

# Courage in Crisis

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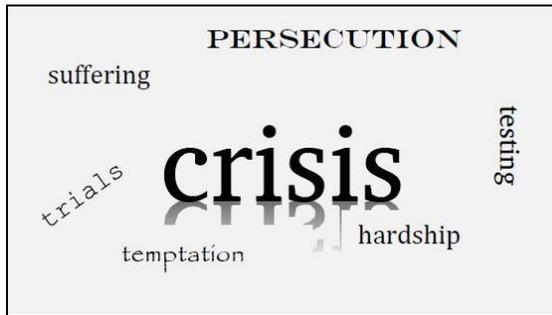
*“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,  
knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.  
And let endurance have its perfect result,  
that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*  
James 1:2-4

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## Courage in Crisis

The dictionary defines **crisis** as:

*“a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger,  
a time when a difficult or important decision must be made.”*



Though the Bible doesn't actually use the word crisis, it has a lot to say about times of intense difficulty, trouble, and danger. It has a lot to say about times when crucial decisions must be made. So, for the purpose of this study, we are going to lump biblical terms like suffering, hardship, persecution, testing, trials, and temptations into our theme word, "crisis."

We rarely expect or plan for a crisis in our lives. When we mark our calendars, we don't mark certain days when a crisis will hit, because they are sudden and unexpected. Yet, God's Word warns us to expect crisis as a normal part of the Christian life!

### Consider 1Pe 4:12–13

*“Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing ...”* (emphasis added)

- Crises are a normal part of life.
- Crises are designed or allowed by God for our testing—to teach us about His character and His deliverance.
- God uses crises to draw us closer to Him.
- Crises are a part of sharing the sufferings of Christ—therefore, a cause for rejoicing.

We have all faced various kinds of crises in the past, and we will certainly face them again in the future. Some of us may be in the middle of a crisis even today. They come in many different shapes, sizes, and degrees. Most crises occur in a sudden and unsuspecting way and can last for either a short or long time. Some crises call on us to make decisions and take action; others are things we can only handle and endure. Sometimes, the consequences of a crisis are only momentary; while at other times, the consequences are long term and life changing. But one thing we know, a crisis is unpleasant—and a crisis calls for courage!

The dictionary defines **courage** as:

*“the ability and willingness to confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation. Physical courage is courage in the face of physical pain, hardship, death, or threat of death, while moral courage is the ability to act rightly in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal, or discouragement.”*

In cowboy terms, *“Courage is being afraid, and saddling up anyway!”*

Unlike the word “crisis,” the Bible uses the word “courage” many times. Its pages are filled with one example after another of men and women who faced times of crisis with the courage that comes from faith. God faithfully led them in victory through the power of His helping hand and the wisdom of His Word. The same spiritual resources that prevailed in times of crisis for our spiritual ancestors are available to us in Jesus Christ. Let’s look to the Bible for courage in times of crisis.

1. In times of crisis ...

**CONSIDER** it all joy!

*“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”* Jam 1:2–6

*“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”* Jam 1:12

James is writing this epistle to Christian Jews who have been dispersed, or scattered, due to persecution. They are facing a time of severe crisis. From the very start, this passage bluntly challenges the human perspective of suffering with divine eternal perspective.

When we think of joyous occasions, we tend to think of times of celebration—like a birthday, wedding, anniversary, the birth of a child, or the acquisition of a new home. Experiences like travel, adventure, and romance stir joyful emotions in our heart. When we ponder on such things as persecution, beheadings, torture, imprisonment, or even the run-of-the-mill crises that we as typical American women face, the word “joy” does not pop into my mind. Does it yours? Yet Jam 1:2 very simply encourages us to consider any kind of trial as a cause for joy.

It’s important to understand that biblical joy is very different from what we consider to be happiness. Happiness is based on happenstance or circumstance. If things are going my way, I am happy; if they aren’t, I’m not. That is a very childish viewpoint to life. The biblical concept of joy is a deep, inner happiness, based not on earthly circumstances but heavenly grace. The word for “joy” in the Greek New Testament is the word *chara*. The word *chara* is very closely related to the Greek word for grace, which is *charis*. The inner-soul joy that we have as Christians is based on the amazing and powerful grace of God in our life! Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have a living and vibrant relationship with the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is the lover of our soul, our God, and our friend. Joy is more than an emotion—it is the very person of Jesus Christ, and He indwells our soul to permeate us with His joy. Remember, Nehemiah said, *“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength,”* Neh 8:10b.

