

BE COURAGEOUS; LIVE BRAVE

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So this old guy is at a state fair -- this old man -- and he sees a booth offering helicopter rides for 50 bucks. And she asks his wife; he says, "You know what? I would really love to go on this. I have wanted to do this all my life, and, you know, I'm getting older, and so I'd like to go now."

And the wife says, "Absolutely not. You don't need to ride a helicopter. It's 50 bucks. And 50 bucks is 50 bucks."

And so the next year comes; same booth is there. The guy goes up and he asks his wife; he says, "Honey, I'd really love to do this."

She says, "Absolutely not. It's \$50. And fifty bucks is fifty bucks!"

And this happens for two or three, four years. And finally in the fifth year, he's just exasperated: asking, begging his wife. And the pilot of the helicopter overhears and says, "Look; I'll make you a deal. I'll take you up for free on one condition. You guys don't say a word. You don't say a peep; you don't scream; nothing. Not a sound! But if you make a sound, I'll charge you 50 bucks. If you stay silent, it'll be absolutely free."

So they talk it over, and they agree on it. And they have this vow: "We will not make a sound. We will not say a word."

So the guy takes them up; does all kinds of flips and all kinds of stuff just to freak them out as best as he can. He's really trying hard! And then he comes down and he turns to the old man and he says, "You know, I'm really impressed! I tried everything I could to get you guys to say anything, and you were totally silent."

And the old guy says, "Well, you know, I almost said something when my wife fell out." [Congregants laugh]

"But 50 bucks is 50 bucks!" [Congregants laugh]

And so ... All right. [Laughs] So

How many people have at least one thing in your life that you would like to try; that you'd like to experience; or you'd like to achieve that you haven't mustered up the courage to do yet? Anybody have one of those? And how many people have ever allowed fear to stop you from making a decision or taking an action?

And my question is: If you were as courageous and as brave as you could be, what would you do that you aren't doing now? And what would look different about how you live your life in general if you were more courageous and you were more brave?

You know, I was reading an article, and it said something very bold. It said if you want your life to get better; if you want to express the very best version of yourself and fulfill your potential, the number one thing for you to do is to start learning how to be brave. How to take steps to live more courageously and to step out of your comfort zones.

You know, Samuel Johnson was really bold when he said that courage is the greatest of all virtues, because courage is needed to have all the other virtues. It takes courage to believe. It takes courage to dream. It takes courage to let go. It takes courage to hold on. It takes courage to speak up. It takes courage to listen. It takes courage to stop smoking; it takes courage to lose weight. It takes courage to

deal with an addiction. I mean, there isn't any area of life you could think about that doesn't require us to have courage in the way that we live.

And the question is: Why does it take courage -- and so much courage -- for us to live our lives? And I'll tell you three reasons.

And the first one is that life isn't easy. Jesus said, *"In this life, there'll be trials and tribulations."* That in this -- a part of this human experience -- we're going to face challenges and difficulties. We're going to have struggles. At times, we will feel betrayed and not supported ... sometimes by the very people that we think should support us. There are all kinds of difficulties and challenges that we go through that require us to have courage.

The second one is: sometimes we hold on to limiting beliefs, beliefs of lack and limitation; that there is not enough. We have a scarcity mentality when we look at life. We sometimes believe that we're not worthy and good enough. And sometimes it takes courage to overcome some of the limiting beliefs that we have.

And the third one -- and the biggest -- is fear. You know, we're only born with two fears: the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises. We have over 500 fears. We have so many fears! We have so many fears we give them their own categories. Phobias: claustrophobia; agoraphobia. We've got phobias about everything! About spiders, about snakes, about heights. Do you know that even public speaking: we have a fear of public speaking! And public speaking, strangely, is a higher fear than snakes! I find that hard to believe living in Arizona! I mean, can you imagine walking out into desert and get scared, and someone says, *"Watch out! A podium!"* [Congregants laugh]

Winston Churchill once said, *"Success is not final and failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts."* It is the courage to continue! It takes courage to start, but it takes courage to continue. Because nobody's life ... the road of life is not smooth and easy for anyone. You know, there are bumps; there are obstacles; there are detours; there are wrong turns. And if we want to succeed as we travel down the road of life, it requires us to rise above; to learn; to overcome. And the underlying attribute to all of that is courage: the willingness to be brave.

And so today, we're going to look at four areas for all of us to be courageous and live brave.

And the first one is to **TRUST IN THE SPIRIT OF GOD THAT IS IN YOU**. We're going to go to the Book of Joshua, Chapter 1, Verses 5 to 9. And this is where God is kind of handing over the reins to Joshua from Moses, who was the leader. And this is the kind of pep talk God's giving. He says, *"No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you or never forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the laws my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from the left or the right, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this book and the laws. Meditate on it by day and by night, so that you may be careful in everything you do that it is written. And then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. For the Lord, your God will be with you wherever you go."*

Two things about this: a constant reassurance that, *"I will be there for you. I will never forsake you. Wherever you go, I will be there for you."* And what is saying is that Spirit of God is in you and around you and always there and supporting you. Trust in that Spirit of God and you, and trust yourself that you have the power to be courageous and the power to be brave.

And the second thing: notice how it says, *"Be strong and courageous"* three times in that passage. That even though God is with us, it still requires us to be strong and courageous. Because he knew, in that

story, that to lead the people into the Promised Land would take courage. To have them cross the Jordan would take courage. To have the battles in Jericho would take courage. That all the planning; all the thought; that it was a long journey with victories and defeats and struggles. And that whole experience would take courage.

When you think about this, this isn't just God speaking to Joshua. This is God speaking to all of us to say that -- in your journey towards your Promised Land -- that it will take courage. Crossing over the Jordan -- and the rough waters and the inner conflicts and battles that we have to face in our experience of life -- that it requires courage. And that we absolutely have it in us.

And God is saying, *"I am there and I am within you,"* but it requires you to walk it. It requires you to dig deep and have that faith and trust in yourself, that that courage is within you.

In the story of *Winnie the Pooh*, Christopher Robin is chatting with Pooh and he says, *"Please always remember this: that you are braver than you believe; that you are stronger than you seem; and you are smarter than you think."* And the fact is: every one of us is more courageous and stronger and braver than we realize. The question is: Are you willing to trust that Spirit of God in you; trust that quality in you; and to be brave and courageous as we move along the road to our Promised Land?

The second thing, for me, in being courageous and living brave is that **WE NEED TO LET OUR CURIOSITY BE BIGGER THAN OUR FEAR.** Leonardo da Vinci was considered the greatest genius of all time. He was a painter and he was a sculptor; a draftsman; an engineer; an architect; a scientist. He studied anatomy; astronomy; and botany. He has hundreds and hundreds of books with all kinds of thoughts. He came up with so many prototypes for inventions that were not even close to being fully invented for hundreds of years later. He was incredible! The number one quality that said that this guy was a genius was: he had a curious mind. He had a curious mind that wondered; a curious mind that explored; a curious mind to believe that there were multiple possibilities available if we would sit and listen and open our minds to them.

And the reason I say a part of being courageous is allowing your curiosity to be bigger than your fear is because, when our minds are filled with fear, our focus gets narrow. We're not able to see possibilities. We only see dread; we only see negativity. We always see the worst case scenario. And so, to be courageous, we need to have a more curious mind to open up to greater possibilities.

You know the difference between the growth mindset and the fixed mindset? It's similar. It's saying that the power of your mind ... You know, Scripture says, *"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."* When you think with a fearful mind -- and a limited mind -- that's the kind of stuff we attract. When we think with a curious, open mind of greater creativity and possibilities, those are the types of things that we attract in our lives. Science is saying that we all need to develop curious minds: minds that explore; you know, minds that ask questions. Because fearful minds focus on lack and limitation, but curious minds open ourselves to greater possibilities.

So here's some ways we can all develop a more curious mind. One of them is just to think and write and reflect on whatever it is that comes to you. It sounds silly, but there's genius in us, but we need to find ways and avenues to get it out and to explore it, and allow the power of the mind that God has given us to bless us.

The second one is to ask questions. To ask ourselves about our lives: Is this the best way I could be living? What else is possible for me? What is a greater way that we can create peace and harmony in our relationship or our family? How can I have more fun and joy in my life? Just asking our questions: How can I be more effective in my work? How can I feel more fulfilled? What is a greater solution to this

problem? Because asking questions begins to trigger our minds of curiosity, which is a mind of unlimited possibility of goodness.

And then the third one is to try and learn something new every day. Just learn something new or discover something new every day. And it could be as even simple as changing your routine. Like tomorrow morning, when you drive to work, drive a different way than you normally work. And if you grocery shop at Fry's, try grocery shopping at Albertsons. And if you really don't want to do that, at least if you're going to Fry's, start in the opposite direction where you normally do. We tend to go down the same aisles, the same sequence all the time! And it really actually helps our mind to expand and open by just doing some things a little bit differently. Because it helps us see life in a different way and opens us up to different perspectives as well as different possibilities.

Curious minds are open minds that are more courageous, and fixed and limited fearful minds close us off to greater possibilities.

And so the next one is: **YOU'VE GOT TO BE WILLING TO BE VULNERABLE**. To me, this is one of the greatest areas of courage that we need. because most of us are scared to be vulnerable. You know, we think we're going to look weak; We think we're going to look foolish; or that people make fun of us; or we'll feel exposed. Or we're vulnerable, that people might take advantage of us or hurt us.

And yes; there are risks of being vulnerable. But the truth is: there are also incredible rewards. There are levels of authenticity and realness and a deeper sense of connection and being known and knowing someone else. You know, being vulnerable is about lowering the walls that we sometimes put up ourselves and taking off the masks and allowing ourselves to be truly known. To open our hearts and to share more honestly.

Many, many years ago, in the Unity church that I attended when I started in Canada, I signed up and went to a class called "How to Deal with Cancer." And I didn't have cancer, but I was going through a lot of challenges with my car accident and things that were going on in my life. I thought, you know: dealing with challenges. I wanted to learn something. So I went. The place was all set up, lectern there, and I was the only one there. And I waited and waited, and I was the only one there.

And then the guy -- the instructor -- came in, and it was only me and him. And he's looking out the window, waiting for more people to come. Seven o'clock came; nobody else showed up. It was snowing a bit, but it really wasn't that big of a deal. So, I sit there; he's at the lectern. And he's trying to do the whole spiel: "*Good evening and blah, blah, blah.*" And it's, like, it's only me! [Congregants laugh]

And then he stopped after a minute. He says, "*You know what? I've got to be honest with you, man, and I'm just really disappointed. I thought I was going to fill this room. I thought there was something important I had to say that the people would want to hear, and my ego feels devastated right now.*" And he said, "*I've really been through a lot, and I thought I would have a lot to share. And so, you know ... So I just want to apologize that I'm just, you know, feeling a little bit down.*"

And so he said, "*Why don't we just sit down and have a chat? We don't have to have the formal class.*" So he started talking and sharing. He said, "*You know, I feel so let down now that it reminds me of when I used to try and get my dad's approval, and when he wouldn't show up, how disappointed and let down I felt.*" And he said, "*I used that energy. There was so much anger in me that I was driven to succeed.*" And he was hugely successful. I mean, had a lot of money, great cars, all kinds of stuff.

And he said, "*Even though I had this outer great life,*" he said, "*there was always something empty in me. And when I got cancer, I was just so devastated. It threw my world upside down. But then someone introduced me to Unity, and eventually I realized that cancer came into my life to help me heal; to help me look at my life.*" He ended up quitting his work and just working on himself.

