



Courageous Faith

Matt VanCleave
January 22, 2023

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

What, if any, next step did you commit to last week, how did it go?

- ☐ I will view frustrating situations as an opportunity for me to be patient.
- ☐ I will be patient in frustrating situations because it's crucial to the formation of my character.
- ☐ I will not obsess over image management or self-promotion.
- ☐ I will devote my life to helping people meet God.
- ☐ I will be bold in sharing my faith.
- ☐ I will use worry as a prompt to pray and give it to God.
- ☐ I will worship God in the middle of my story, when I don't know how things will end.

THIS WEEK'S SERMON RECAP

C.S. Lewis once said, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point." The characters that fill Lewis's books are tested, and in each trial, we see this quote come to life. Yet the idea of courage, the path of the courageous, is not merely an idea found in books; rather, it is something we encounter in our lives.

The book of Daniel, like the books of Lewis, is filled with characters of courage that many of us relate to. Some people, like the characters in the books, believe God is leading them to more security, success, or comfort. Yet when we look at the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we discover God leads them to places of danger, pain, and destruction, places in which courage is the driving force. How many heroes of the Christian faith had easy lives? Maybe we need to stop praying for deliverance from the furnace and, instead, ask for God to be present as we, with courageous steps, walk into the fire.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a film, a story, or a TV show that you like that shows this theme of courage? What draws you to these stories? Do you resonate or align with a character in these stories?
2. Why do you think we talk about courage when discussing our faith lives? Have you ever had to be courageous in or for your faith?
3. In Daniel 2 King Nebuchadnezzar seemed to be on the verge of becoming a servant of God. Yet when we meet him in Daniel 3 he is placing himself in the god position. He builds a tall statue and then requires all the people in his land to worship this image. Every culture has 'gods' that desire worship. What in life pulls your attention away from your faith, what has the potential of becoming a god? Why is it easy to be drawn to these things that call for our attention?
4. Daniel 3 continues, the community gathers to worship and bow down to the statue. Three Israelites, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, are among them. When everyone bows to worship the three stand, as Matt notes, 'In the midst of a submitted nation, in an act that looks like either courageous faith or suicide, they refuse to bend the knee. They refuse to bow their heads.' What do you think the scene must have looked like? What do you think the others thought and felt when they saw the men standing?
5. Do you think you would have the courage to stand? What factors would cause you to worship like the others? What factors would draw you to stand?



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6. Read together Daniel 3:13-18. What word or words stand out to you in this reading? What does the response of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego teach you about their faith? What do you learn about God in this passage?
7. When Matt reflects on these verses he comes up with one simple idea, God is able. How do you see that reflected in these verses? How does that thought challenge you?
8. We see this idea of God is able throughout the Bible. What story comes to mind when you think about God is able? What does this teach you about the characteristics and action of God?
9. Why is it hard to believe that God is able? What has caused you to think that God isn't able?
10. We see God in this story, and in other stories in the Bible, rescue those who call on His name. God is able. How does walking with courage help us navigate our faith journey?



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NEXT STEPS FOR THIS WEEK (COMMIT TO GROW)

- ☐ I will honor God in my relationships, and not bow to the god of pleasure.
- ☐ I will honor God with my finances, and not bow to the god of security.
- ☐ I will honor God in my worship, and not bow to my self-interests.
- ☐ I will remain devoted to God even if he does not give me what I want.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Daniel 3:1-18
- Job 13:15
- Esther 4:16

Spiritual Practice of the Week

- ☐ Scripture Memorizing: the act of scripture memorization may be difficult for some of us, and yet in moments of distress or turmoil we can pull from our memories to remember who God is and what God has done. So, this week, spend some time reflecting on and memorizing a verse about courage. Try Daniel 3:18, or Job 13:15, or Lamentations 3:22-23.

Prayer Request(s)

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