In this passage, James gives us three reasons to rejoice in times of trial:

a. Trial tests and refines our faith, leading to spiritual maturity.

Jam 1:3–4; 1Pe 1:6–8

- Certainly God is concerned with our circumstances, but He is more concerned with our character. Trial is part of what He uses to conform us to the character of Jesus Christ.
- Job suffered severe trial and loss in his life. At the end of the trial, he spoke these words, *“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You.”* This is evidence that the trials in his life brought him to greater spiritual maturity (Job 42:5).

b. Trial drives us to prayer.

Jam 1:5–6

In times of crisis, our first go-to should be prayer. Prayer calls on the power of God to help us in times of crisis and brings God into active participation with our situation. The Lord never intends for us to “go it alone”!

- Call upon the Lord for help.

In an instant, our life can change; in an instant, we can be in severe fear, threat, or danger. In an instant, we can call out to God and He hears. David tells us that God is a *“very present help in trouble,”* Psa 46:1.

*“Sometimes the  
Lord calms the  
storm, sometimes  
He lets the storm  
rage and calms  
His child.”  
~ Leslie Gould*

- Call upon the Lord for peace.

Phi 4:6–7, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

This verse is a command with a promise. The command is to forsake anxiety and come to God in prayer, with a thankful heart. The promise is one of peace—a *“peace ... which surpasses all understanding”* (Phi 4:7, NKJV) because it is a peace in the midst of trial. The peace that God gives guards our heart from the frights and fears that we often face in times of crisis. Prayer, with thanksgiving, is the path to peace. Consider the story of Hannah in 1Sa 1:1–18.

- Call upon the Lord for wisdom.

Often, in times of crisis, there are crucial decisions that need to be made. In these times, we can go to God for wisdom. Jam 1:5 specifically tells us to ask God for wisdom in times of trial, and to ask, believing that He is willing and able to give that wisdom.

When David and his men were facing critical battles against the Philistines, he repeatedly went to God for wisdom and instruction on how to proceed. God was always faithful to give David the wisdom he needed.

- c. Perseverance (continued, patient faith) in times of trial brings the promise of eternal reward.

Jam 1:12; Rom 8:16–17; 1Pe 1:6–8

As children of God and women of faith, let's throw out our earthly concept of trial and embrace this divine eternal perspective! When we consider the temporal and eternal value of trial, it brings rejoicing and courage in times of crisis.

2. In times of crisis ...

○ **OVERCOME** fear with faith.

Fear is a natural reaction to threat and danger. God gives us the gift of fear to make us aware of things that threaten our safety so that we can take the proper action. Fear produces adrenaline, which drives us to fight or flight. However, uncontrolled fear can paralyze our thoughts and hinder the very actions necessary to overcome a threat.

*"Fear knocked,  
Faith answered.  
No one was there."  
~ sign found in an  
English pub  
during WW2*

Repeatedly, in Scripture, we are exhorted by our sovereign Lord to *"not fear."* With each exhortation comes a promise of His presence, help, and deliverance in times of crisis. Psalm 27 is a psalm of fearless trust in God. In this psalm, David declares the power of faith over fear:

*"The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
Whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the defense of my life;  
Whom shall I dread? ...  
Though a host encamp against me,  
My heart will not fear; ...  
For in the day of trouble He will conceal  
me in His tabernacle;  
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;  
He will lift me up on a rock." Psa 27:1, 3, 5*

David's confidence comes from knowing the strength of God's character and the readiness of His help. When David wrote this psalm, he was an adult with years of experience in trusting God. But think back to his youth where he displayed the courage to face Goliath when the more-seasoned soldiers of Israel were paralyzed with fear (1 Samuel 17). When Goliath shouted his arrogant threats, Saul and all of Israel *"were dismayed and greatly afraid"* (1Sa 17:11). When the young David comes on the scene, Goliath moves forward and shouts his threats once again. This time, the soldiers of Israel *"fled from him and were greatly afraid"* (1Sa 17:24). They are taking counsel of their fears.

