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Our Greetings to You

"...That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace" (Psalm 144:12).

Sixteen years ago we realized we needed a plan. God had blessed us with three sons and three daughters, precious "plants" in the "garden" He had entrusted to our care. How would we, by God's grace, guide these children to godly adulthood? Our sons were already eight, six, and four. How could we ever teach them everything they needed to learn before they left our home to start their own families?

We prayed for wisdom and strength, and the idea for this book was born. Its purpose was simple. **We wanted to prepare our sons to faithfully serve God as young men, as husbands, as fathers, as church members, and as leaders in their community.** (Similarly, *Polished Cornerstones* was born out of a desire to see our daughters become godly women.)

Now, sixteen very fast years later, we thank God for His grace and mercy. Ever-faithful to His Word, God continues to work in our lives, and we praise Him for the evidences of His grace at work.

Those three sons, just little boys only yesterday, are now godly young men, committed to serving God in their homes, their careers, and their church.

This book is part of our journey – a journey that centered on God's Word. Perhaps these ideas will be a help to you, as well. May you continually turn to God and His Word as you disciple your sons. May you rejoice in the years to come, when you see the fruit of your labor and the evidence of God's faithfulness in strong and vigorous "plants grown up," godly sons with courage and commitment, joyfully bearing fruit for Christ's kingdom.

In His Grace,
Pam, for all the Forsters

Courage

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13).

If our sons are going to mature into men who will be strong leaders in their homes and communities, they must learn to be courageous -- not in their own strength, but with a spirit of faith in the unfailing character of our all-powerful and sovereign God.

A fearful man will be afraid to lead his family. He will be afraid to stand up for what is right when family members do wrong. He will be afraid to confront those under him about their sins. He will be afraid to risk failure or embarrassment.

We must not be afraid to let our sons experience frightening situations. We must not yield to the temptation to shield our children from any experience that will cause them fear. We can breed a spirit of fear in our sons by overprotecting them and keeping them from launching into areas that we fear ourselves. Facing fear, and learning to do the right thing in spite of it, is part of growing up.

We must also not be afraid to let our sons fail. If we shield them from failure or express dismay at their failures they will become afraid to try anything that would risk failure. A fear of failure will greatly hinder a man’s ability and willingness to lead.

A. Select verses from the list below, and use some or all of the following suggestions to help you study and better understand their meaning (easier verses are listed first, in italics):

- 1) Copy the passage.
- 2) Read it in several different translations of the Bible.
- 3) Read the passage and several of the verses before and after it to gain a better understanding of the context of the passage.
- 4) Rewrite the passage in your own words. What does it mean?
- 5) Record a specific way in which you can change your actions or attitudes based on the teaching of this passage.
- 6) Memorize the passage.

Proverbs 28:1

2 Timothy 1:7

Hebrews 13:6

1 Peter 5:7
Proverbs 29:25
Matthew 6:34
Luke 12:22-31
1 Corinthians 16:13
Philippians 4:6-7

(BIBLE / SPEECH)

Beginner

- B.** Draw a picture to illustrate Proverbs 28:1. *(BIBLE / ART)*
- C.** Read with your parents the story of Gideon in Judges 6 and 7. Was Gideon naturally a brave man? How do you know? How did God assure him of victory over the Midianites? How did he defeat the Midianites? Can God use us even when we are tempted to be afraid? *(BIBLE)*

Set up some tents in the back yard or make tents with sheets in your house, and act out the story of Gideon and his victory over the Midianites. *(BIBLE / DRAMA)*

- D.** Read with your parents the story of the Israelite spies that Moses sent in to the land of Canaan. How many men thought they should go in and conquer the Canaanites? How many thought they shouldn't? What reasons did they give for their opinions? How did the Israelite people respond to their reports? What happened to the spies who gave the bad report? What happened to the people? What happened to Joshua and Caleb? *(BIBLE)*

Act out this story with your friends and/or siblings or with your toys. *(BIBLE / DRAMA)*

- E.** Read with your parents about some of David's mighty men:

