# THE IMPORTANCE OF COURAGE

## INTRODUCTION

Did you know the famous children's song "Jesus Loves Me" was written in 1860 as a poem in a novel called *Say and Seal* by Susan Warner. Her sister Anna wrote the words and Susan used them in a scene with a young boy being comforted as he was dying.

*Jesus loves me—this I know,*
*For the Bible tells me so:*
*Little ones to him belong,—*
*They are weak, but he is strong.*

*Jesus loves me—he who died*
*Heaven's gate to open wide;*
*He will wash away my sin,*
*Let his little child come in.*

You can see how those words about Jesus' love would be comforting to a child, or even any adult, in lonely and frightening times. There is nothing more important than the love of Jesus, is there? Love is Jesus' most important quality, and therefore the primary quality we should pursue in order to be Christlike.

## COMMENTARY: THE IMPORTANCE OF COURAGE

But how do you pursue Christlike love? Paradoxically, not by pursuing love. Why not? Because love is like light. Just as light is actually made up of a spectrum of many colors, love is made up of a spectrum of qualities.

Over the next many days we will be thinking carefully about those qualities—character traits that we must develop and strengthen in order to love like Jesus. For example, how can you love without gratitude... without being the kind of person who says thank you? How can you love without perseverance... not giving up when it's hard to be thoughtful? How can you love without being honest...? It's not loving if you don't tell the truth. So over the next many days we will be meditating prayerfully on twelve character traits that make up love.

Today we begin with courage—perhaps the most important one. After all, how can you love without being willing to do hard things that you may not want to do?

Our greatest model of courage is Jesus Himself. The second verse of Jesus loves me says: *Jesus loves me—He who died, Heaven's gate to open wide.*

Don't forget what Jesus faced the night He was arrested. Let's read it.

> **Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. (Luke 22:39-44)**

Apparently He was scared. He asked His heavenly Father if there was any way He didn't have to die on the cross. He knew how much it would hurt in every dimension. Just thinking about it made him sweat drops of blood from His forehead, the very place a crown of thorns would soon pierce his skin and

make him bleed. When He realized there was no other option, He stopped praying and turned toward the cross…He didn't run away…because Jesus loves me and you—all of us.

Love requires courage. Here's a definition of courage for you to meditate on. **Courage is "doing good in spite of the fear of harm or loss."**

Typically when we think of courage we think about heroic acts like throwing yourself on a live hand grenade to save others. But courage is not limited to—indeed it is not usually demonstrated through—such grand acts of self-sacrifice. In fact, courage is required on a daily basis in ordinary events.

**REFLECTION:**

Please take some time right now to think about some ordinary situations that require the courage to do something good and right even though you might have to give up something or face uncomfortable circumstances.

- *You're a volunteer in some sort of service or ministry group that meets every Tuesday night. On this night you've come home from work tired. It was a hard day with several problems and now you have a bothersome headache. It would feel so much better not to go, but…? It will leave people hanging if you don't go. So you go. That's courage.*
- *You agree to the family's request to speak at a friend's funeral even though you are petrified about public speaking.*
- *You give your opinion on some issue even though you know it won't be the one most people agree with.*
- *You offer to loan someone money to help them out of a tough situation even though you're not sure you'll get paid back.*
- *You go across the street to welcome a new family who just moved in, even though you're not sure they speak English.*

Now that you've heard these examples and gotten the idea of ordinary things that require courage, here are some questions:

- ***Who is the most courageous person you know, and why?***
- ***What's one of the most courageous things you've ever done?***
- ***Can you think of anything right now in your life that you probably should do, but you have not been sure you want to take the risk?***
- ***Is there anything you've been doing that is starting to really concern you about possible harm or loss? Are you willing to keep on?***

See? Courage is required in the ordinary situations of life, especially those things that involve truly loving other people. Would you join me in prayer?

**PRAYER:**

**Dear Jesus, during this season of prayer I'm asking you to help me learn more about courage, see when courage is required, and when I might back away. Help me stick up for someone when they are being treated wrong. Help me speak up for what's right when others aren't. Help me to keep my promises even when I'm tired and don't feel like it. Help me have the courage to tell the truth even when I'm scared of how someone might react. I know it is unlikely I will ever face anything as traumatic as Jesus when He knew He would have to die on the cross. But there are many things that worry me as I face doing things I know are good and right. Sometimes those things are necessary in order for Your will to be done in the lives and for the sake of other people. Just as your angels strengthened You, Jesus, strengthen my character to do Your will and show Your love no matter what. Amen.**