David, on the other hand, took counsel of his faith:

- He reflected on God's help in the past (1Sa 17:37).
- He relies on God's strength and not his own (1Sa 17:45–47).
- He runs to the battle, not from it (1Sa 17:48)!
- His courage strengthened the courage of the other soldiers (1Sa 17:52).

David concludes Psalm 27 with these words:

*“Wait for the LORD;  
Be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
Yes, wait for the LORD.” Psa 27:14*

The word “*wait*” is the Hebrew word *qavah*, one of the strongest Old Testament words for faith. It means “to collect, to gather” and pictures someone braiding many strings together to make a strong rope. When we braid together the promises of God, the presence of God, the character of God, and our past experiences with God, we are braiding together truths that build a strong rope of faith. This is the kind of faith that encourages our heart in times of crisis. When fear confronts us, we can overcome that fear with faith.

Fears in life can be real or imagined. Oftentimes, our fears create a crisis that hasn’t even occurred. One time, while ministering in the mountainous region of southwest China, I did this very thing. I love the mountains but, at the same time, have a fear of heights. We were going to visit Lisu people in the little village of Padhi. This remote village was nestled along the side of a steep mountain; and in order to get there, we had to travel a primitive one-lane road. On one side of the road was the mountainside and on the other side of the road was a sheer drop off with a river flowing far below! We were travelling in a Chinese-made vehicle with a driver who had just gotten his license six weeks ago. At one point, the hairpin turn was so sharp that the driver couldn’t even make the whole turn without stopping in the middle to **back up** toward the edge of the cliff, before pulling forward once more. As we zigzagged our way up the mountain, my imagination ran wild; and I kept picturing the vehicle—and all of us in it—plummeting into the river below. My faith was overcome by fear. To paraphrase William Shakespeare, “the brave man dies but once, but a coward dies a hundred times.”

I find, as a woman, that my most fearful times are in the safety of my bedroom at 2 a.m. Sometimes, I awake in the dark of night to be overcome with anxious thoughts that are distorted by the grogginess of sleep and the darkness of the hour. Being a mother and grandmother, my anxieties usually center on my loved ones and the hurdles they face. Whether we fear the real or the imagined, the solution is the same—we must overcome fear with the power of faith!

Fear is only one of many emotions. In times of crisis, we may also experience anger, grief, despair, bitterness, and a host of other reactions. These are all powerful emotions that must be dealt with. As with fear, these emotions must be subordinate to the stronger power of faith. We can be angry, but should not let the sun go down on our anger. We can grieve, but not as those who have no hope. We may feel despair for a time, but must then look to God—the great Giver of hope and life. Negative emotions, like bitterness, can easily take root in our thinking and in our life. These must be confessed as sin and replaced with thoughts of faith and trust in God.

Consider Isa 26:3:

*“The steadfast of mind You will keep in  
perfect peace, because he trusts in You.”*

The most intense kind of battle a soldier can face is hand-to-hand combat; one man is looking the other in the face, eye-to-eye, sweat-to-sweat, and weapon-to-weapon. One will win and one will

die. Let's put this into the context of our spiritual battles. Most of them are fought not out in the world, but in the inner workings of our heart and mind. The most intense kind of spiritual battle we fight is "thought-to-thought" combat: worldly against heavenly, grudges against forgiveness, fear against faith—the list goes on and on. But in the end, one is going to win and one is going to die. When our minds are wrought with fears and negative emotional baggage, we must stay in the battle until our faith prevails.

Consider these verses, and let faith in our all-powerful and all-present God overcome your fear in times of crisis:

*"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity,  
but of power and love and discipline." 2Ti 1:7*

*"The wicked flee when no one is pursuing,  
but the righteous are as bold as a lion." Pro 28:1*

*"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name; you are Mine!  
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,  
Nor will the flame burn you.  
For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
your Savior ..." Isa 43:1b–3a*

3. In times of crisis ...

**U**NDERSTAND God's unique purpose for you.

*"The two most important days in your life are the day you were born,  
and the day you find out why." Mark Twain*

This quote is relevant to our study of Courage in Crisis because oftentimes a crisis is life-changing and life-defining. At times of severe crisis, we have the opportunity to display a faith that will stand as an encouragement to others in time and a source of reward for us in eternity. Consider the great men and women of Scripture whose stories are recorded for our benefit. It is in the most difficult situations that their faith shines forth as a beacon to us, calling us to follow their example of faith. Consider Job, Ruth, Rahab, Deborah, and many others. We know them by their courage in time of crisis.