Josheb-basshebeth or the Tachmonite, 2 Samuel 23:8

Eleazar, 1 Chronicles 11:12-14

Shammah, 2 Samuel 23:11-12

Abishai, 2 Samuel 23:18-19

Benaiah, 2 Samuel 23:20-23, 1 Chronicles 11:22-25

Act out the courageous deeds of these men with your siblings and/or friends or with your toys. *(BIBLE / P.E.)*

- F.** Draw pictures of David's mighty men (see Project E) and post them in your room or bind them into a book. *(BIBLE / ART)*

- G.** Talk with your parents about people and situations that cause you to be afraid. What attributes of God can you trust during those times? What verses can you memorize to recite to yourself when you are afraid? *(BIBLE / WRITING)*
- H.** Do something that you are afraid of doing (talking to someone you don't know, performing in front of an audience, going outside alone in the dark, etc.) Pray for God to give you courage, and thank Him when He does. *(SOCIAL SKILLS / PERFORMANCE / ETC.)*
- I.** Tell your family a story about a time you gave in to fear. What happened? Did God protect you? *(SPEECH)*
- J.** Tell your family a story about a time when you chose to trust God when you were afraid. *(SPEECH)*

Intermediate

- K.** Choose an area in which you are afraid, and take actions that will help you overcome that fear. (Examples: Take swimming lessons if you are afraid of water. Accept opportunities to speak in public if you are afraid to do that. Learn to go out in the dark.) Pray and memorize Scripture that will give you God's boldness in these situations. *(P.E. / SPEECH / BIBLE)*
- L.** Write out an account of a time you chose to trust in God and to be brave, and what the results were. *(ENGLISH COMPOSITION)*
- M.** Interview different men and ask them to recount episodes in their lives when they were tempted to be afraid. What happened when they gave in to their fear? What happened when they trusted God and were courageous? Write a summary of your findings. *(SPEECH / WRITING)*
- N.** Complete the study: *God, What's Your Name?* by Kay Arthur and Janna Arndt, from the "Discover 4 Yourself Children's Bible Study Series." How does each part of God's character enable us to be courageous? Write down your ideas, and review your list when you are tempted to be afraid. *(BIBLE / WRITING)*
- O.** Study the men of the Reformation -- men like Martin Luther, William Tyndale, John Knox, John Huss. What gave them the courage to stand up against the corrupt practices of the church when they knew such rebellion could cost them their lives? Copy quotes from Reformation leaders that explain the source of their courage. *(HISTORY / HANDWRITING / RESEARCH / READING)*
- P.** Read daily from one of the following devotionals that focus on courage and trusting God:

- *Battlefields and Blessings: Stories of Faith & Courage from World War II*, by Larkin Spivey, John Croushorn, and Jocelyn Green
- *Battlefields and Blessings: Stories of Faith & Courage from the War in Iraq and Afghanistan*, by Jane Hampton Cook, John Croushorn, and Jocelyn Green
- *Battlefields and Blessings: Stories of Faith and Courage from the Revolutionary War*, by Jane Hampton Cook
- *Battlefields and Blessings: Stories of Faith and Courage from the Civil War*, by Terry Tuley

(HISTORY / READING)

- Q.** Study the book of Joshua. Write down every incident that required courage from those involved. What were the results? (See form on page 119.) (BIBLE / RESEARCH / WRITING)
- R.** Study Bible characters who exhibited courage and faith in God, beginning with those mentioned in Hebrews 11. Make a chart listing each person, the Bible references, and what the person did. (HANDWRITING / BIBLE / RESEARCH)
- S.** Study cowardice in the Bible: Adam, Isaac, Jacob, the Israelites in the wilderness, the disciples, Peter, Pilate, etc. List each person, what they were afraid of, what actions they took, and what the results were. (Look up “*Cowardice, Instances of,*” in *Nave’s Topical Bible*. Use the form on page 120.) (RESEARCH / BIBLE / WRITING)
- T.** Use a concordance to help you study the phrase “fear not” in Scripture. Using copies of the form on page 121, list each reference, who is speaking, who is being spoken to, the circumstances, and the reason given for not being afraid. When you have finished your reading, review your notes. Why should we not be afraid? (BIBLE)
- U.** Study the chapter on “Courage” in *Christian Character*, by Gary Maldaner, pages 10-13. (BIBLE / READING / WRITING)
- V.** Study the chapter on “Fear” in *For Instruction in Righteousness*, by Pam Forster. (BIBLE)
- W.** Study *Choosing Victory, Overcoming Defeat*, Kay Arthur’s inductive study on Joshua, Judges and Ruth. (BIBLE)

