

Live Courageously
Stewardship Testimony by Cory Lehnbeuter
Presbyterian Church in Leonia
November 4, 2018

Reverend Fowler asked me to speak about COURAGE today and how God has called me in my life to live courageously and generously.

When I started thinking about Courage, I realized it is something you need when there is something good that should be done, with the best intentions.....but it isn't necessarily pleasant....or at a smaller level...it isn't necessarily convenient.

Psalm 34: 24 says "Be Strong and take courage, All you who wait for the Lord"

In reality, we shouldn't even need Courage because we already should know that God is with us and there is nothing to be scared about when doing the right thing, whether big or small. But the word Courage has a definition because us mere mortals need a way to explain our own made up anxiety and remind ourselves that we are going to be OK and God loves us.

At scale, human nature tends to find comfort in being part of a group and acting in herd mentality which can distort our interpretation of right and wrong.

Courage in today's polarized world with alot of egregious rhetoric coming from politicians spilling over into day to day life, might just be to show an act of kindness to another. Particularly to those who are not in the majority - whether it is religious, sexual orientation, skin color or race. Small acts of kindness can be contagious in a positive way; just the opposite of how hateful speech can gain traction with misaligned groupthink.

Leah mentioned an anecdote about a man jumping on the tracks in the subway to save a child who had fallen a few years ago and it made me remember a similar experience I had which i had totally forgotten about, but not quite as daring. Late at night on the PATH station platform in Manhattan waiting for the train, a man lost his balance, fell onto the tracks and hit his head on the track and was knocked out. He was just laying there and everyone on the platform just carried on like nothing happened. Without giving any thought, I jumped down on the tracks to help lift him up and get him out of there. Everyone was just kind of staring at us and now acknowledging that something had happened but not attempting to help. Eventually someone else who originally

ignored this whole thing jumped down to help me since this guy was unconscious and I wasn't strong enough to pull him up to the platform myself. Then another person jumped down, and another. I was definitely wondering internally, what would have happened if no one had the courage to jump down there and help this guy up? Would these people have even joined in to help if there wasn't already someone down there to start it off? In the end, we got him up and we all got out before a train came...but it made me think that this herd mentality of human nature really needs one small act of courage or kindness and then it becomes easy for others to join in and accomplish something great.

1st Timothy 6: 18-19 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. **19** In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

I try to be conscious about what is going on around me and help out like stopping to buy a homeless person a meal. In some cases people just need an ear to share their story.

Other times, I regretfully have seen someone on a street that could use some help and kept walking because I was too busy and running late, or I felt I needed whatever was in my wallet for something else more important later. It just wasn't convenient....

Yet in some of these times, after passing by and continuing on my business, I have almost physically felt God's call to "be rich in good deeds and be generous and willing to share" Where I have turned around 2 blocks later after fighting with my conscience and went back to go have a conversation and buy some food or throw some money in a jar. So what if I'm a bit later than I wanted to be? or I can't get that thing I didn't even know what it was that I was holding the money for? I've never had a regret or poor consequence when I've had the courage to turn around and act.

Is there someone in your life that you could lend some time and resources to? A lonely neighbor? A person on hard times that would appreciate a meal or some change to get by? A child that needs some mentorship and some encouragement that might not be available to them otherwise?

And look at all the great work that this church can do! Like how the church gave money to the Fistula foundation to help do these straightforward surgeries for these outcast women. Or working Loaves & Fishes, or the people who need a safe place in the Oelhaf House. When I see all of this good work it helps reinforce the trust I have in God to act courageously to help others and provide meaningful impact.

We are all busy and it's easy to find a legitimate reason....not an excuse...but a truly legitimate reason to not be able to find time to volunteer...but in reality, we're probably just not being efficient in figuring it out and if we really acted courageously could find some more time to volunteer - sharing our resources and gifts.

For me, it may be easier to eat out but in the end I know I'll get by and my life isn't all that bad. I have a lot to be thankful for. So maybe instead of that coffee or dinner out, I can increase my pledge to the church and have a much larger impact than just a short term fleeting satisfaction for me on whatever I used it for.

I encourage everyone to think about what resources they have at their disposal, whether it be skills & knowledge, or financial, and challenge yourself to be courageous to find ways to share these resources so they can be pooled with other resources of members of this congregation to drive the mission of this church, not only here but outside of this church, in order to have a greater impact on others. Many small acts of kindness and many forgone latte's can really add up to something great.