One of the greatest examples of this principle is found in the life of Esther. Though the name of God is not mentioned in the Book of Esther, we see His hand designing every detail of her life so that she would be in the perfect place at the perfect time to stand with courage in a time of national crisis.

God brought her Jewish ancestors to Persia in exile; she was later orphaned and raised by her cousin Mordecai, who was a man of wisdom and faith. When it came time for King Ahasuerus to choose a new queen, God bestowed favor on Esther in many ways. This led to Esther being

chosen as his queen and living in the king's palace. She was living a life of luxury and pleasure until one day the king allowed a decree to be signed that would lead to the destruction of the Jewish people in the land of Persia. Esther and her Jewish kinsman wept, wailed, and mourned at the signing of the decree and their impending doom.

Mordecai implored Esther to go before the king and ask for deliverance for her people. She, in turn, sent a message back to him expressing her unwillingness to approach the king because of the danger involved. She was not allowed to speak to him unless he first asked for her presence. To violate the king's wishes in this area could mean death. Mordecai had the spiritual insight to recognize Esther's unique position in this time of crisis, so he responds to her message by saying:

*“Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. **And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?**”* Est 4:13–14 (emphasis added)

When these words reached Esther's heart, she too began to understand the unique position God had put her in. From this understanding, she gained the courage she needed to face the crisis with faith. She sent a message back to Mordecai, asking him and all the Jews to fast with her and her maidens. Her courage is displayed in the statement she sends back to Mordecai:

*“And thus I will go into the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.”* Est 4:16

When crisis comes into our life, we often want to ask **“Why?”** Why would God allow this to happen to me or to someone I love? When we ask **“Why,”** we are asking the wrong question. We need to ask **“What?”** **“God, what is your unique plan for me in this time of crisis—what do you want me to do?”** A crisis in life often presents opportunity for witness, for encouraging others, for standing on the solid Rock of God's Word—an opportunity to prove to the world the power of relationship with Christ. Many times a crisis requires action: there is a life to save or a heart to rescue. When we understand that crisis is not a random event, but a part of God's perfect design, then we must trust He has a purpose for us in that crisis.

*“For I know the plans I have for you' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’”*  
Jer 28:11

Consider Rom 8:28 (emphasis added), *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, **to those who are called according to His purpose.**”* This New Testament verse reinforces the principle found in Esther's life. God indeed worked all things together for good for her and the Jewish people. He not only delivered the Jewish people, but many came to believe in the One true and living God of the Bible through the events that took place in the life of Esther. Rom 8:28 is a promise that our heart should grasp onto and claim in times of crisis. Through the accompanying fear and fright, we can trust that our good and perfect Lord has called us to a good and perfect purpose. In understanding this purpose, there is courage!

4. In times of crisis ...

**R**EMEMBER God's faithfulness.

Jeremiah experienced a crisis of the likes that we, living in this time and place, have never before seen. He helplessly watched as the Babylonians violently sieged his beloved Jerusalem. The city was burned, people were slaughtered, and the finest of the youth were captured, chained, and marched to Babylon to become slaves of King Nebuchadnezzar.

In Lamentations 3, Jeremiah describes the soul-pain he felt with these words:

*“He has filled me with bitterness,  
He has made me drunk with wormwood.  
He has broken my teeth with gravel;  
He has made me cower in the dust.  
My soul has been rejected from peace;  
I have forgotten happiness.  
So I say, “My strength has perished,  
And so has my hope from the LORD.” Lam 3:15–18*

Because of the violent and devastating crisis that Jeremiah endured, he lost all peace, happiness, strength, and hope. Only bitterness and despair remained. Perhaps, at some time in your life, you have felt like Jeremiah.

