

Courageous

Jasmine Womack 6/10/20

As followers of Christ we are called to love one another. Throughout Jesus' life he healed the sick, lifted the oppressed and condemned oppressors. He shed light on the people brushed to the side of society and made them the focus of his Kingdom.

Now, more than ever, is the time to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We need to stand with the oppressed, to lift up their stories by amplifying their voices and acknowledging they are God's creation.

It is no longer enough to be not racist. We must choose courage over comfort to stand in the face of our history, present reality, and learned reactions to people who look different than we do.

Jesus gives us examples of how to do this throughout his life and shows us what courage in the face of the powers that be and religious leaders looks like. I give you permission to have that same courage and offer some insight into what to do with it.

1. **Stand with people:** In John Chapter 8:2-11, Jesus stands with a woman condemned of sin and breaking the law. She had every right to be stoned by the letter of the law, but what happened when Jesus stooped with her is he was standing for her. Her accusers left and she was forgiven by Jesus. The point here is Jesus stood against an oppressive application of the law that accused one party and let the other go free.
2. **Listen to the oppressed:** In Luke 8:43-48, A woman who suffers from bleeding touches the hem of Jesus coat and is healed. Noticing the healing had occurred he stopped and listened to the woman's story. He could have just kept walking, he could have ignored her but he chose grace and compassion. This is a woman who has been isolated (according to the law) for 12 years with no hope of being cured until Jesus. How much more do you think his listening ears meant to her than the actual healing?
3. **Mourn/Grieve with people:** In John 11: 20-35, Jesus is called to a friend's house to heal, but when he arrives he sees and feels the grief of sisters Martha and Mary. He is present in their grief and shows us there is more than one way to grieve. Some need to be comforted by the words of the Lord and some need to weep.
4. **Seek Godly wisdom:** There are many examples of this in Jesus life. He often went away and prayed. I encourage you to pray. Pray and listen to the wisdom of God.
5. **Remember what we are called to:** Matthew 22:37-40 and Luke 10:25-37: these are two scriptures that identify the greatest command, which is to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself. However, these are two scriptures that identify it and give context to it in very different ways. In Matthew, it indicates the law is based on these two things and cannot be carried out without love. In Luke, Jesus gives the example of the Good Samaritan. This example is of people who know the law yet walk by the injured man on the road, not wanting to tarnish themselves (forgetting the law is about Love). In contrast, the Samaritan sees the same situation and does what is right.
6. **Educate yourself:** Jesus knew the scriptures. In this time when the world tells us what to believe, we need to know what God says about the issues plaguing our country and people.
7. **Follow the spirit:** Jesus would go and do based on the spirit. In John 4:1-26, Jesus leaves Judea and travels to Jacob's well where he sits while the disciples go to get food. A Samaritan woman comes to draw water and has a conversation that changes her life. When we listen to the Spirit we will know where our work is. There is a lot of work to be done but not all the work is our individual work.

If this work seems daunting, you are correct. If this work seems like a lot, you are right. That is why we have each other and there is nothing we can't do with God's power and guidance.

My prayer is that the Lord makes us courageous to seek justice, love, mercy and to walk humbly with our God.
(Casting Crowns: Courageous)