

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Responding Courageously
Jeremiah 37:1-2, 6-17; 38:14-23

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Set up the area for the meeting.

Bible Study Leader:

While you are preparing to teach, pray for the session and for those who will attend.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

I Will Call Upon the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #498; CCLI # 11263

In Christ Alone (My Hope is Found), *The Worship Hymnal* #506; CCLI # 3350395

My Life Is in You, Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #518; CCLI #17315

Here I Am, Send Me, *The Worship Hymnal* #523; CCLI #35847

Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Responding Courageously

Focal Text

Jeremiah 37:1-2, 6-17; 38:14-23

Background

Jeremiah 37:1—39:10

Main Idea

Faithful living calls for responding courageously to God's guidance.

Question to Explore

Why do people resist God's message?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to tell ways we can be more receptive to God's guidance.

Gathering together:

Sing one or more of the following:

I Will Call Upon the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #498; CCLI # 11263

In Christ Alone (My Hope is Found), *The Worship Hymnal* #506; CCLI # 3350395

My Life Is in You, Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #518; CCLI #17315

Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

First thoughts:

Christ's Courage Matthew 26:42

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 26:26-29; 39; 42.

Read aloud: **"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."**

The imagery of a cup has survived thousands of years to describe what a person might have (“my cup is full”) or what is needed. In the above imagery, Jesus uses the “cup” to describe what he must do—be viciously murdered on a horrible cross, buried, and resurrected. That is a full and heavy “cup” to drink.

It takes courage to be a consistent follower of Jesus. That courage is found in the same place Jesus found His. It comes from an intimate prayer relationship with God the Father. Jesus and His Father communicated regularly. This part of Jesus’ prayer came after an agonizing time spent with His Father. It was not just a moment, but hours spent in a prayer so intense that He sweated drops of blood. Christ’s courage came: (1) from an intimate association with His Father, (2) with the willingness to drink from the cup, (3) with complete submission to His Father’s will.

The great British Baptist pastor Alexander McClaren reminds us, “Only he who can say, ‘The Lord is the strength of my life,’ can say, ‘Of whom shall I be afraid?’”¹

Thomas a Kempis, the 14th century German Catholic monk, wrote in **The Imitation of Christ**, “He who loves God with all his heart dreads neither death, torment, judgment, nor hell, for perfect love opens a sure passage to God.”² Courage comes in loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Jesus is our greatest example to follow. Keep your eyes upon Him.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Today, we look to a real person, the Old Covenant prophet, Jeremiah, his preaching, and his personal life and experiences for a lesson in how to live courageously—without fear as we learn more about depending on our faithful God.

Pray for courage to be obedient to the calling of God in your life.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won’t need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

¹ Alexander McClaren, *Christian Reader*, Vol. 32, no. 3.

² Thomas a Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ*. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 41, no. 3.]

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Responding Courageously

Focal Text

Jeremiah 37:1-2, 6-17; 38:14-23

Background

Jeremiah 37:1—39:10

Main Idea

Faithful living calls for responding courageously to God's guidance.

Question to Explore

Why do people resist God's message?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to tell ways we can be more receptive to God's guidance.

Introduction to your personal study:

Zedekiah, Judah's last king (597-587 B.C.) wanted advice from Jeremiah but feared the consequences from the people. He asked for advice from Jeremiah but did not take it to heart. At one point he asked Jeremiah to pray for the nation's deliverance.

When the Babylonians temporarily withdrew from Jerusalem Zedekiah thought that Jeremiah had been wrong; the worst surely was over. Then Jeremiah told him not to be deceived. The fate of Jerusalem had already been revealed. It would fall to Babylon. If Zedekiah was to believe anything else the nation would be put in a worse position.

Jeremiah tried to leave and go to see his possession in Anathoth but was arrested as a deserter. He is jailed but continues to proclaim the word God had commanded him to do.³

³ *Shepherd's Notes, Jeremiah/Lamentations, p. 62.*

Chapter 37 should be read and studied with the following chapter. The two are a collection of stories about the prophet, his personal crisis, his encounters with Zedekiah, and ultimately his faithfulness which lasted until the end.⁴

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Personal stories of Jeremiah and of actual events that involved Jeremiah help us to visualize him as a real person called by God to do real things.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Chapters 37-44 give a detailed account of the siege and fall of Jerusalem and some of the events that followed that catastrophe. Jeremiah faithfully proclaimed God’s word for forty years leading up to that time. All the warnings he had proclaimed were coming to fulfillment. The events unfolding were vindicating him as a true prophet of God.

Instead of believing him, the people considered him a traitor because he encouraged them to surrender to the Babylonians. In their minds he preached blasphemy when he said that the Davidic dynasty would fall and the land would be taken from them. However, everything he preached would have saved Judah had they not hardened their hearts.

I. No One is Listening. (Jeremiah 37:1-2).

1. Zedekiah son of Josiah was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; he reigned in place of Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim.

2. Neither he nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid any attention to the words the Lord had spoken through Jeremiah the prophet.

These verses are a superscription for the narratives that follow in chapters 37-44. Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoiachin with Zedekiah who was another son of Josiah. This act completed God’s judgment on Jehoiakim that there would be no more descendants on David’s throne (36:30).

Zedekiah (c. 597-587 B.C.) was Judah’s last king. He was like a leaf blowing with the wind. He wavered between seeking advice from Jeremiah and fear that he had of the people. Even when he asked for advice from Jeremiah he did not heed it. He asked for Jeremiah to pray for the nation’s deliverance.

