

The **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**
***“Barnabas”* Edition**

Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

Lesson Eighteen: Faith in The Love and Sovereignty of God

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Lesson Eighteen: Faith in The Love and Sovereignty of God

CORE VALUE: The FORTITUDE for leading built on the love and sovereignty of God and the discipline of prayer.

BIBLE VERSE(S): Mark 4:40-41 & 1 Samuel 17

ONE SIMPLE TRUTH: The leader who trusts in God's love and sovereignty faces adverse circumstances without fear or anxiety.

APPLICATION: View fear and insecurity as symptoms of a lack of faith in God's ability to compassionately control your circumstances. Pursue initiatives that deepen your faith in God.

Introduction:

Fear paralyzes a leader. Being afraid leaves a leader indecisive. A leader intimidated by adverse circumstances often fails to initiate the appropriate action required for a given situation. People often abdicate their responsibility to lead when facing the dread of impending danger. Many irrational behaviors flow from the person who leads with a mind gripped with panic.

Insecurity opens the door for doubt and anxiety. Leaders, who speculate on countless things that might happen, often fall victim to emotional bondage and stress. "What if thinking" will unnerve the leader who dwells on improbable events of an unforeseen future. Circumstances which a leader perceives as beyond one's control typically causes digression into a feeling of anxious concern. The anticipation of doom and gloom often explains why a leader displays an agitated attitude. The uncertainties of what might happen, drive many leaders to second guess decisions and retrace actions already concluded.

God desires leaders who follow Jesus Christ to lead others free from the bondage of fear, insecurity, doubt, and anxiety. The word that best fits with the internal strength which God intends you to lead from is “fortitude”. The Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines fortitude as follows: “...strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger or bear pain or adversity with courage”¹

One may wonder: Where does the state of mind come from that enables a leader to face adversity with courage? How does a person obtain fortitude? To some extent, each individual has a certain capacity to face difficulties inherent in his or her personality. Everyone, however, encounters circumstances that exceed this inherent capacity for courage. When this happens, emotions of fear, insecurity, doubt, and anxiety will take over in a person’s heart and mind resulting in poor decisions and irrational behavior. Fortitude for leading starts by trusting in a God whose infinite power and control exceeds all temporal circumstances.

Real fortitude, the state of mind that enables a person to decisively lead others in the midst of overwhelming danger and adverse conditions, depends on a faith that truly trusts in the love and sovereignty of the Lord God Almighty. Do you believe God loves you unconditionally and always puts your best interests first? Do you believe that God is the creator of and sovereign king and ruler over all heaven and earth? Then we must also believe that all circumstances are under God’s control and that everything which happens, works for our greater good and well-being. Fortitude based on God’s love and sovereignty frees a leader from fear, insecurity, doubt, and anxiety.

¹Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*., Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

Jesus went to extreme lengths to establish in the hearts and minds of his followers the full extent of his love and true identity. The twelve Apostles witnessed many miracles performed by Jesus that clearly demonstrated his divine control over nature, diseases, death, and the demonic world. Jesus' disciples allowed circumstances beyond their control to overwhelm their trust in his love and faith in his sovereignty, which surprised and disappointed Jesus. Read Mark 4:35-41 and answer the following questions.

Jesus Calms the Storm

“That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?’ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’” (NIV)

Questions of the Biblical Text² (Mark 4:35-41)

Describe the level of skill (experience and ability) you think the disciples might have had in piloting a boat on the lake they intended to cross? Keep in mind that among the disciples were professional fishermen whose livelihood depended on fishing these waters.

State your profession and describe your level of skill (experience and ability).

Describe the level of intensity associated with a “furious squall” that has waves which break over a boat and nearly swamps it.

² Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

Describe how you think the disciples felt in the midst of this storm.

Think of a situation (i.e.: “furious squall”) you have faced in your profession that threatened to swamp your boat. Describe how you felt in the midst of this storm.

Surely, the professional fishermen among the disciples had faced a storm on the lake before this moment. Why do you think this “furious squall” caused them to be afraid?

The disciple’s fear prompted them to ask two questions:

1. “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”
2. “Who is this? Even the winds and waves obey him!”

These two questions reveal a fundamental lack of faith and trust in Jesus in two regards. Comment on the two aspects of faith in Jesus the disciples lacked at this point in time.

Do you struggle with any level of fear, doubt, anxiety, or insecurity in regard to where you lead in the marketplace? Comment on how a lack of faith in the love and sovereignty of God might impact your courage and peace of mind as a leader.

What two questions did Jesus ask his disciples after he calmed the storm?

1.

2.

Why do you think Jesus was surprised that the disciples still lacked faith in his love and sovereignty? To answer this question; consider events that preceded this story, such as:

- Jesus drives out an evil spirit (Mark 1:24-28).
 - Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law and others (Mark 1:29-34).
 - Jesus heals a man with leprosy (Mark 1:40-45).
 - Jesus heals a person with paralysis (Mark 2:1-12).
 - Jesus states his commitment to sinners (Mark 2:17).
 - Jesus heals on the Sabbath (Mark 3:4-6).
 - Jesus taught the disciples in a straightforward manner (Mark 4:33-34)
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Commentary

Fortitude for leading others only comes from an unwavering faith in the love and sovereignty of God. A leader, who follows Jesus, must trust that God controls every circumstance and that he has the leader's best interest at heart. Jesus showed the disciples the extent of his compassion for mankind and the unlimited scope of his supernatural power. The disciples witnessed Jesus' miracles firsthand and had no reason to be paralyzed by fear and anxiety. The account of Jesus calming the storm was one of many circumstances Jesus allowed in order to teach the disciples about his love and sovereignty. These lessons should have produced a faith evidenced by fortitude.

