SESSION 1

Courage to Obey the Lord's Instructions

Consider It

God's instructions for our lives often take us out of our comfort zone and into a place where we need to rely on Him to get the job done. We follow Him not just into the green pastures but also through the valley of the shadow of death (see Psalm 23). Fear is a natural response to such times of risk, and it is only through courage that we can press forward and obey God even when there are good reasons to be afraid. In this first session, we'll put ourselves into the shoes of the Israelites in the Bible and look at the risk God asked them to take to secure the Promised Land. We will look at the people's fears and reactions and see that the courage to obey God is firmly founded in the promises of God.

1. ***What thoughts and images come to mind when you hear the word "courage"? What sorts of individuals or professions do you think of?***

2. ***Do you relate to the idea of needing courage in your life? Why or why not?***

Experience It

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Hear Me saying *Peace*, *be still* to your restless heart. No matter what happens, *I will never leave you or forsake you*. Let this assurance soak into your mind and heart, until you overflow with Joy. *Though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea*, you need not fear!

"The media relentlessly proclaim bad news: for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. A steady diet of their fare will sicken you. Instead of focusing on fickle, ever-changing news broadcasts, tune in to the living Word—the One who is always the same. Let Scripture saturate your mind and heart, and you will walk steadily along the path of Life. Even though you don't know what will happen tomorrow, you can be absolutely sure of your ultimate destination. *I hold you by your right hand, and afterward I will take you into Glory*."

—From *Jesus Calling*, April 20

3. ***Jesus calmed a storm by saying, "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39 NKJV), to the wind and waves. How easy is it for you to be at peace in your heart? What helps you? What gets in the way?***

4. ***How does tuning into the Word of God give us courage in the midst of the media's constant barrage of bad news?***

> "Be willing to go out on a limb with Me. If that is where I am leading you, it is the safest place to be. Your desire to live a risk-free life is a form of unbelief. Your longing to live close to Me is at odds with your attempts to minimize risk. You are approaching a crossroads in your journey. In order to follow Me wholeheartedly, you must relinquish your tendency to play it safe.
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> "Let Me lead you step by step through this day. If your primary focus is on Me, you can walk along perilous paths without being afraid. Eventually, you will learn to relax and enjoy the adventure of our journey together. As long as you stay close to Me, My sovereign Presence protects you wherever you go."
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> —From *Jesus Calling*, December 9

5. ***When has Jesus asked you to "go out on a limb" with Him? What was the result?***

6. ***Do you tend to play it safe, or are you fairly comfortable with taking risks? What motivates you to take risks that line up with God's leading?***

Study It

Read aloud the following passage from Deuteronomy 31:1–8. God had called Moses to confront Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Moses had gone out on a limb and obeyed God, but when the people refused to conquer the Promised Land, he was forced to wander with them for forty years in the desert. The events in this passage take place toward the end of this time, when the people were finally ready to enter the Promised Land. God had appointed Joshua to lead the invasion, and Moses, nearing the end of his life, was offering them some final words of instruction.

[1] Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: [2] "I am
now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead
you. The Lord has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.' [3] The
Lord your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy
these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land.
Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the Lord said. [4] And the
Lord will do to them what he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the
Amorites, whom he destroyed along with their land. [5] The Lord will
deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have com-
manded you. [6] Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified
because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never
leave you nor forsake you."

[7] Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of
all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people
into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and
you must divide it among them as their inheritance. [8] The Lord himself
goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake
you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

7. *What did the Israelites need courage to do? What did Joshua need courage to do?*

8. *On what promises was their courage based? Do those promises apply to you? Explain.*

9. *What do you need courage to do? If you are a believer, how can God's promises help you in this situation?*

10. *Take two minutes of silence to reread the passage, looking for a sentence, phrase, or even one word that stands out as something Jesus may want you to focus on in your life. If you're meeting with a group, the leader will keep track of time. At the end of two minutes, you may share your word or phrase with the group if you wish.*

11. *Read the passage aloud again. Take another two minutes of silence, prayerfully considering what response God might want you to make to what you have read in His Word. If you're meeting with a group, the leader will again keep track of time. At the end of two minutes, you may share what came to you in the silence if you wish.*

12. *What was it like for you to sit in silence with the passage? Did soaking it in like this help you understand it better than before?*

13. *If you're meeting with a group, how can the members pray for you? If you're using this study on your own, what would you like to say to God right now?*

Live It

At the end of each session you'll find suggested Scripture readings for spending time alone with God during five days of the coming week. This week, the theme of each reading will focus on how you can be courageous when God asks you to take a leap of faith with Him. Read each passage slowly, pausing to think about what is being said. Rather than approaching this as an assignment to complete, think of it as an opportunity to meet with the One who loves you most. Use any of the questions that are helpful.

Day 1

Read Deuteronomy 31:23. What does God tell Joshua to do?

Jesus Calling®

BIBLE STUDY SERIES

LIVING WITH GOD'S COURAGE

Sarah Young

Bible study and discussion questions written by Karen Lee-Thorp

What promise does God give him?

In Deuteronomy 31:6–7, Moses had instructed the people to "be strong and courageous" because the Lord promised to be with them. Why do you think God repeats this instruction and promise to Joshua in verse 23?

Does the repetition help you? If so, how?

Tell God anything that stands in the way of your being strong and courageous, and seek His help in overcoming those obstacles.

Day 2

Read Psalm 89:1–4. What reasons for courage does the psalmist offer?

How would you define faithfulness?

Why is faithfulness a quality of God that you should value highly?

When have you experienced God's faithfulness toward you personally?

Use these verses as a springboard for your own prayer to God, praising Him for who He is and what He does.

Day 3

Read Psalm 89:5–8. The psalmist speaks of God's faithfulness two more times in this passage. Why do you think the biblical writer repeatedly spoke of this characteristic of God?

The psalmist also says there is no one like God anywhere (see verse 6). Why is that a reason for every son or daughter of God to have courage?

When you think of God as mighty, how does that affect you?

When you think of God as being "surrounded" by faithfulness, how does that affect you?

Choose one of the qualities of God depicted in these verses and praise Him for it.

Day 4

Read Psalm 89:9–13. How does the psalmist depict God's power?

What impact do these words have on your own courage?

Where do you see God's power at work in the world around you and in your own life?

Where do you long to see more of God's power?

Turn your longing into a prayer that leaves room for God to work in surprising ways and not according to your agenda or timetable.

Day 5

Read Psalm 89:14–18. Why are you grateful for God's righteousness and justice?

When have you been aware of God's Presence with you this week?

How will you rely on God as your strength today?

What gives you courage right now?

Today, thank God for His commitment to justice, for His Presence, and for His Strength.