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✧ What Is Courage?

Imagine you're a superhero! It's up to you to save all girls everywhere from Captain Liar Pants. He spends his days shooting globs of sticky feelings at every single human he sees. These no-good, horrible, very bad emotions stick like glue. And the victims of Captain Liar Pants never even know what hits them! Before they realize it, they're trapped in a web of lies like a fly gets stuck in a spider's web.

Thankfully, you possess what just might be the world's best superhero gadget: the Megaphone of Truth! All you have to do is tie on your True Girl cape and blare the truth for all to hear.

Suddenly, the traps Captain Liar Pants has set for all girls everywhere have no power. One by one, the webs fall away, and the girls are rescued. A great shout of victory goes up into the air as Captain Liar Pants slinks off into the darkness.

Superpowers, daring acts, mortal combat, and damsels in distress! These are all things that come to mind when we think about the word *courage*. But let me ask you something: Is this what *real* courage looks like in *real* life?

Let's start zooming!



Zoom In & Out—Who? What? Where? When? Why?

Zoom waaaaayyy out with me and you will see that the timeline of Miriam’s story begins in the land of Egypt. The Israelites moved there during a famine. For many, many, many years God’s people called this place their home. In fact, they’d been there sooooo long that they kept having more and more babies. And now, there were a whole lot of them!

Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, didn’t like that one bit. So, he made them become his slaves. And still, they kept having babies!

So, Pharaoh came up with a horrific idea: “I’ll kill all the baby boys.”

Talk about villains! This guy was bad.

But, there were good people in this story too, and one of them was a very young girl named Miriam.

Wait, wait, wait!

Let’s slow it all down.

Before we start looking for the theme of courage in Miriam’s life, we need to be sure we understand what courage *is*. And what it *isn’t*.

What is REAL courage?



Dannah & Autumn

My daughter Autumn lived in China and spoke only Mandarin when we met and adopted her at the age of 14. She became a part of our family when she was a teenager! That’s kind of unusual, right?

Before we could bring her home, she had to stand ALONE before a judge in a Chinese court of law and declare that she wanted to be adopted. That was scary! Then she had to get onto an airplane with people who could not speak her language and fly far away from everyone and everything she knew and she felt

all ALONE. Boy, was that scary! Then she had to get onto an airplane with her new parents who could not speak her language and we arrived in the United States, she had to go ALONE (again) into a private room with a customs police officer and say that she wanted to enter this new country with a new family that she didn't even really know. When we arrived home, everything was new and . . . well, frightening. Even our enormous dog, Stormie, was probably a little bit scary.

The most courageous person I know is my daughter Autumn.

**Who's the most courageous person YOU know?
Write their name in the award below.**



What makes them so courageous? Write a few thoughts about that in the space below.

In the Bible, God tells us to have courage. But how can we be courageous if we don't know what it is in the first place?

True courage can be difficult to define and explain. And if we aren't careful, we will begin to believe the lies that the world tells us about it.

So, before I tell you what it *is*, let me tell you what it's *not*. Let's take a look at five lies you may be believing about courage. I'm no superhero, but I'm getting out my megaphone of truth, the Bible! And I hope God uses it to set you free.

LIE #1: COURAGE IS DOING SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY.

It's easy to think that in order to be courageous you have to do something extraordinary. According to the dictionary, *extraordinary* means "going beyond what is usual, regular, or customary."² This is just a fancy way of saying something is super special, exciting, or important.

▶ { **Extraordinary: super special, exciting, or important.** }

While doing something extraordinary for God can certainly be courageous, living a courageous life is actually much simpler than that. Let me explain.

Read Joshua 1:7. Circle the words "strong," "courageous," and "obey."



Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. (Joshua 1:7)



SPOILER ALERT: These words were spoken by God through Joshua to God's special people *after they had been saved from Egyptian slavery*. And yes, Miriam has a lot to do with that. You see, she is one important part of a Bible story that's probably familiar to you. What story? The one about Moses and the Exodus of God's people from Egypt! The verse above are the words God spoke long after they'd left their slavery, and it was finally time for them to go into a special piece of land that they called the Promised Land.

Based on Joshua 1:7, write the three things that God instructed the people of Israel to "be" as they went to the Promised Land.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

It probably doesn't surprise you that God's people had to be strong to live courageous lives. But what did you think when you read that they also needed to be careful to obey? When God tells someone in the Bible to be courageous, it often comes with this encouragement to be obedient.

But, for God's people, there was one problem . . . the land was full of giants! (Think Goliath-sized guys!) Yikes! *Who wouldn't be afraid of people like that?*

Courage requires obedience because, otherwise, we might chicken out. It looks more like faithful obedience to God than doing extraordinary things. If you want to be a girl of courage, start small. Choose to obey God in the little things, no matter how hard it may be.



THE TRUTH: Courage is living in faithful obedience.

Who knows? Those little acts of faithful obedience may just turn into something extraordinary!

Grab your megaphone of Truth! 

I spy a lie! Cross out the lie below and fill in the blank by writing the truth!

LIE: Courage is doing something extraordinary.

TRUTH: Courage is _____ in _____.

LIE #2: COURAGE IS SOMETHING SOME PEOPLE ARE BORN WITH.

When we see someone do courageous things, we are only seeing a little snapshot of their lives. Maybe you know a firefighter who rescued a child from a burning building. (That sounds courageous!) Or perhaps you have seen someone in your school stand up to a bully. (That's super brave!) It could even be that you have met my daughter Autumn. (She's my inspiration for courage!)

