

# Concept of Courage

## By Bob Vernon

Announcer:

Woke last night in the middle of the night in a cold sweat I had dream that our speaker this morning didn't show. And as Bob didn't arrive until just a few minutes before we began I began to think that that dream might become reality and all of us who were involved in planning and preparing Chapels often fear that what if the speaker doesn't show some of you've been through that experience and I'm delighted that he's here. This is the second of our alumni chapels this year about a month ago. You heard Ernie Pearson and Bob Vernon is Ernie's brother in law.

And that's probably the first time he's ever been introduced as Ernie's brother in law. It's usually the other way around but we're delighted that he's here and we can present these alumni chapels to you featuring some of the outstanding alumni from Biola. Ernie came bringing grace to us. Bob brings the loss so we get a little combination of those two. Actually the list of credentials concerning Bob is rather lengthy and I could consume about half of the time we have this morning just describing to you all the outstanding accomplishments that are his throughout his life.

He did undergraduate work at Biola in early 50s then went on to get his master's in business administration from Pepperdine University and has been with the L.A. Police Department for some 27 years. He served from 1973 to 1979 as deputy chief and for the past two years has been an assistant chief with the LAPD. He's also the author of the book L.A. cop peacemaker in blue.

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It's full of fabulous cop stories if you haven't bought it. It's available in our bookstore and we're delighted also that Bob serves on the Biola board of trustees has a son here by his same name at Biola. We're delighted for the longstanding association that he and his wife have had with Biola a pleasure a privilege for me to introduce him to this morning. Bob Vernon.

[Applause]

Bob Vernon:

The reason I was fairly close to the time period is that I didn't want to I do not want to get a citation on the way in as a matter of fact. I did see two people get a citation. It was a what we call in in police parlance a double banger. This guy was going along and he saw a couple cars and somehow he got on his radio and got one of his compadres up there you know and they pulled over two cars at the same time just a little bit ahead of me I was glad I let them pass me and I was keeping a run on a speed limit. We have of course a lot of problems with public relations because of citations anybody ever here ever get a ticket would you raise your hand anybody got a citation. Come on no more of it. Yeah a lot of you. Is there anyone here that liked receiving a citation would you raise your hands? Get the booby hatch will you take that guy. I mean that's something you don't like to get you know and yet we have that's one of the jobs we have to do because of traffic safety et cetera. There is a good reason for it.

Did you know that a thousand people a week lose their lives in traffic accidents that's incredible just needed in the United States and over half of those are involved with alcohol. And so now you know why we're out there looking for the drunk drivers. One of the first times I pulled over a

drunk driver. I was really surprised because he was so intoxicated. Well let me tell it. Here's the way it happened I pulled him over and I walked up to the door and I and I open the door and a guy poured out into the pavement. Hello. And he's lying there looking at me you know. And I couldn't believe this. You know I mean I've never seen a guy this smashed and he's driving. I said sir. What in the world are you driving for in that condition? And he looked back over at me eyes kind of crossed you know he says don't talk to me talk to the driver. You know I was so square I looked back in the car to see if someone else was in there. Guy was so bombed he thought he was someone else was driving.

Well you know it is kind of a problem with public relations and getting citations giving citations that is we had a we had a guy I will give you his last name because some of you may know him he's just recently retired. His name was Joe and he used to work our freeway squad and he had a very kind of a novel approach to public relations you know it wasn't very good. We're kind of happy that he retired because one of the things he used to say if he'd get you gone real fast you know like 20 miles over the speed limit like 70 in a in a 50 or something like that he would say that he'd walk up and smile at you and take a puff on a cigar which is one thing we don't like him to do either you know blow smoke in people's face and he'd say. Good evening sir. May I see the driver's license you used to have?