As Jeremiah remembers the devastation of the siege, his soul is “*bowed down within*” him (Lam 3:20). But then, Jeremiah's mind ponders on something else: He remembers the undeniable faithfulness of God.

*“This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.  
The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,  
For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.” Lam 3:21–23 (emphasis added)*

In a few short verses, we see a dramatic change in the condition of Jeremiah's soul: from hopelessness to hope, from despair to courage. The change comes from simply remembering the faithfulness of God in the midst of crisis. When Jeremiah looks at the crisis around him, his soul is in chaos; when he looks to God's faithfulness, he receives courage. Notice that Jeremiah's circumstances have not changed, but his perspective has!

Consider the faithfulness of God revealed to us in Scripture:

- He remains faithful, when we are faithless (2Ti 2:13).
- He is faithful to forgive our sins (1Jo 1:9).
- He is faithful to deliver us from temptation (1Co 10:13).
- He is faithful to keep His promises to us (Heb 10:23).
- He is faithful to us in suffering (1Pe 4:19).
- He is faithful to fulfill His plan for our life (1Th 5:24).
- He is faithful to strengthen us (2Th 3:3).

- All His work is done in faithfulness (Psa 33:4).
- The name of Jesus Christ in Heaven is *“Faithful and True”* (Rev 19:11).

All of these aspects of God’s faithfulness are relevant to us in times of crisis. And all of these aspects of God’s faithfulness are alive and active every day of our life. We should be alert to His faithfulness to us in good times, so that we are confident of it in times of crisis.

In Luke 2, we see that Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a habit of “treasuring up” God’s faithfulness in her life. The angels appeared to the shepherds outside of Bethlehem, declaring to them, *“today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”* (Luk 2:11). The shepherds immediately traveled to Bethlehem to find the baby lying in a manger. They made known the statement that the angels had told them and then conveyed that message to others, *“and all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart”* (Luk 2:18–19, emphasis added).

Later in Luke 2, we find Jesus as a youth, travelling to Jerusalem with his family to celebrate the feast of Passover. When it came time to leave Jerusalem for home, Mary and Joseph assumed Jesus to be somewhere in the caravan of travelers. Instead, the young Jesus had remained behind to learn from the teachers in the temple. After a day’s journey, Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem to find Jesus. When they located him in the temple, they asked him why he had caused them such worry. Jesus said to them, *“Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?”* (Luk 2:49). Again, *“His mother treasured all these things in her heart”* (Luk 2:51, emphasis added).

The word for *“treasured”* found in Luke 2:19 and 51 is the Greek word *suntereo*, meaning “to preserve, to keep safe by holding close.” Luke 2:19 also says that Mary pondered all of these things. The word “ponder” is the Greek word *sumballo*, meaning “to throw together and meditate.” It is the practice of being alert to God’s blessings in your life: answered prayer, guidance, comfort, strength, and faithfulness. When we are aware of these things, meditate on them, and hold them close to our heart, we are building a soul-diary of God’s faithfulness. We need to be spiritually awake to God’s working in our life!

Why was it important for Mary to keep this soul-diary of God’s faithfulness? Because one day she would face a soul-wrenching crisis: she would stand near the foot of a bloody cross and see her first-born son crucified for the sins of the world. In reflecting on God’s faithfulness, no doubt Mary found the courage she needed to face the crisis of the cross. As far as we can tell, Mary remained faithful to the end of her days, since we see her in Act 1:14–15 gathered together with the other disciples of the early Church, devoted to fellowship and prayer.

Why is it important for you and I to “treasure up” God’s faithfulness? Because it’s pretty certain that crisis is looming in our future. When your crisis comes, I encourage you to open the pages of your soul-diary, and remember all He has done for you in the past; then trust Him for all He will do for you in the present and in the future. David said, in Psa 37:25, *“I have been young and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken.”* I wholeheartedly agree with David’s words!

*“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”*  
~ Corrie ten Boom

Remembering and reflecting on the faithfulness of God gives courage in times of crisis!

5. In times of crisis...

**ABIDE** in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you have heard the saying, “If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.” Soldiers, Marines, police officers, firefighters, medics all go through intense times of training so that when a crisis hits, they are prepared to take action. When war breaks out, crime surfaces, or lives are at risk, these brave men and women fall back on their training; and they know what to do! As Christians, every day should be a training day for us. Spiritual preparation is crucial for courage and victory in times of crisis!

