Firmly Planted - Courage to Live—Feb 2022

Sometimes I wonder if I have the courage to die. I'm in awe of the dedication and unwavering faith of martyrs, missionaries, and, especially "ordinary" people who have been imprisoned for what they believe. The thought of torture terrifies me, even though the chance of that happening is a small percentage of minuscule. To escape these morose and unreasonable fears, I reel in my thoughts: "Get real…this is never going to happen because you live too sheltered a life, and if, for some reason, you have to face this, he'll give you the grace to handle it." Truly, dying for my faith probably isn't something God will ask of me; however, inevitably, death will come, and I hope to face it with courage. But there is another kind of courage I've been thinking about—not the courage to die, but the courage to live.

The courage to live is an idea I recently read about in Gordon Smith's Courage and Calling. What kind of courage is this? It's the courage to be my true self—the person God made me to be, without any pretense; it's the courage not to be ruled by anyone's expectations besides *his*; it's the courage to use the abilities he's given me and follow the voice I hear calling. It sounds easy enough. But how easy is it to know who I truly am, recognize my true abilities, and silence the "shoulds, oughts, and need-tos" so that I can follow the one voice that matters? It's like digging out of a ditch, but it's worth it.

Getting to know myself so I can *be* myself requires an honest look at my habits, what I do and why I do it. I have to distinguish between what I love doing and what I think I *should* love doing, what I'm good at and what I *want* to be good at. It requires a sometimes painful visit to the past—family history, bad choices, unfortunate events, and all the things that make me who I am. I've found that the process of peeling away layers to reveal what's true is also necessary for me to recognize the abilities and gifts God has given me. The things that bring joy and satisfaction, which are God's good gifts, are often buried under a ton of "baggage."

At my age, I feel like I'm "behind," like I should know this by now. Lucky are the few who figure it out sooner than later. My journey (perhaps like yours) has been up and down and all around, and life has often moved too fast to allow time to do anything but what was required for the day. But life changes--I have more time now, and it's never too late.

Several months ago I began asking and seeking (again, but at a deeper level): exactly what am I here for? My nagging nudges needed confirmation. I found out about a ministry called Soulwell. Deep called to deep when I visited the website and read about the Soulwell Journey. Sitting there in my yellow velvet Goodwill chair, I looked over at the bookcase to my right and a title jumped out at me—*Courage and Calling*. The book had sat there in silence for months, waiting for just this moment, summing up in two words my heart-cry, and what Soulwell was all about. It's only one of several things that synced beautifully, with perfect timing, confirming that this was God's path, his chosen journey for me.

The last week-end is coming up, but I see it as a beginning, not an end. This brings me back to the point of the story. I've learned a lot about myself and I'm continually practicing filtering out the noise to hear the voice I hear best in silence—the voice that says, "*This is the way, walk in*

it". That *way* takes an immediate and adventurous kind of courage *to live*. It's courage that requires me to make a choice, to act, to get out of my rut. I will need courage to die in the future, whether it's tomorrow or in 20 years, but courage to live is here and now, today. I *want* this kind of courage. I *need* this kind of courage, and I'm *praying* for this kind of courage because it's what makes life meaningful and brings God glory.

Dina Cavazos @January 12, 2022