Advanced

- X.** Study “the fear of the Lord.” How does a proper fear of God enable us to be bold in the face of testing and temptation? Write out your insights and conclusions. (You can look up “Fear of God” in *Nave’s Topical Bible*) (BIBLE / RESEARCH / WRITING)
- Y.** Study the chapter on “fear” (pages 72-74) in Wayne Mack’s book, *A Homework Manual for Biblical Living, Vol. 1.* (BIBLE / WRITING)
- Z.** Research your family history. What can you find out about courage exhibited in your ancestors? How would your life be different now if they had not been brave in the face of danger? Write a story of your family’s history, or compile what you discover into a notebook with photographs, letters, and stories. (FAMILY / HISTORY / WRITING)
- AA.** Read *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*. What gave these men and women the courage to die for their faith? (READING / HISTORY)
- BB.** Read the book of Acts, noting each demonstration of courage displayed by the apostles and early believers. What challenges did they face? How did they respond? What can you learn from their examples? Write a paper summarizing your observations. (BIBLE / ENGLISH COMPOSITION)
- CC.** Conduct word studies in the Bible on the following words:
- Afraid**
Bold
Courage
Faith
Fear
Trust
- (BIBLE / RESEARCH / FOREIGN LANGUAGE / WRITING)
- DD.** Study the Psalms. As you read, note references to fear and to trusting God. Why could David be brave? On what did he base his courage and trust? List verses and insights. (BIBLE / WRITING / RESEARCH)
- EE.** Complete the study, *Lord, I Want to Know You*, by Kay Arthur. How can an understanding of God’s character help you trust Him more? (BIBLE)
- FF.** Read *Courage to Stand: Jeremiah’s Message for Post-Christian Times*, by Philip Graham Ryken. Answer the discussion questions for each chapter at the back

of the book. What has God most strongly impressed on your mind after reading this book? What can you do about it? Write down a specific plan.

(BIBLE / READING / WRITING)

GG. Study the book, *Knowing God*, by J.I. Packer. Outline the book as you read, and write a summary when you have completed the book, or use the companion study guide to study the book with your parents or a friend. How does a true knowledge of God and His character enable us to be courageous?

(RESEARCH / BIBLE / READING)

Additional ideas:

Parents:

Consider and discuss with your son the following questions:

- Is he overly shy around adults or strangers?
- Is he afraid of personal harm?
- Is he afraid of talking to others?
- Is he afraid of people's opinion of him?
- Is he afraid to talk openly and express his feelings?
- Is he afraid to express his opinions?
- Is he afraid to try anything new?
- Is he afraid to fail?
- Is he afraid to try again when he fails?
- Does he put things off?
- Does he deny reality?
- Is he afraid to stand up for what is right?
- Is he afraid of the future?
- Is he afraid to say "no" when others encourage him to do wrong?
- Is he afraid to say "no" when others ask him to accept responsibilities that will cause him to over-extend himself?
- Does he have the courage to resolve disagreements and misunderstandings with friends, siblings, teachers, parents, etc.?
- Does he tend to become discouraged or give up when confronted with sin in his life?
- Does he accept criticism with a positive attitude?
- Does he have the courage to admit when he is wrong?
- Does he have the courage to ask forgiveness when he has wronged someone?
- Does he have the courage to humbly confront a friend who is sinning?
- Does he fear man more than God?
- Is he afraid to share Christ with others?

Notes and comments: