

How To Be Courageous  
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If I boiled this lesson down to one sentence, it would be the words of Jesus in Mark 6:51:

*“Don’t be afraid,” ... “Take courage! I am here!” (NLT)*

It’s been a pretty discouraging couple of weeks at our house due to my Mother’s latest health problems and surgery. In fact, the past three days have been especially challenging and we’re still not out of the woods regarding placement for the next phase of her recovery and rehabilitation.

Friday night as I had been pretty down, Susan reminded me: *“You need to remember that the same God that parted the Red Sea is handling this problem too!”* I told her that, wouldn’t you know it, that’s what this week’s lesson is all about. It’s all about having COURAGE in the face of tough circumstances.

We’re being reminded that as believers, we express our faith in courageous ways by taking action on the basis of Jesus’ power and presence.

In Mark chapter 6 we see some good examples of a time when the disciples had to learn to be COURAGEOUS in times of:

- OVERWHELMING NEED;
- OBEYING GOD; and
- OBVIOUS DISTRESS

Mark 6

In the first 34 verses of Mark 6 a lot of things transpired...

- Jesus ... went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.
- Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's ...?"
- And they took offense at him.
- Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."
- He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.
- And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

Then...

- Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil[b] spirits.

- These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. 10Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them."
- 12They went out and preached that people should repent. 13They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.
- Meanwhile, they get the discouraging news that John the Baptist had been beheaded
- 30The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."
- 32So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.
- 33But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.
- 34When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.
- Then the disciples were faced with an **OVERWHELMING NEED**

Verses 35 and 36:

*35By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."*

- Then in verse 37 Jesus **STUNNED** the disciples:

*37But he answered, "You give them something to eat."*

*They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages[e]! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"*

- All these people were hungry and what was **THEIR** solution?
  - Better tell these people to go shopping for something to eat
- But Jesus had a different solution...
  - **YOU** give them something to eat!
- Jesus knew it was five thousand people (**JUST COUNTING THE MEN!**) and He knew that the disciples didn't run the **12 MEN AND A TRUCK CATERING SERVICE**
- Why would he have challenged the disciples to **FEED THE PEOPLE?**

Warren Wiersbe said:

*Jesus looked at the situation, not as a problem, but as an opportunity to trust the Father and glorify His name. An effective leader is someone who sees potential in problems and is willing to act by faith. Acting on the basis of human wisdom, His disciples saw the problem but not the potential. The first step is not to measure our resources, but to determine God's will and trust Him to meet the need.*

A couple of statements:

It doesn't take much courage to meet needs when we have an abundance of resources.

In fact, if the disciples could have solved the problem IN THEIR OWN STRENGTH no one would have been impressed.

Sometimes God places OVERWHELMING NEEDS that appear to be INSURMOUNTABLE in front of us so we can ACT WITH COURAGE knowing HE CAN DO THE IMPOSSIBLE!

When we're faced with an OVERWHELMING CHALLENGE remember those words of Jesus:

*"Don't be afraid," ... "Take courage! I am here!" (NLT)*

We all know how the story ends...verses 38-44

38"How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

39Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.

40So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41Taking the five loaves and the

two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them

all. 42They all ate and were satisfied, 43and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44The number of the men who had eaten was five

thousand.

- Jesus didn't accept the negativity of the disciples...
- In effect, He said: 'Don't tell me what you DON'T HAVE...tell me what you DO HAVE!
- How many times do we give up on meeting a need because we just can't see where the resources are coming from to meet it? No need is too great that it can't be resolved through the Lord's power!
- In verse 41 Jesus gave thanks and started breaking the bread.
- Our commentary says:  
*The amount of the food remained the same until Jesus had a conversation with His Father.*

- It was just five loaves and two fish UNTIL He took it to His Father.
- How many times do we sit staring at how few resources we have; how few answers we have; how few options we have...instead of lifting up what we have to God and THANKING HIM for what he'll do with it.
- Like the old song says: "Little is much when God is in it!"
- And look at verse 43: "the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish." LEFT OVERS!!

Here's another statement:

Jesus didn't promise the ADEQUATE LIFE; He promised the ABUNDANT LIFE!  
When Jesus feeds his people there's always MORE THAN ENOUGH.

It's easy enough for us to SAY we TRUST Him. "But GENUINE TRUST is demonstrated in HOW WE LIVE. Even when we question the WHY of God's actions He requires obedience from those who SAY they TRUST Him." (Lesson commentary)

- After the disciples had seen the miraculous multiplication Jesus performed that day, you would think they were so BLOWN away that they would never doubt His provision and protection again!
- "That was so impressive we'll NEVER doubt that Jesus will ALWAYS work it out!"
- Is that what happened?
- Is that what happens with you and me? When we've seen God come through for us time and time again; what happens when the next crisis shows up?

