

## I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to week 4 in our series called Character Tour. We're talking about positive character qualities we need to develop and qualities we want our kids to develop. On the weekend I preach about these qualities and then on Thursday, we reinforce these qualities at our Six Flags Family Ministry night. So it's been a spiritually full summer and I'm glad you're here. Thank you for being here today.
- B. You're not here by accident. You're not here because someone talked you into it. You're here because God has been tugging at your heart; God has been drawing you in, God has been reeling in the line and here you are. God brought you here. God wants to meet you, teach you, encourage you, and lift you up today. I'm glad you're here.
- C. Today I want to speak with you on the topic of courage. And for our case study, we're going to end in the book of Daniel, but we won't start there. We're going to start in 2 Kings 6:24. As we go, I want to give you some practical principles about courage, and you might want to take notes, thereby becoming a spiritual giant.

## II. The Siege

- A. *24 Sometime later, however, King Ben-hadad of Aram mobilized his entire army and besieged Samaria. 25 As a result there was a great famine in the city. After a while even a donkey's head sold for two pounds of silver, and a cup of dove's dung cost about two ounces of silver (2 Kings 6:24, 25, NLT).*
  - 1. I don't even want to imagine what you might do with a cup of dove's dung. But scholars aren't sure what the word means; it might mean some kind of vegetable.
  - 2. Here's the setup for story: Samaria is under siege.
  - 3. In a siege, an army surrounds a city, and pitches camp, and stays there for as long as it takes. It's like fighting in super slow motion. Nobody fires any bullets, or shoots arrows or throws spears.
  - 4. A siege is a war of attrition. Can the attacking army wear you down until you surrender?
  - 5. In a siege, you die by inches and finally give up.
  - 6. Samaria is under siege.
  - 7. And possibly so are you. Nobody's attacking you, literally. No weapons are being fired. But bad junk has pitched a bunch of tents around your life and bad junk is wearing you down.
    - a) A marriage that falls short of God's ideals.
    - b) Or you're dating life is terrible, and there are no good men or no good women for you to date.
    - c) Maybe your relationships are suddenly weird, and you don't know why.
    - d) Financial problems that you can't solve
    - e) The IRS is coming to get you.
    - f) Or your grades are too low for the scholarship.
    - g) And the career you spent a lifetime training for isn't working out.
    - h) For some, your body is letting you down, slowly, gradually turning against you
    - i) Or your mind is failing, and it scares you.
    - j) And then, there's the economy.
  - 8. Bad junk has pitched a bunch of tents around you and every direction you look, you feel stuck. You're under siege, and it's sucking the life out of you.
  - 9. Samaria is under siege.
- B. *3 Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die?" (2 Kings 7:3, NKJV).*
  - 1. Most of us connect courage with doing brave stuff in extreme circumstances. And that's true. When a criminal grabs a woman's purse in Winco, and you jump on the guy and hold him till the cops come, that's courage.
  - 2. Courage rises up against a frontal attack. Yes?
  - 3. But there's a deeper courage that most of us need most of the time.
  - 4. Let's draw a mental picture:
  - 5. Most of us live two lives.
  - 6. There's the life we're living now; that's the first one.
  - 7. But there's another life inside us. That's the life of our dreams, the childhood fantasies that never played out, and the hopes that fizzled. Those dreams, I believe come from God. There's a whole vision of life implanted in your heart, your vision and your destiny. Your hopes and dreams. God's call on your life: that's the second life. It's the un-lived life buried in your soul.
  - 8. Late at night have you ever experienced a FLASH of a vision of the work you might accomplish, or the person you might become? Have you ever imagined what you might become?
  - 9. Most of us live two lives: the one we're living, and the one we only dream of living.
  - 10. In between stands a huge barrier. I want to give it a name. We're going to call it the RESISTANCE.
  - 11. The Resistance camps around the accidental life you're living and says, "You'll never get out of here."
  - 12. THE RESISTANCE is the most toxic force in the universe. It causes more unhappiness than any ten social ills put together. It stunts your growth and makes you fly lower than God designed you for.
  - 13. It comes from inside you. It's part of your Inner Mess. And it is happy to see you fritter your life away halfway doing stuff that half matters with only half a heart.