Not very good. That was his former humor. We got a lot of complaints from people that were contacted by him. Well this morning I want to talk about. A principle in the Bible that you see appearing again and again that is absolutely essential to being use of God. And it's a principle dealing with a subject that that I'm very interested in. I've been interested in it all my life really

but me being a policeman it's even become more of an interest to me and that is the concept of courage. What is it? Why is it so important? And what does the Bible have to say about it. I guess the best passage on courage is in Joshua. The first chapter so would you turn out this morning. Joshua 1. And some of you I'm sure have memorize. At least one or more of the verses I'm going to quote from this morning. Because these are kind of classics on this matter of courage and while you're turning there. I looked up Webster's Dictionary definition of courage and I had about five definitions not I have one two three four different definitions one of them I thought really applied to what we're going to talk about this morning.

And it said doing what one believes one ought to do. That's how Webster's Dictionary defines courage doing what one believes one ought to do. In other words having whatever it takes within you to act. Like you believe that's interesting that Webster's dictionary would say that. Well let's see what the Bible has to say about it. Beginning with verse 6 in Joshua 1. Be strong. And courageous there is that word. For you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. And he says it again only be strong and very courageous to be careful to do according to all that law which Moses my servant commanded you do not turn from it to the right or to the left.

So that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth. But you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? He says at the third time. Be strong and courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you everywhere you go. You know I

don't know if you've noticed this or not but three times God tells Joshua to be courageous and then on top of that in addition to the three times he says be courageous he says Joshua quit trembling. Does that give you some insight into Joshua? You want to know something maybe you haven't thought of this before. I believe Joshua was afraid. Why else is God telling him three times a Joshua? Be courageous be courageous quick shaken. Be courageous. Joshua was afraid. You know I can identify with Joshua.

I've been afraid before. Many times I've been afraid in police work. You know I thought that somehow when you became a police officer and got that badge and carry a gun that you wouldn't be afraid as much as a normal person. Actually it's kind of like. Flying on an airplane and knowing a little bit about an airplane. You know my wife tells me I wish you wouldn't tell me what's going on because she does know anything about airplanes and one time we were in a real hairy storm. I mean it was a biggie. We were going through this storm and all of a sudden I'm sitting next to the window nice. I see this floodlight coming back from the cockpit on the wings and I look out on the wings and on the trailing edge of the wings I see some white stuff. And I tell my wife I said that's ice. She said Yeah. So I said well if a certain amount builds up there we stopped flying. She said. Don't tell me those things. You know sometimes it's better not to know what's going on right.

Well you know in police work when you know what's going on when you know how many guys have guns when you see what happens when you get shot with a gun in real life not like on TV you know it's almost like you get more afraid because you know a little bit more than some people. Well I've had several experiences I'm going to share one that give me some insight into

fear and into doing something in spite of fear. I remember one night getting an assignment to search a house. Now we had received his call of 4 5 9 there now. That means a burglar there now. And so we got there and it was an unusual situation. The neighbors had captured one burglar and the other one was in the house. They had the house surrounded. Kind of neat you know kind of have things already ready for you when you got there. And so there was a major problem. The people whose house the burglar was in had gone to Europe and it had their power turned off somehow. We don't know how to get back on.

So the guys in the house at night in the dark and I'm the guy that gets the call and the sergeant says Well Vernon since you and your partner got to call you two guys go in and we'll stand outside here and watch the windows. I forgot to tell you the people said we're not sure whether he's armed or not he did have something in his hands. That oh nice darkness a burglar. A gun maybe a knife or something you know. And so as I went in the house you know I was afraid.

These were the days before we had bulletproof vests. And so I'm going in there with just you know my gun and a uniform. And a badge. Well that's not a very big protection area on. That has worked once in a while but you know that's kind of small. So we went in there and I remember searching the house kind of quickly you know and we couldn't find him so we came out well we couldn't find him he apparently got away before the guys got here you know. And the sergeant had been talking with people he said no he's in there Vernon go back in there and do a good job. And so the second time we went back and we really looked thoroughly you know I got up into the attic and flashlight around in the attic. Now can you imagine this a strange house. The lights

are out. It's dark. You ever come up on a mirror in the night you know like that. I almost killed two mirrors you know I mean. But anyhow we finally.