But when you hear about their courageous moment, you don't see all the moments that lead up to it. You don't see how they *learned* to be brave. You see, courage is learned over time as you watch others who are even more courageous than you!

Think back to who you wrote down as the most courageous person you know. What are some things you can learn from them?



Start there! Practice those habits, qualities, and behaviors. When you do, you'll be in training to be a girl of courage.

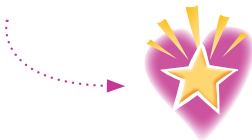
One thing that trains us to be brave is to study how Jesus lived and learn to be more like Him. After all, He was courageous enough to die for us! He also stood up for people who others treated badly and hung out with people who were not popular. As you imitate Jesus and others, you begin setting an example for everyone else who comes after you. Don't believe me?

Check out this verse. Use your favorite color to underline the word in it that describes you.



Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

People can learn from you even though you are young. Set an example not just in love, faith, and purity, but in courage!



THE TRUTH: Courage is a character quality you learn from Jesus and others who love Him.

I don't know about you, but I sure wasn't born courageous. And I'm still learning. It's OK if you are, too!



Grab your megaphone of Truth!

I spy a lie! Cross out the lie below and fill in the blank by writing the truth!

LIE: Courage is something some people are born with.

TRUTH: Courage is a _____ you
 _____ from _____ and others who _____.

LIE #3: COURAGE IS SOMETHING YOU FEEL.

In movies, courage is often presented as this magical moment of truth where the *feeling* of courage wells up inside a person before they go and do something heroic. But that’s not how courage works at all. Courage is a choice to take action in spite of what you feel! And I don’t know about you, but I often feel very afraid when I most need to be courageous.

In the space below, write about a time when you have felt afraid, but needed to have courage.



It’s OK to be afraid. It’s normal.

Do you remember those big giants I told you about? They made the Israelites feel fear, and lots of it! But check out these instructions God gave to them. (This may sound familiar, but it’s a different verse than the one we looked at earlier.)



So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

NOTE: Fear is not always bad. For example, if you’re walking on a trail in a forest and you see a bear, fear will help you make a wise choice. (Hopefully, you’ll walk the other way and stay a safe distance.) It can be difficult to know when fear is telling you useful information or just holding you back. So, promise me when you feel afraid you will tell an adult you trust!



The Israelites felt fear. That was their *feeling*. But God invited them to choose courage. And to be strong.

Look back at the verse and cross out the words "afraid" and "panic."

That's what we want to do in life. We want to live in such a way that we cancel fear that holds us back and live in courage. So, you can't listen to your feelings when they disagree with God's Word. The Israelites didn't need to listen to their feelings because God promised to go ahead of them. Better yet, He promised "not" to do two things.

What did God say He would not do?



Courage is choosing to trust God when you feel afraid. He will not leave you or fail you. Not only do you have to choose to believe that He will help you overcome your fear, but you also need to trust Him for the outcome.



THE TRUTH: Courage is a choice to trust God.

Courage is not the absence of feelings, but a *choice* we make to trust God.

Grab your megaphone of Truth! 

I spy a lie! Cross out the lie below and fill in the blank by writing the truth!

LIE: Courage is something you feel.

TRUTH: Courage is a _____ to _____.



LIE #4: COURAGE COMES FROM INSIDE YOU.

The world will constantly tell you that *you* are the source of your strength. “*Look inside yourself!*” people say. “*Courage comes from inside!*”

Well, I’m here to tell you that courage does *not* come from you. God *alone* is your strength. He is the one who gives you courage!

Let’s look at a chapter we will dive into later in our study, Exodus 15. The Israelites had just escaped slavery in Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. (If you don’t know that story yet, don’t worry because as I mentioned we’ll read all about it later.) When they made it safely to the other shore, the waters came crashing down, destroying Pharaoh and his army who were following close behind. God’s people looked back and they knew something for certain about courage: where it came from. In fact, they sang about it in a special song.



The LORD is my strength and my song;
he has given me victory. (Exodus 15:2a)

Who was the strength of Israel?



God was their strength in times of trouble. Because of the power of God, they had the courage to leave Egypt so that they could start a new life in the Promised Land!



THE TRUTH: Courage comes from God.

Courage does not come from within. Courage comes from God—the only source of strength!

Grab your megaphone of Truth! 

I spy a lie! Cross out the lie below and fill in the blank by writing the truth!

LIE: Courage comes from inside you.

TRUTH: Courage comes from _____.



THE GOOD & THE BAD ISRAELITES

Using the clues below, fill in four of the good and courageous choices the Israelites made. Then, fill in four of the sins and some of the mistakes they made while traveling in the wilderness. (Hint: Spaces are included in color.) If you need to, look up the Bible verses to find the word!

**UP AND DOWN:
Good and Courageous Choices**

- Followed the pillars of _____ faithfully. (Exodus 13:21–22)
- Crossed the _____. (Exodus 14:21)
- _____ were confident in the Promised Land. (Numbers 14:6–9)
- Marched around _____. (Joshua 6)

LEFT TO RIGHT: Sins and Mistakes

- Failing to trust God to enter the _____. (Numbers 14:1–4)
- Complaining over the lack of _____. (Exodus 17:2–3)
- Building and worshipping the _____. (Exodus 32:7–10)
- Attempting to collect _____ on the Sabbath. (Exodus 16:27–29)

For puzzle answers, go to page 110.