

Courage and Calling

...courage is rooted in the confidence that we know ourselves and that we have no desire to be anyone other than who God has made us to be. –Gordon Smith

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity but of power, love and self-discipline.
2 Timothy 1:7

1. How can you be certain that you are courageous? What types of characteristics will define us when we are courageously being who God has created us to be?

Courage begins with honesty about our fears ... Acknowledging our fears does not in itself somehow make us courageous or justify our actions. But it is a start. When we acknowledge our fears, we can ask if they are legitimate; we can ask if we are really living in faith, hope, and love, or whether our fears are nothing but rationalizations for actions that are less than noble. –Gordon Smith

We are afraid of that which we cannot control; so we continue to draw in the boundaries around us, to limit ourselves to what we can know and understand. Thus we lose our human calling because we do not dare to be creators, co-creators with God. –Madeleine L'Engle

2. What aspect of your calling are you afraid of? What is the true root of your fear in this area? Do you fear failure or success...or perhaps something else?

Vocational integrity is a matter of both courage and calling, of having the courage to accept the risk that inevitably comes with embracing our vocation ... When we feel the loss of influence and significance, it takes courage to let go and accept that our role will be very different. But only in letting go, the critical act of courage, do we become a source of blessing and wisdom. When we fearfully cling to our influence, we lose it; when we have the courage to let our influence go, we gain it. –Gordon Smith

3. What motivates you more, your fear or your courage? Why? How is it dangerous to be motivated by fear (and what are the consequences/repercussions)?

Psalm 23:4-6 ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

4. What seems to define David's courage here in Psalm 23? Even though he went through many trials, including being chased by Saul for many years, to what extent has David learned not to allow fear to influence his thinking and behavior?

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Somehow, ironically, a biblical fear of God gives us, at the same time, a sense of joy. I defy any other fear to do the same. –Ed Young Jr.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

5. What does it mean to fear God? How is this form of fear different from other kinds of fear, and how do love and joy aid us in defining this distinction?

Exodus 14:13-14 ¹³Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

6. What does "standing firm in the Lord" look like tangibly and how does it start to help uproot our fears?

Being still, or standing firm, doesn't mean we do nothing while we wait on God. Faith requires action. As we trust God with the future, we need to be taking the next step along the path. Too many times we are overwhelmed with this future because we try to see too far ahead. All that God requires of us is to take the next step. We know that ultimately he holds the future in his hands. But he reveals only what we need to know, where we need to go, one footfall of faith at a time. –Ed Young Jr.

Exodus 14:15-16 ¹⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.

7. What is keeping you from taking the "next step?" How can faith, wisdom and courage help identify the next step in your calling and also prime your determination to take it?

There is perhaps no more powerful ministry that we can have to one another than the ministry of encouragement. With it we grant to one another that quality, that virtue, that intangible inner strength that enables us to rise above the fears that so easily cripple us. When we offer encouragement we enable one another to have the courage that is needed for this day, for this hour, for this moment. With encouragement we can do what we are called to do, we can follow our conscience, we can say yes to the Scriptures when the apostle says that we have not been given a spirit of fear. –Gordon Smith

8. Does your art contribute to the ministry of encouragement? How so? How might your art address the conquering of fear?

Discussion Guidelines:

1. Allow everyone a chance to speak. If you are bursting with ideas and tend to share a lot – great – but occasionally pause a bit before you go, sometimes the quieter ones are just waiting for their chance and they need a little space before they go.
2. Respect the opinions of others, and refrain from giving advice.
3. Keep discussion focused on the material being studied.
4. Maintain the confidentiality of personal things shared within the group.

The Haven mission statement is:

To empower artists to influence the culture for Christ.