And then I shared my devastation and where I was in my life and feeling lost and hopeless. And I'll tell you, in those two hours that we shared together, I probably knew him better than I knew some people I'd known for 20 years. It was incredible! When you let down the walls and allow yourself to be vulnerable -- allow yourself to be known -- how incredibly closer and connected we can feel. How accepted, how validated that we could feel. There were no masks on; nobody is impressing everybody. And it was just incredible.

And that thing ... Mike lived for one more year; we became really good friends and we were connected. And it's really amazing to see him and how he grew. And even though he died from cancer, the fact is: his last year of life I think was probably some of the healthiest and the most authentic and joyful and fulfilling of his life.

And one thing that it made me realize is that the thing we're all looking for is love. We all want to be validated. We all want to be acknowledged and appreciated. Every one of us wants that! And the truth is: If we are not willing to be vulnerable, we're never going to get to the depth and the level of the experience of love that we are all looking for.

You know, Leo Buscaglia would say, *"If you miss love, you miss life. So don't miss it!"* And one of the ways that we can miss love is if we aren't willing to be more vulnerable and authentic, particularly with the most important people in our lives. To be willing to be honest about sharing where we are. And whether it's our fear, or it's our insecurity, or our shame, or our deepest dream and desire, to authentically share who we are is one of the most courageous things that we can do. And I believe of all levels of courage, the greatest level of courage, because we are here.

Life is about relationship. It is about love. And it is about making that connection. And one of the things we need to do is practice being vulnerable. Because it's not easy! It is not comfortable. And one of the ways to practice being vulnerable ... the first one is being vulnerable and honest with ourselves. Of journaling and actually saying the raw, honest truth about what's going on with ourselves ... for nobody else's eyes, but ourselves. And then, you know, being honest.

You know, I know people who don't even tell their therapist the truth! I mean ... And, you know, being in support groups and working our way. It is not something just overnight that you flick the switch. It is practice, you know, and work we need to do. And you just don't go vomit your story on everybody. It's about being, you know, aware of what's going on in me and who are the people that I want to share and be more vulnerable with, so I could feel closer. So that I could be known in a greater and more fulfilling way.

Karlfried von Durckheim said the person that is willing to risk themselves and expose themselves to life -- that is the only individual who can have that indestructible spirit within them rise. And it's only when we are fully authentic and we know who we truly are; and it's only when we're fully authentic that we can truly experience the deepest level of love that we can experience.

I ask you: What is something that you want to say or share with someone that is key and important in your life that you would be willing to be vulnerable and share it with them?

I remember I was trying this practice once with somebody, and I was so nervous my opening line was, *"I am so scared to say this, but I just need to share this."* And even if it comes out clumsy or awkward, it will get better in time. But just opening our heart to be honest and true is really one of the greatest things that we can do.

We want a better life? I would say one of the key things is have the courage to be willing to be vulnerable. Because only until we are vulnerable can we experience deeper levels of love, closeness in our relationships, and greater fulfillment in our lives.

And the last one for courage is to **BE WILLING TO STEP OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONES**. Do you remember when Peter was in the boat in the storm and Jesus called him out to step out of the boat and come onto the water? And he did. And for a second he stood on the water. And then he got freaked out, and sank and got back into the boat. The thing I love about that is that Peter was willing. He was willing, even with his fear, to have faith in Jesus and to step out of the boat of his comfort. He could have easily stayed in the boat, but he was willing to step out. And later, Jesus said, *"You are the rock upon which I will build my church."* You are the one that was willing to step out and stretch your faith, and stretch your belief, and stretch yourself.

