbs 25:2 KJV.

Be aware that GOD isn't hiding things "FROM" you; HE is hiding things "FOR" you! On occasion, Christmas gifts are purchased early, and hidden away, waiting for that special day called, Christmas. Those gifts are yours already, you will be aware of them on a specific day. Those gifts, presently hidden, are not hidden "from" you; they are hidden, "for" you.

It is GOD'S glory to "conceal" a matter. To "conceal" a matter means to "put a lid" on something. Since it's the honor of kings to search out a matter, you are challenged to take the lid off some things GOD has prepared for this season of your life. GOD has an abundant provision of courage, wrapped within you, now is the time to take the lid off, and experience the fearless, bold, and unafraid life of a champion of the faith.

Illustrations of courage are found in many places. One of my favorite places to look is in the Word of GOD. People who exhibited courage in difficult times are impressive and worth noting. Actions those folks took during seasons of difficulty, and when facing impossibilities is inspiring, and serves as encouragement to all as our journey of life continues.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the story of Joshua, and his leadership of the Children of Israel. It's a treatise in courage. A brief foundation of his story lets us know he might not have thought of himself as a person of courage, but GOD used him to do great deeds, and his story is part of the rich history of his day.

As I read the story over and over again, questions pop into my mind. From why Joshua was chosen, to what qualities were present that enabled him to become a man of courage, as well as uncertainties that might have been present during this season.

I guess my biggest question would be, “What can one learn from Joshua that would cause them to become a person of courage, and see their dreams come true?”

Let’s jump right in and ask the first question, “Why was Joshua chosen as the person to lead the Children of Israel to the Promised Land?”

It seemed to be such an impossible task. It would take someone special to be in charge of such an undertaking. The answer is found in scripture where GOD had spoken to Moses to choose Joshua. Moses was also told to encourage him, and strengthen him, as he would lead GOD’S people into this land of promise.

Moses picked Joshua because GOD had picked Joshua. Moses was doing what GOD has asked. *“But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see”* Deuteronomy 3:28 NASB.

Next question might be, “What caused GOD make the selection of Joshua?”

We do know that Joshua was one of the selected leaders to go and spy out the land. When these leaders returned from their trip, only two of the twelve men believed that GOD would keep them safe. Joshua was one of those men. One main reason Joshua was chosen by GOD was the he had a strong trust in GOD. GOD looks for those who trust HIM. HE looks for those who want to live appropriately in HIS sight. We might go so far as to say that Joshua was a friend of GOD.

When GOD spoke to Joshua, it was an exhortation to be courageous. *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go”* Joshua 1:9 NASB.

Sometimes, issues of life are thrust upon us; it was surely thrust upon Joshua. It’s also evident that Joshua would need to be encouraged. Even though he brought back a good report from spying out the land, he would still need to be courageous in order to inherit the land. When GOD spoke to Joshua, *“arise,*

cross this Jordan," HE was instructing an exit from the desert and a movement into Canaan. This symbolic of GOD wanting HIS children out of the wilderness and into a place of deliverance and conquest, all of which courage becomes the quality of life one must exhibit. GOD'S plan isn't for HIS children to live in a wilderness of daydreams and empty hopes. GOD has more and is committed to providing for every need. GOD also mentioned, "*.....all this people,"* to illustrate that courage isn't just for an elect few, but it's for all believers. The abundant life is for all those who trust in HIM and walk by faith in HIS deliverance.

When courage is put under the magnifying glass of examination, we find that courage is a choice to engage a circumstance even though fear might be present. Courage also has a deep connection to the center of your being as it is also taking a stand for what's appropriate and right. Caring also has a connection to courage, as well as some discomfort and pain. Often, courage is demonstrated by a willingness to leave a comfort zone.

Sometimes courage will manifest in choices made. With options of going back to old, comfortable paths, or remaining in a present uncomfortable situation, one is tempted to accept the status quo. However, the other option, the courageous option, would be to accept the challenge for change and be willing to move forward toward an uncertain future, trusting GOD for provision to be discovered along the journey.