Look at verses 45 - 50

45Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

47When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. 48He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, 49but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, 50because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

- Here's the first question I have: "Jesus is the Son of God, therefore he is OMNISCIENT...what does that mean? So if He knows everything then He would have known about the storm on the lake right? Who needs DOPPLER radar when you have Jesus?"
- Why didn't He just say: "Hey boys...big storm coming stay off that lake."
- What DID He tell them? Verse 45 says "Jesus MADE his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him..."
- Why would Jesus send his most precious, trusted men into a storm that He had to know about?

- Sometimes Jesus allows storms into our lives for a purpose.
- He didn't say there wouldn't be trouble...in fact, He said just the opposite:

John 16:33 (New International Version)

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

- He didn't say we'd never have a storm...but what did He promise us about the storms in our lives?

Isaiah 43:2 (New International Version)

2 When you pass through the waters,  
 I will be with you;  
 and when you pass through the rivers,  
 they will not sweep over you.  
 When you walk through the fire,  
 you will not be burned;  
 the flames will not set you ablaze.

Hebrews 13:5 (New International Version)

... God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." [a]

The writer was quoting the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 31:6 (New International Version)

6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

- Look back at verse 48. Does it say: "Jesus heard the disciples calling out for Him in prayer from the shore asking for His help?" No.
- What does it say they were doing? Straining at the oars.
- They were doing what made good common sense because where did they think Jesus was? On the shore!
- How many times do you and I set sail into the sea of our lives thinking we left Jesus on the shore?
- When the storm comes up we wring our hands and say "Oh, I wish Jesus wasn't back on the shore, we sure could use his help right here in our boat!"
- No matter what kind of storm we encounter, Jesus is never "back on shore" he's right there with us.
- Verse 49: "When they saw him walking on the water they thought he was a ghost."

- Things are not always what they appear to be...when we see things that frighten us, if we'll look closer we'll see Jesus is right in the middle of our storm!

Yesterday's Oswald Chambers said

*Believe God is always the God you know Him to be when you are nearest to Him. Then think how unnecessary and disrespectful worry is! Let the attitude of your life be a continual willingness to "go out" in dependence upon God, and your life will have a sacred and inexpressible charm about it that is very satisfying to Jesus.*

Look at verses 51-52

51Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

The King James Bible Commentary says:

*"Jesus demonstrated His power not simply in order to aid the disciples, for He could have uttered an effective command from shore, This miracle[was]aimed at confirming His identity<sup>1</sup>"*

- He could have spoken ONE WORD from the shore and the storm would have died down...but He was making a point that could only be made by the disciples seeing him walking ON THE WATER and IN THE STORM
- Sometimes Jesus puts storms in our lives to remind us WHO WE ARE and then comes walking on the water to remind us WHO HE IS!
- Remember that one sentence I said summarized the lesson?

*"Don't be afraid," ... "Take courage! I am here!" (NLT)*

- Look at verse 52. The disciples had seen Jesus miraculously feed five thousand...yet, they were AMAZED He could walk on water and calm the storm.
- What does that verse say about their hearts? They were "hardened".

The Life Application Study Bible says:

*"The disciples didn't transfer the truth they already knew about Jesus to their own lives. We read that Jesus walked on the water, and yet we often marvel that he is able to work in our lives. We must not only believe that these miracles really occurred; we must also transfer the truth to our own life situations."*

- In other words, let's not be too hard on the disciples...we have a tendency to doubt that Jesus will really be there to walk on the water and calm the storms in our lives.

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<sup>1</sup>KJV Bible commentary. 1997, c1994 (1981). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

When I was a kid they taught us to sing a little song. Only this week as I was preparing for this lesson did I discover the story behind the song:

Oscar Eliason who penned the chorus tells his story:

*During the summer of 1929, after graduating from the Northwestern Bible and Missionary Training School in Minneapolis, I went through some severe testings. My brother passed away, and I, also, became seriously ill and was not expecting to live. During the time that I was attending Northwestern, I had learned to know a Presbyterian minister,- C.K. Ingersol who had great faith in God, especially in praying for the sick. On my sickbed I felt led to send word to brother Ingersol to come and pray for me. The result was that I was healed of tuberculosis.*

*Eliason went on to say that he had seen in a newspaper the slogan of the construction company that had dug the Panama Canal: "We Specialize In Things Thought Impossible".*

*He wrote: "After the healing took place, I felt led to make a slight change in the slogan and write music for it, making it into a gospel chorus. This I did, and it seemed that it was God's plan."*

The little chorus goes like this:

Got any rivers, you think are uncrossable?  
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?  
God specializes in thing thought impossible  
He does the things others cannot do.

- How about you?
- Got any RIVERS?
- Got any MOUNTAINS?
- Got any STORMS in your life?

Jesus is right beside us saying:

*"Don't be afraid," ... "Take courage! I am here!" (NLT)*