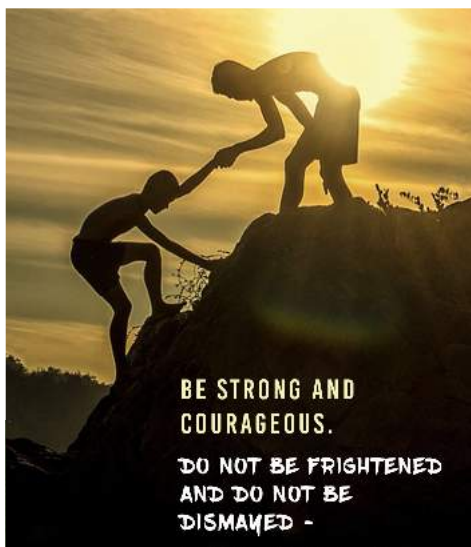


Courage In Crisis



Can one person make a difference? Can one person change the direction of an entire family tree? Can one person stand up in the face of fear, hardship, and peer pressure, and lead a people into a whole new way of life? We are not the only ones to wrestle with such questions.

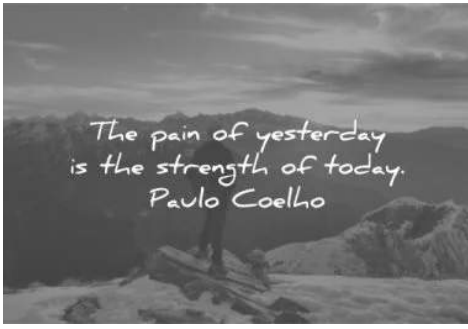
We live in a world where crisis comes our way, irrespective of how we try to navigate the bumpy roads of our lives. Bad luck, good luck, gloom, doom and with no regard to fairness. Any of us can find ourselves losing our jobs, the breakdown of a relationship, bankruptcy, unpleasant and challenging times, or as a carer to sick person.

And sometimes, no matter how much we might try, there's nothing we can do to prevent or reduce the problem. In a worst case scenario, finding no solutions and no respite.

But that doesn't mean we are defeated or helpless. No matter how bad the situation we are about to deal with, there are things that we can do to become more resilient and that will help us face the impending storms of life.

I hereby command you:

Be strong and courageous;
do not be frightened or
dismayed, for
the Lord your God is with
you wherever you go
(Joshua 1:9)



Reflective Journaling:-

- 1.How do you define courage?
- 2.What does courage look and sound like?
- 3.Who are the examples of living with courage that you want to emulate – why do these people stand out to you?
- 4.Notice, without being self-critical, how you cope with crisis?
- 5.What do you use to deal with pain - is it alcohol, busyness, binging, Netflixing, exercising, fits of rage, shopping, crying, hiding and isolating yourself from others? Is this working for you?
- 6.How did the early Israelites cope with their crisis? Trust in their leaders? Trust in God? Complain? Flee? Run away? Ride the storm and wait for the calm?

Abuse and Forsaken

The Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness for years. They didn't want to be there. Yet, there they were, wandering from place to place. The wilderness is a harsh and difficult place. No one wants to be out in the desert. Not knowing where your next meal is going to come from, where you're going to find your next pair of shoes, where you're going to lay your head down at night. Yet, there they were, wandering in the desert. Having meandered from place to place for years the Israelites were now finally standing at the edge of the Promised Land. Moses, their experienced wilderness guide, had just passed away. Standing between them and their long hoped for future was a wall of water that was about a mile wide, the mighty Jordan River. If that wasn't bad enough, based upon previous scouting reports, the land ahead was full of mighty warriors and fortified cities. What would they do?

400 years earlier, God had made a promise to their ancestor Abraham that His descendants would receive this land as an inheritance, as a homeland. In time, Abraham's grandson, Jacob, and his family went to Egypt during a famine. Eventually, the Egyptians became afraid of them as they grew in numbers and so they enslaved them. While in captivity, their Egyptian taskmasters abused them and made their work hard for them and so, they cried out to God for help but help seemed long in coming. "God, help us! Deliver us!" they cried.

In due time, God sent Moses, who, under the mighty hand of God brought them out of slavery. They then began their trek to the Promised Land. However, on their way they began to grumble. With Moses now dead, Joshua had been chosen to fill his shoes. What will Joshua do? What will the people do? Do they even dare dream of better days and try to possess the land?



Back at the edge of the Promised Land, face-to-face with a wall of water, a land of warriors, and powerful cities, what would Joshua do? Would he abandon the wilderness of his past and embrace the hope of a better future? Or, would he give in to the negativity and rebellion of those around him? Or would he 'abandon ship'. Just then, as Joshua was wrestling with all of these fears and emotions and insecurities, the Lord spoke and said to him, "My servant is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and this people, into the land that I am giving them, to the Israelites ... No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you ... I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord you God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1: 2, 5, 9)

"Be strong and courageous." What does that mean? The word *courage*, as it's used here in the Bible, means "resolute." In other words, instead of being weak and wishy-washy, God was calling Joshua to be strong and steadfast. In particular, God was calling Joshua to be resolute in following the Lord's directions for living. The Lord declared, "Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful." (Joshua 1:7-8) The key to Joshua's success was for him to be rooted in God's word.

He was going to have to "meditate" on it day and night. In Old Testament times, meditation involved two things: First, it meant to focus on God himself, His works, and His rules for living. Second, meditation was an activity that was done aloud, not just inside one's head. In other words, if Joshua was going to succeed, he needed to focus on God, His faithfulness, His instructions for holy living, and then always have God's Word upon his tongue. Instead of grumbling, and complaining, Joshua was to meditate on God and His ways. If Joshua would do that, he would be successful and God would be with Joshua, "wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). So, what would Joshua do? What would the Israelites do? Would they trust God? Would they take a step of faith? Would they leave their old ways behind for a better future?

According to Scripture, in spite of all the challenges ahead, and fears, and doubts, Joshua chose to trust God and His promises and so they took a step into the uncharted water. When they did, the mighty Jordan River, which was at flood stage, parted and they crossed over on dry ground. As they took a step of faith and trusted God, the Lord provided them with one miracle after another and they took possession of the land. Be strong and courageous! We all need courage to face the future. But, to be clear, courage is not all that superhero stuff you see on TV and in the movies. Courage is facing life's challenges with the help and direction of God. Courage is being resolute in the face of great trials. Courage is being strong and steadfast in the ways of God, even if you're the only one! By the grace of God, we can make a difference! We can change the whole direction of our family tree! We can stand up in the face of fear, hardship, and peer pressure, and lead others into whole new way of life! What God said to Joshua, He's saying to us, *"You're not alone, every step of your life, I'll be there. I've not forgotten you. I am with you. You need only to be strong and courageous. Follow me, keep my word, and I will bless you wherever you go."*