In the Bible, we are encouraged to “*abide*” in Christ. The Greek word for abiding is *meno*, meaning “to stay, to remain, to continue.” Many verses speak of abiding, but the most thorough passage on abiding is found in John 15. In this passage, Jesus teaches an important principle of truth with a simple illustration. As He and the disciples travelled through Israel, they would have passed many a vineyard. Now, He draws their attention to such a vineyard to teach the importance of abiding.

Let’s focus on Joh 15:4–5:

*“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”*

The vine is the source of nourishment and life for the branch. Therefore, if a branch is removed from the vine, it has no usefulness, no power, and no fruit. If we, as Christians, remove ourselves (through sin or apathy) from abiding in Christ, we remove ourselves from the source of His nourishment and life. Our Christian life becomes wasted, lacking usefulness, power, and fruit. As the branch is dependent on the vine, so we are dependent on Christ.

If it’s true, and it is, that we can do nothing apart from Him, how can we hope to have courage in times of crisis if we are not daily abiding in the source of all courage, strength, power, and wisdom? How can we hope to bear fruit in that crisis if we are removed from the source of fruitfulness?

In an earlier passage Jesus said this:

*“If you continue [abide, NKJV] in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” Joh 8:31–32*

One of the types of crises that we sometimes face is a moral crisis. When we are tempted by the world, the flesh, or the devil to compromise biblical standards and fall into areas of sin, it creates a real battle in our soul. Jesus faced such a spiritual battle at the hand of Satan. In Matthew 4, Jesus had fasted for 40 days—that is a long time to go without food. The tempter came to Him and said, “*If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.*” Jesus

answered, **It is written**, “*MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD*”” (Mat 4:3–4, emphasis added). Courage to overcome this very real temptation came from the power of God’s Word!

Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “*If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, “HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU”*”; ... Jesus said to him, ‘*On the other hand, it is written, “YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST”*’” (Mat 4:6–7, emphasis added).

The devil misused Scripture while Jesus made a proper application of the Word of God, to once again overcome temptation.

The devil tempted our Lord a third time: he took Jesus to a very high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and the devil said to Him, “*All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me.*’ Then, Jesus said to him, ‘*Go, Satan! For it is written, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.”*’” (Mat 4:9–10, emphasis added).

The pattern is obvious. The Word of God, abiding in the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, was the source of courage and wisdom in this time of crisis. The abiding truth of God’s Word set Him free from the temptation. Temptations loom all around us each and every day we live. If we fail to overcome in times of temptation, the consequences are sometimes huge! The same power that Jesus Christ used to overcome temptation is available to you and me. The question is: do we daily make use of that power by staying close to the Vine?

“Thy Word I  
have treasured in  
my heart,  
that I may not  
sin against You,  
O LORD.”  
Psa 119:11

The time to prepare for crisis is now! Every day is a training day. Heroes may be discovered in a moment, but they are developed over days, months, and years. When we are surprised by a crisis, we don’t have time to go back and “find a verse” or run for counsel. We must face the crisis with what is in our soul when the crisis hits. This is one reason why it is so important to daily “abide in Christ.”

One of my favorite women in Scripture is Abigail. Her story is relevant to this portion of our study. Even though Abigail lived prior to the New Testament concept of abiding, it is easy to see that she was a woman of faith, “abiding” with her God. Her story is found in 1 Samuel 25. The passage describes Abigail as:

- “*Intelligent and beautiful,*” 1Sa 25:3
- A woman of action, 1Sa 25:18
- Respectful, 1Sa 25:23
- Humble, 1Sa 25:24
- Giving godly counsel, 1Sa 25:28–30
- Guided by God, 1Sa 25:32
- Discerning and “*blessed,*” 1Sa 25:33
- Honest, 1Sa 25:37
- Rewarded, 1Sa 25:39

These attributes could not be found in a woman apart from the abiding power of God and His Word. Abigail's story is a lengthy one, but the main thing I want to point out is this: when crisis came to her home, she knew exactly what to do! She acted quickly, she acted courageously, and she acted wisely. She emerges as the heroine of the story. Her actions spared her life and the lives of many others. Her words admonished David to turn away from a violent, emotional reaction—to faith.

When we abide in Christ and His Words abide in us, we will have the courage and wisdom we need in times of crisis. Our abiding will bear fruit; our training will result in action (see Heb 5:14). With victory comes the opportunity to share our courage and wisdom with others in need.

Remember this: a hero may be discovered in a moment of time, but heroism is developed over days, weeks, months, and years. If you want to be ready to spiritually jump into that phone booth, yank off the street clothes, and emerge with a big “” on your chest, then abide in Christ and let His Words abide in you! He is the Source of all heroics! To Him be the glory!

6. In times of crisis ...

**G**LORY is knocking at the door.

There is potential to glorify God through our attitude, praise, and actions in times of trial. When Mr. and Mrs. Job were hit by a horrific crisis (loss of family and wealth), Job's wife chose to curse God while Job chose to praise Him by saying, “*The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD*” (Job 1:21). When glory knocked at the door of their lives, one chose to lock it shut while the other chose to open it wide!

In Joh 12:23, the Lord Jesus Christ makes an incredible statement—one that has encouraged me many times in life. This is toward the end of His ministry, with His arrest and crucifixion looming in the near future. He says to His disciples:

*“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”*

What is so incredible about this statement is not in what He says, but in what He doesn't say. The Lord is facing betrayal, arrest, scourging, mocking, beating, and finally, crucifixion. He is facing—for the first time in His life—separation from the heavenly Father and the taste of sin and death. But in His statement, He disregards that long list of suffering and mentions only the glory! It's as if He is facing a deep valley of suffering in front of Him, with a mountain of glory beyond. He glances past the valley to gaze only on the glory. Oh, that we could have such a divine perspective in our soul in times of crisis!

In Acts 7, Stephen is also facing a crisis—one that will lead to his death. He is courageously giving a defense of his Christian faith to the religious Jews of his day. Rather than be convinced by his words of truth, they become enraged. When they heard his defense, “*they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him*” (Act 7:54). At this point, God did an amazing thing for Stephen: He opened Stephen's eyes to the glories above, and “*he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God*” (Act 7:56).

When Stephen declared to them that he saw Heaven opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, they covered their ears and rushed upon him. The religious Jews locked the door to God’s glory, while Stephen opened it wide. Stephen saw the actual glory of God with human eyes. That same glory is waiting in Heaven for us, but we must see it by faith—“*for we walk by faith [and] not by sight*” (2Co 5:7).

When we examine passages in Scripture that encourage us to be faithful in times of suffering, we find that encouragement is coupled with the promise of glory. Suffering and glory are almost always coupled together in Scripture. Why? Because in times of suffering, glory is knocking at the door of our soul. Will we lock the door to that glory, or open it wide? In Rom 8:18, Paul, who suffered much persecution and trial for the sake of the Gospel, said:

“I pray  
You, show me  
Your glory.”  
Exo 33:18

*“For I consider that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the **glory** that is to be revealed to us.” (emphasis added)*

Paul walked through deep valleys of suffering in this life, but in the midst of them saw the mountain of glory by faith. Paul amplifies this concept for us in 2Co 4:17–18:

*“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

In this passage, Paul compares affliction (which is present in times of crisis) with glory. The affliction is seen, while the glory is unseen. The affliction is light, while the glory is heavy. The affliction is temporary, while the glory is eternal. Perhaps this is why Jesus Christ never even mentioned the valley of affliction before Him, and focused only on the mountain of glory!

This gem of truth from God’s Word calls us to courage: courage to suffer in times of crisis, by faith—with our eyes on the eternal glory available to us if we will only open the door to it!

7. In times of crisis ...

**E**NDURE faithfully to the end—finish your race!

This exhortation is fitting for the end of our Courage in Crisis study. Oftentimes, a crisis involves long-term hardship where the effects of the crisis become the new norm in our life. Spiritual endurance is necessary in order to not grow weary and lose heart. James encourages us to endure through the example of the prophets and Job. Consider Jam 5:10–11:

*“As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”*

These verses give us an encouragement through the promise of blessing to those who endure. Job suffered long and hard; but in the end, God showed His mercy and compassion by restoring to Job more than he had lost. As we mentioned earlier in this study, Job also gained a spiritual insight and maturity that is beyond the value of earthly blessings. Every problem has an expiration date, but we must be diligent to endure until that date comes.