The group of disciples in the boat on the lake included professional fishermen. Their livelihood depended on fishing these waters. Not only were these anglers skilled at fishing, these could navigate a boat skillfully. No doubt the disciples possessed a

familiarity with the waters they sailed the night when Jesus calmed the storm. No doubt these fishermen had encountered difficult circumstances such as storms many times before. Surely they had successfully traversed these waters in the midst of rain and wind before. This tempest, however, constituted no ordinary storm. Mark described it as a “furious squall,” a storm capable of sinking their boat. The intensity of this storm surpassed these fishermen’s experience and ability to navigate a boat. This shortfall of professional ability to prevent their boat from swamping left the disciples fearful of drowning. This set of adverse circumstances led these followers of Jesus to questions his love for them and his ability to protect their lives.

Every leader, regardless of his or her skill level, faces circumstances that exceed their experience and ability. The leader who relies on self will experience fear and anxiety as he or she comes to realize a situation exists beyond his or her control. I believe God allows such overwhelming circumstances to arise to demonstrate his love and sovereign control, to lessen one’s reliance on self, and to deepen a person’s faith and trust in the Lord. God desires leaders to trust in him. When followers rely on God, all fear and doubt melts away and leaders can face adverse conditions with lasting fortitude.

The disciple’s fear prompted two questions: 1. “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” 2. “Who is this? Even the winds and waves obey him!” These two questions reveal a two-fold lack of faith and trust in Jesus. First of all; the disciples questioned Jesus’ love and concern for their well being. Secondly, the disciples did not fully grasp that Jesus could miraculously control all circumstances, even the weather. Do you feel the presence of Jesus’ love where you lead in the marketplace? Do you rely on his

miraculous power when facing circumstance beyond your control? If not, do you try to navigate difficulty times alone and rely on self only to wind up fearful and anxious?

Jesus had demonstrated his love and sovereignty many times for the disciples to witness first hand. Also, Jesus had extended love and compassion to total strangers. In addition, Jesus had performed numerous miracles that proved no circumstance was beyond his ability to control. Jesus taught the masses with parables, but he taught his disciples in a straightforward manner.

After he calmed the storm, Jesus asked his disciples why they were afraid. Jesus commented that he was surprised that they still lacked faith. After all, they had seen him do and after all he had taught them, the disciples should have felt secure in his love for them and his ability to control any circumstance they faced. Perhaps, you have experienced God's unconditional love in your life. Perhaps you have seen him accomplish the miraculous in the circumstances of your life.

Fear, doubt, anxiety and insecurity all constitute warning signs that a person trusts in self and not God. The intensity of fear goes up as one perceives circumstances spinning beyond his or her ability to control. God does not want Christ followers to live or lead bound by these emotions. God does not, however, expect us to generate some internal bravery as an offset to fear. God wants us to truly relinquish self-reliance and trust in him.

For example, King David encountered circumstances that had frozen other men with fear. "Then the Philistine said, 'This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.' On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified ... As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine

champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear ... David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." (1 Samuel 17:10-11, 23-24, 32 NIV) David did not possess superior bravery than the other Israelites, he possessed a deeper faith and trust in The Lord God Almighty, which came out as real fortitude. Read 1 Samuel 17:45-47 and answer the following questions.

"David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands.'" (1 Samuel 17:45-47 NIV)

Questions of the Biblical Text (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

The Israelites faced a warrior too big for their conventional fighting skills and armament. Their perception of an adverse situation left them frozen with fear. Explain how David had the fortitude to face Goliath alone.

According to David, the battle belongs to the Lord. What does this suggest about David's trust in God's love and sovereignty?

Application

The path to leading with fortitude is not mustering up levels of superhuman self-confidence and courage. No matter how self-assured a leader becomes, there will always

arise circumstances, “furious squalls” or “Goliaths” which exceed one’s skills and melt away one’s courage. The only way a leader can avoid becoming paralyzed by fear and insecurity involves letting go of self-reliance and embracing an unwavering faith in God.

A wise leader recognizes his or her need for trusting God. A leader must build the solid foundation of an intimate and trusting relationship with God before the storms of leading rise into an uncontrollable tempest. God solidified David’s faith in the Lord’s love and sovereignty long before the day he faced Goliath. As a follower of Jesus who leads in the marketplace, God desires you to have faith like David. A deeper faith in God comes from spiritual discipline and devotion. The next lesson in The ENTRUSTED Leader’s Workbook series focuses on prayer and how prayer leads to fortitude in leading.

Personal Application

Think of a circumstance currently causing you to feel fear, insecurity, doubt, or anxiety as a leader. Write out a prayer in your own words that focuses on God’s love for you and his sovereign control of all circumstances.

(Insert additional pages if necessary)

Conclusion

Fear paralyzes a leader. Insecurity leaves a leader feeling doubt and anxiety. Such negative emotions result in a lack of initiative, poor decisions, and irrational behavior on the part of a leader. God does not expect a leader to muster the self-will, courage, and

strength to supersede feeling of fear and doubt. God does, however, expect a leader to let go of self-reliance. God desires a leader to trust and follow him.

God intends leaders to lead with fortitude: "...strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger or bear pain or adversity with courage"³ Lasting FORTITUDE for leading only comes from faith in the love and sovereignty of God. The leader who trusts in God's love and sovereignty will be able to face adverse circumstances without fear or anxiety.

³Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).