14. THE RESISTANCE hovers like a cloud over every exciting adventure God puts in your path, and tries to scare you off. It is uncreative. It lacks initiative. It takes no character to give in to the resistance because fear takes the path of least resistance—over and over till you're dead.
  15. "And it came to pass that THE RESISTANCE came and besieged the child of God."
  16. Meet the Bible's most unlikely heroes: Four lepers sitting at the entrance of the city gates. They're outside the city gates because they have leprosy. This disease made them outcasts. Their culture considered them unclean. They weren't allowed in the city. Outsiders. Excluded. Unclean. Unworthy. Unloved.
  17. Sitting at the gates, they ask one of those questions that changes your life. Have you ever asked a question like that?
  18. Margi and I asked that question in Chicago. I had planted a church in the city. I had been the senior pastor for 16 years. I loved the church, the people, the ministry, the place, and never figured I'd leave that church. It was my baby.
  19. And then Margi and I felt a deep question percolating to the surface: Is God calling us to the next chapter of our lives? And he was and here we are.
  20. Have you ever asked a question that changed your life? One of the most courageous things you will ever do is ask yourself big, scary questions.
  21. The lepers did.
  22. They asked, "Why should we sit here waiting to die?"
  23. It's a good question, a life-changing question. They are losing their lives inch by inch by inch, day after day, ebbing away, disappearing.
  24. The Resistance is winning. The Resistance is defining them. Not God's call. Not their identity as God's people. Not their hopes and dreams. The Resistance rules their lives.
  25. This is where courage comes in.
  26. Sometimes, you gotta shake things up.
  27. That's where you ask the scary big question. Here's their answer.
- c. 4 *"If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender [lit. fall] to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die" (2 Kings 7:4, NKJV).*
1. They have three choices:
    - a) Stay here, that's death.
    - b) Go backwards into the city, but that's death too.
    - c) Go forwards toward the enemy, but that looks like death, too, though it might not be.
  2. How much courage does it take to stay put? None.
  3. How much courage does it take to go backwards? None.
  4. How much courage does it take to move toward the big scary monster at the end of the story? Courage.
  5. It's one kind of courage that makes you run to help a kid out of a burning car, but it's another kind of courage that makes you stand up against an invisible, internal, stealthy, blood-sucking tick called the RESISTANCE.
  6. The biggest obstacle standing between your two lives is never the external one; it's the internal one. It's your own unwillingness to step out of today's comfort zone in order to lay hold of tomorrow's dreams.
  7. The RESISTANCE keeps you stuck in a siege mentality.
  8. And yes, you might fail. You might go down in flames. But aren't you going to do the same thing in slow motion if you just stay put?
  9. This is really relevant and big in my life these days. As you know, I'm a pastor. And I draw my paycheck from our church. And we're in the process of building a new building.
  10. That, to me, is scary. It's big-time risky. I get headaches when I think about it, and pray about it, and talk about it. When our board goes over numbers and plans and all that, my brain screams.
  11. I'm just being honest.
  12. But I can't go away from it. Every time I stand in that lobby and see people leave our church because the building is too crowded, I get sad.
  13. The status quo is not acceptable. You have a team of pastors and elders and leaders in this church that simply believes the status quo is not acceptable. Why sit here till we die? We can't sit still. We can't go backwards. To do that is to die; it's to give in to the RESISTANCE.
  14. But moving forward into building is scary.
  15. Staying alive involves walking straight into a fear. What is your fear? Where are you stuck?
    - a) It may be getting saved. You blank out about the whole subject. You go dumb, you daydream, you get tired, and you go analytical.
    - b) Getting back to your husband or wife.
    - c) Or having children or pursuing adoption.
    - d) Or starting new relationships—you have every excuse in the books.
    - e) Or serving God.