*“For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.”*  
Heb 10:36

By far, the greatest example of endurance is found in the sacrificial suffering of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. After being betrayed, arrested, beaten, scourged, pierced, mocked, and humiliated, He was then made to carry a heavy cross to Golgotha. There, they hammered heavy spikes through his wrists and ankles, and hung Him on a cross to die like a common thief. The physical suffering He endured was horrific; but even greater was the spiritual suffering He endured to pay the penalty for our sin. For on that cross, God the Father gathered the sin of all mankind and placed the penalty of it onto His very own Son. Sinless God suffered for sinful man. The spikes pierced the hands and feet of Jesus, but something else pierced His soul: your sin and mine! Such suffering you and I will never know.

The book of Hebrews likens the suffering in our life to the running of a race, in which we cannot give up short of the finish line. Heb 12:1–3 says:

*“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility of sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

This is a very rich passage—full of valuable principles. But for the purpose of this study, I want to draw attention to one nugget of truth: Fix your eyes on Jesus! When we reflect on His great love for us, proven by His great sacrifice for us, it gives us courage in the midst of crisis. It gives us endurance in the midst of weariness and despair. Jesus ran His race, faithful to the end. He is the *“author and perfecter of [our] faith.”* He can and will give us the grace to cross the finish line in victory and fall into the comfort of His waiting arms!

With this in mind, let’s consider the grace of God in our life. The Apostle Paul was given a *“thorn in the flesh”* (2Co 12:7) to keep him from exalting himself. Scripture does not make clear to us what the thorn in the flesh was, but we do know it was something difficult for Paul to bear. Therefore, he asked God three times to take that crisis out of his life. God’s answer to Paul was simple and direct, *“My grace is sufficient for you”* (see 2Co 12:7–10).

As believers in Jesus Christ, the same heavenly grace that sustained Paul in his time of crisis is available to you and me. One of the verses that has really jumped out at me recently is Eph 1:7–8a:

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the **riches of His grace** which He **lavished** on us ...”* (emphasis added)

Think of the wealth and the depth of this promise. In travelling the world, I have seen the ugliness of religion: man’s futile efforts to be delivered from the cancer of sin. The Hindus beat themselves, offer animal sacrifice, light incense, chant, and wail: actions believed to appease the “gods” that they have bought from an idol store on the side of the road. These are futile efforts!

In Buddhist countries, I have watched worshippers pour water over little Buddha statues for forgiveness, push large prayer wheels for hours on end, and carry out painful pilgrimages to mountain shrines. Futile efforts!

In Africa, I have seen dirt and rock altars where the villagers have sacrificed to a dead frog and sticks in hopes of forgiveness. Futile efforts!

There is nothing on the face of this earth man can do to satisfy the just demands of a holy and righteous God. Only Jesus Christ can do that: holy God dying for sinful man. Through His blood, we have redemption; and through redemption, we have the pouring out of His grace—richly, lavishly, and eternally!

The same lavish grace of God that bought our eternal life is available to sustain us through each and every crisis in our life—from beginning to end! His grace is sufficient. When we consider the suffering of Jesus on our behalf (He considered it all joy) and fix our eyes on Him, we gain courage to endure through the long days, months, or years of every crisis. No one ever won a race by walking off the track. Losers walk off the track; winners cross the finish line. They may be exhausted, limping, or even crawling across, but winners finish the race! In times of crisis, endure faithfully to the end. Never quit!

In times of crisis: **Consider** it all joy, **Overcome** fear with faith, **Understand** God’s unique plan for you, **Remember** His faithfulness, **Abide** in Jesus, **Glorify** God, and **Endure** to the end. It is my prayer that the principles taught in this study will be kept in your heart for the day of trial. May they give you the courage you need to stand firm in your faith and so glorify your heavenly Father. Always remember, we do not know what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future!

*“Take courage, fear not!”* Isa 35:4