

Episode 028

The Call To Courageous Leadership

Introduction

- We chose the theme on Courageous Leadership because we believe that this is the season of increasing challenges for God's people. This is a season where leaders need to rise up courageously to face the increasing buffeting, the wave of pressures.
- But beyond that, the Kingdom of God needs courageous leaders to rise up to push the Kingdom forward. And it is not only for the few. It is for the many. In fact, it is for all.
- That is why my topic today is The Call To Courageous Leadership. God is calling his people, especially leaders to be courageous. For we leaders need to step out to resist waves of darkness opposing God's Church. We leaders need to push the frontiers of the Kingdom forward, not retreat.

Why Courage Is Godly

1. God is courageous

- The more I study God, the more I realised that God is not a conservative cautious being. He is not a sovereign being that ensures everything runs like clockwork with no possibility of anything going amiss.
- Just as God holds the perfect balance between being holy and loving, justice and compassion, principled and pragmatism. God is both sovereign and yet courageous in His choices. God takes creative, courageous, even audacious steps.



- Would you live down the road from a nuclear reactor? Nobody in their right mind would. But that is basically what God has done, for us. Our sun is one huge thermonuclear fusion device. Our earth is basically the distance of only 100 suns away. Imagine the average nuclear reactor core is between 2 to 4m in diameter. That means like you are living 200 to 400m down the road. Essentially it means you are living next door to a typical nuclear plant compound!
- How are we protected from all the radiation? Because the sun's outer layers actually converts its most harmful radiations, gamma radiation to less harmful forms. Our atmosphere, such as the ozone layer and earth's magnetic field protects us from most of the rest. Yet if any of these natural processes fail, we are toast!
- God is sovereign yet constrains His sovereignty in such a way to give His creatures freedom to choose. Freedom to choose means freedom to not choose God's way.
- That is how the archangel Lucifer could choose to rebel against God, as did a third of the angels.
- That is also why Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and fell into sin. Leading to all mankind falling into sin. Who would create a masterplan with such disastrous results?
- Because God knew that is the only way to have a people like Himself. Who could love, be holy, be compassionate, be wise and basically be like Christ. Is to have a people who can think for themselves and decide for themselves. It means every individual need to be able to make their own decisions. And ultimately it will determine their destiny.
- That is why God often encourages us to make choices! Sometimes He even pushes us to make choices. Have you noticed that often when God speaks to us, He offers us choices? Rather than simply tell us what to do?



- Parents raising children face this dilemma. We can try to control our children's life to keep it safe from their immaturity and lack of wisdom. But when we over-control and over-protect, they will lack the experience, the skills, the character and the maturity when they are finally on their own. Better to give them the freedom progressively and guide them to develop their experience, skills, character and maturity in the hope they will grow well.
- It has its risks. It can be emotional. It can be painful. But it can lead to the best outcomes for them.
- The end product as parents is to have children dependent on God, rather than us. Otherwise, we trap them with apron strings to us!
- God could have chosen a safe predictable route. But God wanted the best outcome, the highest outcome. That required the more dangerous route. Though it meant that the majority will not choose God nor His ways. God courageously chose the dangerous route.

2. Jesus is courageous

- The very life and mission of Jesus is a testimony of courage.
- It took courage for God to constrain Himself to become just a man. Almighty God of this universe, constraining Himself to be a fragile man. God who is infinite, squeezing Himself into a finite body. God who knows all things, limiting Himself into a finite mind of a man. Its crazy brave!
- The Son of God was humiliated, tortured and died on the cross. Absolutely radical. Unheard of. It takes great courage to allow yourself to go on such journey.
- The Son of God doing all this to redeem mankind from sin? By serving man? Turns everything upside down. Totally audacious!
- Jesus is our ultimate example of courage.



3. God calls leaders to be courageous

2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV) For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

- This may be a challenge for some of us. You may be naturally cautious, conservative, afraid of making the wrong steps. That is what I was. But I cannot be grow to be like Christ as long as I remain in that shell. I am limiting myself!
- Christ-followers love to embrace the nature and characteristics we like about Jesus. But we should include parts that we are uncomfortable with.
- Some Christ-followers who are inclined already to be audacious, they need to embrace other characteristics of Christ like being wise and considered.
- Leaders are meant to lead God's people into God's purposes. This includes being courageous.
- Leaders set the pace. Leaders who dare to be bold and courageous, develop courageous people. Leaders who are timid will nurture timid people.
- David had mighty men because he was a brave, courageous warrior. Who would have dared to face Goliath with nothing more than a sling and 5 stones?
- Who could have led Saul's army to victory against the Philistines? And army that previously was losing their battles?
- Will we be courageous leaders for Jesus?



Why Courage Matters For Leaders

1. Courage breaks open new frontiers

- Courage is always needed:

a. To initiate.

- There are many who are unwilling to think nor act beyond known acceptable norms. Because it is safer. Because it is familiar.
- John, an office manager stepped into the staff room for lunch and there was Mark quietly having his lunch. “I smell something burning.” He looked out the window and saw the next door factory burning. “Fire”, he exclaimed and frantically begin to call 000 for fire emergency. Turning towards Mark, “Didn’t you see the fire?” “Oh, it has been burning for the past 30 minutes”, Mark calmly replied as he munched his lunch. “But it is not in my job D to call 000. Besides, it is not even our company.”
- Lack of initiative can be problematic.
- Leaders need courage to take initiative, in their areas of responsibility. It takes courage to stick our neck outside the norm. To do things differently so that we may improve things.

b. To enlarge the boundaries.