Life is amazing. Although it's an exciting journey from birth to the grave, we are well aware of the ebb and flow of circumstances that can challenge us to the core of our being. It's during those challenging moments we discover actions and reactions that define and reinforce who we are during perplexing moments. How you react is usually based on perceptions formed as you evaluate what's come your way.

Let me share three quick points of reference that can be used to navigate through life and enjoy the success GOD has promised. Point number one is easy, and I'll call it.....

"SEEING THE OPPORTUNITY." Seeing an opportunity can be exciting, challenging, and cumbersome all at the same time. Something starts moving on the inside, adrenaline flows, and the speed of thoughts increase exponentially.

It's somewhat parallels the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, when Mary was carrying JESUS, and Elizabeth was carrying John the Baptist. When Mary extended her greeting to Elizabeth, the testimony of Elizabeth was the baby "leaped" in her womb. She was an older woman, apparently hadn't felt the baby move, and was concerned if what was inside would live. At the witness of Mary, Elizabeth felt movement and fresh excitement surfaced as she saw the opportunity to fulfill the word of GOD.

Mary saw an opportunity, Elizabeth saw an opportunity, Joshua saw an opportunity, and many others, whose names are written in GOD's word saw opportunities that shaped periods of history. SEEING THE OPPORTUNITY can be the beginning of an exciting adventure. Now, with all these possibilities brought by SEEING AN OPPORTUNITY, what could possibly go wrong?

Point number two might bring some cloudy emotional weather when you begin.....

"SEEING THE DIFFICULTY." It's at point number two, many folks decide to turn away from SEEING THE OPPORTUNITY when they are faced with SEEING THE DIFFICULTY. Opportunities can fade into the background and shrink in fear of difficulties that arise. I've learned one sign of walking away from your dream is "sadness." When the realization comes that difficulties might be greater than the opportunity, sadness enters as some begin walking away from what began as the possibility of an exciting adventure.

The Apostle Paul told of a great open door, but quickly added there are many adversaries. Even great men and women found themselves SEEING THE DIFFICULTY. If a solution isn't quickly found, perceived difficulties can abort the opportunity because there seems to be no way to get from the excitement of SEEING THE OPPORTUNITY to the manifestation of what has been seen because of SEEING THE DIFFICULTY.

Perhaps you have seen opportunities, and in the beginning excitement, anticipation and expectation were dominant emotions of the day. But over time, the issues of life came piling on; difficulties came into view and covered all the delight that dominated previous days and weeks. What was an exciting opportunity has become a faint thought that seldom occurs. A dark cloud of hopelessness dominates every day and refuses to permit hopefulness to enter

the equation at any level. There are just too many difficulties. Don't stop here; wait until you see number three!

Point number three is the solution to point number two and connects to point number one. I'll simply call it.....

“SEEING THE LORD!” The only place where difficulties shrink is in the presence of the LORD. In HIS presence is fullness of joy, and since the joy of the LORD is our strength, and strength is connected to COURAGE, perhaps we've found the key to navigating from SEEING THE OPPORTUNITY, thru SEEING THE DIFFICULTY, all the way to SEEING THE LORD, and those opportunities begin coming into reality wrapped in the favor and blessing of GOD.

It's in the presence of the LORD we discover the COURAGE that's been dormant in our life for too long. Activating courage is what GOD does, and courage becomes the wrapping of opportunities, which provides confidence in moving forward. Seeing the LORD provides accurate perceptions, and the courage necessary to bring opportunities to manifestation.

We often see mental pictures of ideal outcomes and desire those outcomes to become part of our life story. Desire is important, but not always enough to obtain a desired result. This is when courage can enter the stage of life. Regardless of circumstances, GOD has the ability to make a way out of no way and create the manifestation of a desired outcome.

SEEING THE OPPORTUNITY, SEEING THE DIFFICULTY, and SEEING THE LORD are easy to remember thoughts, which can provide encouragement to create action plans, in spite of difficulties, to bring a desired outcome.