We finally made a pretty thorough search and I was back by myself in a back bedroom. Way in the back of the House the last room my partner is out somewhere in the front you know. We were pretty sure he wasn't there. And as I started to leave the bedroom I noticed that the door to the bedroom was against the wall but it wasn't completely against the wall. You know what I mean. And if he's in there I'm thinking you know I've looked every place else I've looked in the closets I've looked under the beds I've looked even in the attic. They say he's in there. I'll bet that Turkey's behind that door. You know now I'm pretty sure he's behind a door right. You got that.

And so I'm kind of expecting what I found there you know but still a strange thing happened I had my gun in this hand and my flashlight in this hand and I walked up to the door and I just kind of wiped the door open with my flashlight and there stands a guy up against the wall. Now remember I had expected to see him there right. But a strange thing happened. Even though I was expecting to see what I saw. My diaphragm did something without my control. You know. It kind of went in I kind of feel a funny noise. You know like that. I didn't mean to make that noise you know. But I did.

And a second thing happened my calf muscles kind of flexed and I came up off the ground about that far. You. Know. Now the weird thing about it was. That he did exactly the same thing. Yeah. To see the picture you know two guys going up. When I came back down you know I got him up against the wall and on I quickly with my flashlight my hand trying to pet him. I could see since

I don't have any weapons I looked as though he didn't have a weapon I kind of pet around the waist real quick and I put my flashlight over here for a second and I quickly in the dark just to make sure you don't have anything and took my flashlight out re holstered my gun. Continued the search. He was not armed so I brought his hands down and I handcuffed him behind his back and as I walked him into the hall my partner had heard this commotion and he was making his way rapidly through the House and as we came out of the bedroom we both began laughing.

You know it's kind of funny huh. You know. That. We both came out laughing. And. My partner said what's going on here. Now here's a guy going to jail maybe for two years you know and he's laughing. And this guy says my partner man you should have seen how I scared your partner.

I tried to swear him to secrecy there but it didn't work. You know he told everybody in the station about that. Well. You know. Listen to me for a minute believe it or not. On that day I was courageous. You say wait a minute. You just said you were afraid. Yeah but. That's what courage is all about courage is doing something in spite of your fear you're afraid. But you do it anyhow. If you don't have any fear you're not courageous you're dumb. You know really. Now. Joshua was afraid of something what you think he was afraid of. Most people when I ask him that question. They say well. He knew about the Giants in the land of Canaan. He knew about the walled cities.

This was a big campaign a military campaign. He was going on. He knew what he was up against. He was intelligently informed. He had been there and he was afraid. Wrong. Joshua was not afraid of the Giants or the walled cities. Remember he was one of the two guys that came

back and what did he say. Let's go for it. Yeah they're big dudes. Yeah they got a big walled cities but man Lords on our side we can take them. Remember him and Caleb. Two of the 12 that came back and said let's go for it. Joshua was not afraid of the Canaanites what then was Joshua afraid of.

Well the answer is right there in the verses if you look at it carefully sandwiched in between God's admonitions to him to be courageous. He talks about obeying his laws. And he's saying only be strong and very courageous. Watch. This is in verse 7. To be careful to do according to law the law which Moses my servant commanded you see Joshua was afraid of not being able to keep the commandments. Joshua was afraid. Watch this. Of having to stand alone. I believe that was Joshua was fear what happened when Moses came down from the mountain after he'd been up there while.

He had left Aaron in charge member when Joshua a rather Moses was up getting the commandments. And Aaron was in charge. And what did the people do to Aaron. They talked him into turning away from God. They said come on Aaron make us an idol make us a calf that we can worship and Aaron said no we can't do this. Oh come on Aaron. And they prevailed on him and the peer pressure watches the peer pressure got to Aaron. All right. Okay. Bring me your earrings your rings Okay. Okay. I know it's wrong but okay just don't bug me anymore bring them to me and I'll do it. And he made them a calf.