- Isaiah 54:2 (ESV) “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.
- Enlarging boundaries is about becoming bigger and better at what we do well.
- When Daniel Kolenda took over Christ For All Nations from Reinhard Bonnke, he eventually expanded the way it worked to include many multiple evangelists on concurrent crusades. This way, they can cover a lot more ground evangelistically and at the same time raise a lot more quality evangelists! It is a daring move to entrust the ministry frontline to many others, instead of a few.



- Our church started with mostly university students in the main campuses in 2 universities. But we continued to push to expand the work. To reach new faculties, new nationalities, new campuses. My heart is to see that we grow our impact in all the university campuses in Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast eventually.
- Yet pushing the envelope meant sacrifices of sending leaders out to new campuses. Working out ways to support a pioneering group.
- Enlarging our boundaries means enlarging our problems. A bigger church usually means bigger problems. Enlargement means more resource issues, more organisational and management issues, more leadership issues. More people issues. It means we have to face growth pains. To grow us as leaders.
- We cannot be complacent and satisfied with where we are at. We should continually expand to reach people. Let's expand your boundaries.

c. To break new ground.

- Joshua 1:6 (NIV) Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.
- Joshua needed much courage to lead the Israelites into totally new territory. Totally unknown to them then. And they were very inexperienced in governing a nation as well as warfare.
- Breaking new ground is about new things, new ventures. It is more than just expansion. God looks for leaders who are willing to be courageous and step out to break new ground for God. Like church-planting. Establishing new ministries. Evangelising a new people group. Missions.
- To do what no one else around you is prepared to do yet.
- The Kingdom of God is to continually push into new frontiers. Pushing back the Kingdom of darkness.



2. Courage to overcome obstacles and setbacks

- Leaders will face many obstacles along the way. It takes courage not to quit against these obstacles.

God is looking for leaders with the courage to:

- Tackle unique challenges with God-glorifying solutions. Often easier to simply rely upon human solutions. It takes courageous leaders who seek solutions that honour God.
- Resolve difficult problems with God-led solutions. Some years ago God led us to go to Brisbane to plant the church. An opportunity opened for me to get a full-time job as a research scientist to bring us to Brisbane. But I was a full-time PhD student and according to regulations I was not allowed to accept the job. But God worked a miracle to get my student visa cancelled so that I could get a work visa.
- Confront impossible situations with God's miraculous intervention.
- In Exodus 14, when the Israelites were running away from Pharaoh's army, they were hemmed in between Red Sea and the mountains. There was no way out, but Moses did not give up on God. God delivered them by parting the Red Sea.

God is looking for leaders with the courage:

- To turn obstacles into opportunities. Our pastors in India and Africa face many light threatening problems. Flood, fire, famine, volcano, terrorists, etc. Yet in the midst of such major problems, they create opportunities to reach the lost!
- To use setbacks like springboards. To bounce back stronger. Moses was out-smarted by Pharaoh in their first confrontation. But Moses bounced back stronger with God's encouragement.
- To turn let-downs into lessons. I failed in my first 2 attempts at disciple-making but I resolved to learn and improve instead.
- All these problems are opportunities to grow through them. To develop our experience, our knowledge, our skills, our character, our maturity, our wisdom. To learn how to overcome them.



3. Courage breeds courage

- I noticed that courageous leaders tend to have courageous followers. Courageous leaders create a courageous culture. For courageous leaders show by example. How they faced their challenges. How they overcame it. They show by their perspectives, their attitudes, their perseverance.
- In the movie Top Gun: Maverick. The top fighter pilots had to practise how they would get into the enemy territory and destroy a uranium facility, against all the enemy's powerful air defences. But no one could make it. Even the commander did not believe it could be done. Until Tom Cruise's Maverick took the matter into his own hands and proved it could be done. When he led those pilots, they rose up to the occasion and did it!
- Courageous leaders will lift the courage level amongst their followers.
- David inspired men who became mighty warriors (2 Sam 23). Warriors who faced incredible odds yet did not flinch, not run. But overcame with great skill. Imagine warriors who faced up to 800 soldiers and killed them all!
- I gained courage also by learning from others. Other leaders I observed. Other leaders I read about.
- The late Rick Seward of Victory Family Centre movement shared with me that as they were planting churches in Uganda, war broke out. Many foreigners were running out of the country. But God told him to go in. So they sent in people during the war. They even had to charter a plane to secretly fly in to support the churches there. Because of their commitment to the church, they were trusted. From those foundations they were later able to plant 1000s of churches through Uganda. When Rick put out a call for missionaries, a young lady volunteered. He told her it was going to be dangerous and she may not return. She said she understood but God had called her.





- Will you set your heart to learn to be more courageous from other courageous leaders?
- I challenge you not to just be inspired to match our courage. Step on our shoulders and be more courageous than we have been. Allow God to lead you on that journey!

Conclusion

- Be courageous because God seeks it. Be courageous because God's Kingdom requires it.
- Courage to climb greater heights, to accomplish greater exploits for God.



Discussion Questions

These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. Does knowing that God Himself is courageous, inspire you? Discuss.
2. What are your thoughts about the statement “Leaders are meant to lead God’s people into God’s purposes. This includes being courageous.” Discuss.
3. What is key point has impacted you the most in this lesson? Discuss.

Actionable Steps

Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. The willingness to break open new frontiers is reflective of courage. What are some specific steps you could take in terms of initiative, expanding boundaries or breaking new ground in your life or ministry? Break it down to some measurable steps.
2. Are there some obstacles or setbacks you are currently facing? What courageous steps can you take to deal with it? Map out a plan.
3. Would you like to have courageous followers? What are some inspiring example of courage do you need to live out? Identify a number of these and act upon it by God’s grace.





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