When you were born, GOD wrapped all the necessary qualities you would need to navigate this journey of life, victoriously. You were built to move courageously through difficulties and enjoy HIS abundant life. At strategic moments GOD will activate those needed qualities, which are already present, to provide guidance to a safe destination.

It was Joshua's strong trust in GOD that enabled Moses, and GOD to provide encouragement for Joshua's journey. This reveals that GOD provides friends, mentors, and teachers to encourage us along the way. It also says that GOD

will speak encouragement directly into our spirit as well. We are never alone. GOD, who first caused you to SEE THE OPPORTUNITY, can provide resources to overcome SEEING THE DIFFICULTY, and bring you to SEEING THE LORD, which secures the manifestation of the opportunity.

God's first promise to Joshua was that no man would be able to stand before him all the days of his life. This promise wasn't just for leading folks into the land of promise; it was to cover his entire life. The obedience of Joshua, and his willingness to be an instrument of GOD, would begin activating dormant qualities he would need to be successful in all his life. GOD will do the same for you.

Gathering courage for opportunities that have been seen will activate other dormant qualities, which are necessary for your victorious journey through life. Courage today, can unlock additional traits, which usher in uncommon days of GOD'S favor and blessing. You might sense struggle and desperation, but GOD has provided inner strength, from which you can draw, during seasons of struggle.

Your present struggle is proof you've not been conquered. Even the fact you choose to draw on the provision of inner strength reveals new levels of courage to move you forward.

Another promise GOD made to Joshua was that HE would be with Joshua, and would not fail him, nor forsake him. You enjoy a Divine traveling companion, unseen with natural eyes, but highly visible with spiritual eyes. I've had friends that were with me but would fail me; I've also had friends who were not there for me and failed me. I've even had friends that forsook me when the going got tough. GOD promised he would not fail you, nor forsake you. HE'S staying the course, regardless of the climate of the difficulty. You have a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

GOD's exhortation to be bold was revealing that Joshua was to be bold, but not in himself. Joshua was to be bold in the moving and operating of GOD. GOD'S plan is perfect, and when implemented with faith and confidence will work to excellence and bring about GOD'S solution to every difficulty. You can depend on GOD to stay with HIS plan, and your bold, courageous, confidence in that plan can usher in a season of miracles.

Joshua also received from GOD encouragement to fear not, nor be dismayed. By definition, to be dismayed is to be unsettled, or off balance. GOD did not want Joshua to be off balance, nor permit fear any place in his journey. Fear is kryptonite to faith. Fear has torment, but the Bible says that, mature love takes our fear. Mature love is based on trust. A complete trust in GOD, with mature love for HIM, can marshal the force of courage to conquer every enemy.

The cream on top of the assignment was that GOD promised Joshua success all the days of his life. The instructions GOD gave Moses were given to Joshua, and GOD'S encouragement was to keep those instructions a top priority. The vision of Joshua was not to move to the right, or the left, but to remain focused on what GOD has spoken. GOD'S word was to be spoken day and night. That seems to express that GOD'S word is to be spoken when circumstances are good, or when they are bad. Just keep speaking the opinion of GOD on the matter. This speaking the word of GOD also strengthens boldness and courage.

GOD'S promise to you is the same as it was to Moses and Joshua. Be bold in the plan of GOD. Refuse to fear, get unsettled, or knocked off balance by circumstances, but continue trusting the LORD. Continue speaking GOD'S opinion on the matter at hand, regardless of circumstances being faced. Following these instructions can provide success and victory all the days of your life.

Determination, and your indomitable spirit, which are carrying you through this season, will ultimately bring you to a victorious end. Anyone can give up; it's the easiest thing in the world to do. But to hold it together when everyone else would understand if you fell apart, that's true courage. Remain a person of courage; God celebrates your journey.

May you find the courage to pursue a dream that will outlast yourself and leave a legacy that will inspire others. ~Bishop Gerald Doggett

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It is the mission of Doggett Leadership to connect and inspire emerging leaders in their service to God while joining with believers around the world in a journey of life-long learning while networking with communities and championing relationships.

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