- f) Or fighting the cancer instead of giving in.
  - g) Or changing careers, or going to school, or seminary.
  - h) Or reaching out to a hurting neighbor.
16. You will find your life by moving into what scares you.
17. What's the worst that can happen? The lepers say, "We will only die." Okay. Then we go to heaven. I'm good with that. At least we'll enter heaven having attempted great things for God, by God.
- D. *5 And they rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one was there. 6 For the LORD had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses--the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!" 7 Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact--their tents, their horses, and their donkeys--and they fled for their lives. 8 And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid them; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried some from there also, and went and hid it (2 Kings 7:5-8, NKJV).*
1. Fear is a sign of something BIG coming up your life.
  2. So, to get a life, you have to feel your feelings, want your wants, and bring to light your deepest desires. You are most alive, when you are most feeling. Fear, scared, anger is better than being numb all your life. At least you're alive; at least you're not bored.
  3. Walking into your fear leads to 5 new discoveries of grace.
  4. First discovery: your fear makes sense. You might get killed going to the Arameans! The importance of honoring your fear. You do not conquer fear by saying: don't be afraid. By saying, there's nothing to be afraid of. Like a scared 7-year-old kid. Never say, "There's nothing to be afraid of" because there's plenty to be afraid of. Just because the negative factors are logical, doesn't mean they have to be determinative.
  5. Second discovery: God is greater than what scares you and God is on your side. The throne of God, exalted, majestic—He is for you.
    - a) *12 Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed out the mountains and the hills? 13 Who is able to advise the Spirit of the LORD? Who knows enough to be his teacher or counselor? 14 Has the LORD ever needed anyone's advice? Does He need instruction about what is good or what is best? 15 No, for all the nations of the world are nothing in comparison with Him. They are but a drop in the bucket, dust on the scales. He picks up the islands as though they had no weight at all. 16 All Lebanon's forests do not contain sufficient fuel to consume a sacrifice large enough to honor Him. All Lebanon's sacrificial animals would not make an offering worthy of our God. 17 The nations of the world are as nothing to Him. In His eyes they are less than nothing--mere emptiness and froth (Isaiah 40:12-17, NLT).*
  6. Third discovery: treasure and life you never expected. The treasure of loving relationships; of satisfying career; of a new arena of study; of a new small group that you've had all excuses to avoid; of a friendship; of that investment—whatever—this is grace! And this kind of grace can only come by overcoming the RESISTANCE between the life you have and the life you want.
  7. Fourth discovery: others benefit from your courage. [*9 Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household" (2 Kings 7:9, NKJV).*] The whole city is fed. Your family, your friends, your neighbors, the people you work with, and your spouse.
  8. Fifth discovery: spiritual lepers get GRACE! They not only get fed, but they carry off gold and silver and treasures they never imagined and the very people stuck outside the city gate become heroes. Who did the work? God did. Who scared away the enemy? God did. Who set the table with food and treasures and the wealth of a nation? God did. All the lepers had to do was overcome the resistance and go get it.
- E. Most people live two lives: the lives we're living today, and the life we dreamed of and maybe gave up on. IN between stands the Resistance.
- F. And the only way to get past it is COURAGE.

### III. God and Courage

- A. Where does courage come from?
- B. There's a guy in the Bible who knows the secret and he states it in Daniel 11:32.
- C. As a teenager, Daniel was taken hostage to Babylon, lost his family, friends, home, and familiar places. Only 3 other young guys believed his faith and worshipped his God. Daniel showed courage.
  1. When he refused the king's meals, and stayed true to what God told him to eat.
  2. When he interpreted the king's dreams.
  3. When he prayed to his God in spite of the king's laws against it.
  4. When he was thrown into a den of lions, and walked among them as God shut their mouths, and he was around 80 years old when that happened.

- D. Don't you think Daniel knew a little about courage? He gives what I think is the clearest secret of showing the kind of courage you need to break free from the siege mentality.
1. *"But the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits (Daniel 11:32b, NKJV).*
- E. There's the secret. It's the people who know their God. When God is little, courage is little. When courage is little, God is little. I can read your theology in your courage.
- F. Last week, we talked about faith. When you enlarge God, faith happens. Same with courage, when you enlarge God, courage happens.
- G. How? How do you enlarge your God?
- H. Three steps
1. Understand God in Scripture.
    - a) We start here. We are people of a book. Not because it makes us smart, but because it is the revelation of our God. We know him as a Trinity, a 3-in-1 community that means that though our God is alone, He is never lonely. The Father, loves the Son, loves the Spirit. This is revealed in the Bible.
    - b) The study of God is called theology, or theology proper, and I think it's the most practical thing you can study.
    - c) *Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39, NKJV).*
    - d) When it comes to knowing God, there will never be a substitute for the Bible.
    - e) Because those who know their God will be strong and do exploits. But there are a whole lot of people who know the Bible and they're still spiritual chickens. That's because there's a second step.
  2. Experience God under pressure
    - a) You know how a laminator works, right? Heat and pressure.
    - b) It's one thing to memorize the attributes of God or the names of God, and I'm all for that.
    - c) But it's another thing to turn to God under pressure and heat, and act as if God is sovereignty, holiness, righteousness, love, eternal life, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, immutability, and truth.
    - d) When you know God as Jehovah Jireh because He's just given you back your son, you know your God.
    - e) That's when you know your God. That's when you go beyond head knowledge to heart knowledge. That's when the most important thing about is what comes to mind when you think about God.
  3. Manifest God through love
    - a) *5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:5, NKJV).*
    - b) If God's love isn't flowing thru you to the world, you don't know your God.
  4. When you manifest God through love; when you experience God under pressure, when you understand God in Scripture, you know your God.
  5. The people who know their God will be strong and do exploits.
  6. The people who know their God will overcome the resistance. The people who know their God will break through the siege lines and will show the world another shining example of the courage of Jesus, living in them.
  7. God is the source of your courage.
  8. That's my prayer for you.