I'm convinced Joshua was afraid that he might give in to peer pressure. He knew the children of Israel. He knew how obstinate they were. How rebellious how often they turn back and back

again to their sin away from God. And he knew it was gonna happen under him. He's now the leader. They're going to come to me. They're gonna say Come on Joshua. Let us serve the ashram again let us serve. Ba'al. Let's forget God Jehovah and Joshua was afraid. You know what I might give in. Joshua might have even been afraid of his life. You know they could assassinate him if he didn't give in.

He wasn't afraid of the Canaanites. He was afraid of his brethren. He was afraid of peer group pressure. He was afraid of not having the guts to stand alone with God. And that's precisely what God said he had to do in order to be successful. Did you notice a couple of times it says? Then you'll be prosperous. Then you'll be successful when you stick to my word Joshua. Even if it means standing alone I want you to turn to a parallel passage in First Corinthians First Corinthians chapter 16 verse 13. Here he says be on the alert.

Stand firm in the faith. Don't give an inch. You should stand firm and in. Second Thessalonians. He gives us some insight as to what he means by standing firm stand firm to the truths that we've taught you. Paul later kind of explains in second timothy or rather second Thessalonians but he does stand firm in the faith. And then he says an interesting thing. Act like men. Now he's not talking about masculinity here. You know what he's talking about. That's a phrase that the Jews use at that particular time that was synonymous with being courageous in fact in the Old Testament. I did a little kind of a study on this. You'd be surprised how many times in the Old Testament whenever it says act like men it's always linked up with Be courageous act like men and it's virtually a synonym of asking people to be courageous stand firm now act like men. Be courageous. It's gonna take some courage to stand firm and that's really what I want to zero in on

this morning. It takes courage to stand firm when you're the only one standing there when you're in a crowd when even your fellow Christians are turning. When you're all by yourself when you know what God's word says but contemporary standards have gone downhill when the way to do things is changed over the years through a kind of a cultural thing where things that the Bible says is wrong are really being accepted by even those in the faith.

And you suddenly find yourself in a minority and you find people saying Oh come on get with it man. This is this is 1981. I mean that was okay for. Back in the 20s maybe or maybe even as late as the 50s. But I mean now. This is 1981 America. I mean get with it. Things are changing. You know in the. In the Bible it also talks about. Not having how does he say it? Paul says it. He says Let me read it to you a second. Timothy. The first chapter we'll begin with verse 7. He says For God has not given us a spirit of timidity but of power and of love.

And of discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God. And so here in the New Testament Paul repeats this admonition to not be timid not to have a lack of courage but rather have the courage to even if necessary stand alone for the cause of Christ. You know I have to level with you. I have faced on the police department a lot of situations you know kicking down doors when you don't know what's on the other side. That is a very scary experience not knowing where the guns are gonna meet you there. Every now and then that happens in police work. Going into a house as dark as I described to you chasing some guys down a wet street. It speeds up 80 miles an hour. You know all those things are scary I admit. But you know I have to I have to level with you.

The thing that frightens me the most is to be socially ostracized to be alone. To be turned off by your peers to be rejected. You know that's what Joshua was afraid of. And I have to level with. That's what I'm afraid of. That's my fear of failure. I don't want to let God down. I don't want to give in to peer pressure when I know what I must do because of what he's told me to do. You know what God's word says he says you want to be successful you want to be prosperous you want to be used mightily of God then be courageous don't be timid don't be ashamed of me. Even when your peers are turning you off even when you're alone be courageous let's bow our heads in a word of closing prayer.

I feel like this is a message that all of us need to hear. And before I pray I would ask you to examine your own heart. Is there something. That you believe you should or should not be doing that you're doing exactly the opposite. Then you don't have courage. God is calling us to courage. We need men and women of courage. God needs men and women of courage. If God has spoken to you about something specifically in your life. I encourage you to right now share that with him and say Oh God give me the courage to be the man the woman that you want me to be

Father. I want to be a man of courage. That's my prayer helped me to have the courage. Give me the strength to be the man that you want me to be. Even if it is necessary to stand alone God be with us all this morning we asked for your blessing for your wisdom. And father we asked for the strength to be courageous in Jesus name amen.