Sometimes we think if we step out and we fail, that that's the worst thing in the world. But it's not! Just the act of trying, and attempting, and putting things into motion, and giving our effort will begin to reward us in greater ways. Every one of us has our comfort zones, because it feels safe. It feels familiar. It feels easy. But ultimately there is not growth; there is stagnation. And there's a lack of fulfillment. We are here to grow. We are here to expand. We are to fully express the glory of God that is within us. And it requires us to get out of our comfort zones and stretch ourselves and do things that are new. Do things that are risky. Do things that are little beyond our grasp.

Einstein said, *"Nothing happens until something moves."* And what he is saying is that life is energy. And if you want to attract greater things, you've got to get some energy moving by taking some action. And the greatest action we can take is by taking some risks and being willing to step out. Most of us want life to get better without us having to do anything. And it doesn't work that way! I've tried! It does not work that way. [Congregants laugh]

Again, even failing or stumbling or falling ... sometimes it's even better than success. You know why? It causes you to go a little deeper. Think a little more. Study a bit harder. Give greater effort. In fact, I bet you any hero you could think about that you have that you admire, I bet you they overcame something. I bet you they had to rise from some difficult period to live at a higher and fuller level.

Oprah Winfrey got fired in one of her first jobs as an anchorwoman, but she had the courage to continue. Michael Jordan got cut from his basketball team; he had the courage to continue. Jerry Seinfeld got booed off the stage on his first performance; he had the courage to continue. Steven Spielberg got rejected three times from film school, but he had the courage to continue.

Vincent Van Gogh said, *"What would life be like if you had no courage to attempt anything?"* And how about: What would life be like if you had the courage to attempt everything? Or anything?

Les Brown does this thing, and it's a really powerful thing. But he says, *"Imagine yourself on your deathbed. And you're surrounded by the ideas and the dreams and the talents and the abilities and the gifts that you were given by life. And that they are there, angry, saying, 'Why didn't you give us life? Why didn't you try? Why didn't you go after that dream? Why didn't you share that gift more?'"*

And then he asked a really bold question. He said, *"If you were to die today, what ideas of yours would die with you? What dreams would die with you? What talents would die with you? What gifts would die with you?"*

And a greater question is: So what are you willing to try today? What are you willing to do or say that you want to today? What are you willing to change today? Or what are you willing to keep going and keep doing today? What is it time for you to step out of your comfort zone and do today? [Baby in congregation shrieks] She's so excited about that! [Congregants laugh] That was a good point!

So, this guy had this really horrible fear that there was a monster living under his bed and would come and kill him one day. And so, he was suffering it for years. And he decided to go see a therapist. He goes to see his therapist and she offers all kinds of things: visualization, meditation, affirmation. After four

months, the guy's still afraid that there's something living under his bed and that it'll attack him and kill him. And so, he stopped seeing her. And then he runs into her like two weeks later.

And she says, *“Hey how's that thing going? Are you still believing the monster under your bed? Did any of the therapies I gave you help?”*

He said, *“No; it didn't help at all. But I went to another therapist, and he cured me in one session.”*

“One session? What did he do? What did he tell you?”

And he said, *“Well, he told me to just cut off the legs of my bed.”* [Congregants laugh]

Okay. [Laughs] I'm sorry. That took a lot of courage to tell that bad joke when ... And the talk was going pretty good up until then! [Laughs – congregants applaud] So, mercy applause. I'll take that. That's fine. [Congregants laugh]

Winston Churchill said, *“Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.”* And the truth is: that's how life is. Life isn't always easy. Things don't always work out. And it's the courage to continue; the courage to keep going that is so vitally important.

I believe that line in that article that said if you want your life to get better -- if you want to express your best self and you want to fulfill your potential -- learn to be brave. And the four ways for us to do that is to trust in the Spirit of God in us and to know that that courage is within. It's to let your curiosity be bigger than your fears and develop a curious mind. And be willing to be vulnerable in your relationships. And then, finally, to step out of the boat of your comfort.

These are the four ways for us to live a better life by being courageous and being brave. God bless.

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