⁴ Keown, Scalise, Smothers, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Jeremiah 26-52, Word Inc, pg. 214.

His leadership led the people and his attendants at court away from listening to the prophet. Warren Wiersbe wrote “There’s no problem so big or complicated that it can’t be run away from.”⁵ This was Zedekiah’s attitude.

Two important points here are (1) Zedekiah was a puppet king for Babylon. His rebellion from Babylon led to the siege and sacking of Jerusalem. (2) He led his people away from listening to the Word of God. Without faith anchored in the promises of God they were doomed to feel His judgment.

II. This is What the Lord Says (Jeremiah 37:6-10).

⁶ Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet:

⁷ “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of me, ‘Pharaoh’s army, which has marched out to support you, will go back to its own land, to Egypt.

⁸ Then the Babylonians will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down”” (Jeremiah 37:6-8).

There were two important points for Zedekiah to hear. The Egyptians will return to Egypt. The Babylonians will return to Jerusalem and capture the city.

Zedekiah sees the Babylonians leaving and decides that it is an answer to prayer. (37:4-5). Instead of seeing the situation from God’s viewpoint he sees what is happening from his own. He should not have interpreted the Word of God by his own circumstances. God intended to finish what He started.

9. “This is what the Lord says: Do not deceive yourselves, thinking, ‘The Babylonians will surely leave us.’ They will not!

10. Even if you were to defeat the entire Babylonian army that is attacking you and only wounded men were left in their tents, they would come out and burn this city down.”

Wishful thinking would not stop the inevitable. God is emphatic. **“They will not!”** From God’s point of view the situation was hopeless. Jerusalem was going to fall. One must be careful when looking at current events to determine the purposes of God. God sees all and the future is in His hands. God sent Jeremiah to tell Zedekiah the Babylonians will have no trouble capturing Jerusalem. How much plainer could God have been?

III. Jeremiah Attempts to go to Anathoth (Jeremiah 37:11-17).

⁵ Warren Wiersbe, “Be Decisive”, pg. 165.

¹¹ After the Babylonian army had withdrawn from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's army,

¹² Jeremiah started to leave the city to go to the territory of Benjamin to get his share of the property among the people there.

¹³ But when he reached the Benjamin Gate, the captain of the guard, whose name was Irijah son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, arrested him and said, "You are deserting to the Babylonians!"

The siege was temporarily lifted when the Babylonians went after the Egyptians, and people could once again leave the city. Jeremiah took advantage of the situation and started to leave the city to inspect the land he had purchased. But, before he could leave the city he was arrested and charged with deserting to the enemy.

¹⁴ "That's not true!" Jeremiah said. "I am not deserting to the Babylonians." But Irijah would not listen to him; instead, he arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials.

¹⁵ They were angry with Jeremiah and had him beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary, which they had made into a prison.

¹⁶ Jeremiah was put into a vaulted cell in a dungeon, where he remained a long time.

¹⁷ Then King Zedekiah sent for him and had him brought to the palace, where he asked him privately, "Is there any word from the Lord?" "Yes," Jeremiah replied, "you will be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon."

Jeremiah was anything but a traitor. He had given his life to preach for the welfare of his country. Instead of a traitor he was a patriot. His devotion was to God and His Word. For all of that he was beaten and imprisoned.

An officer named Irijah arrested him. He was not as sympathetic as the earlier officials in an earlier arrest (36:13,19). Perhaps he felt that Jeremiah's preaching undermined the morale of his soldiers. So he placed Jeremiah in a prison that might have been for those thought to be dangerous political prisoners. A special watch could be placed upon him so he would spread no more seditious propaganda. They did not want to hear from God. Jeremiah was in prison for a long time.

Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and asked what God had spoken. Perhaps he thought God had changed His mind. But, God's mind and word did not change. Zedekiah was going to be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon.

IV. Zedekiah Calls for Jeremiah again (Jeremiah 38:14-18).

14 Then King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and had him brought to the third entrance to the temple of the Lord. "I am going to ask you something," the king said to Jeremiah. "Do not hide anything from me."

15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I give you an answer, will you not kill me? Even if I did give you counsel, you would not listen to me."

16 But King Zedekiah swore this oath secretly to Jeremiah; "As surely as the Lord lives who has given us breath, I will neither kill you nor hand you over to those want to kill you."

17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down; you and your family will live.

18 But if you will not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be given into the hands of the Babylonians and they will burn it down; you yourself will not escape from them.'"

This meeting parallels the first meeting in 37:13. Zedekiah had been asking the same question hoping for a different answer. Since God is not going to change His mind it must be up to the king and the people to change their minds and repent. In v.14 there is no question asked.

Jeremiah is wary of the king by this time. The king had not listened to him before. Why should it be different. Zedekiah then swears an oath and promised him immunity.

Zedekiah was going to have to have great faith. If there was ever going to be a change of behavior in Judah it was going to have to begin with him. He was being called upon to be a courageous leader.

Jeremiah's answer was for him to surrender to the Babylonians. If he and his officers surrendered all would live. If they did not the city would be taken and burned.

V. Zedekiah's Lack of Faith (Jeremiah 38:19-23).

19. King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Jews who have gone over to the Babylonians, for the Babylonians may hand me over to them and they will mistreat me."

20. "They will not hand you over," Jeremiah replied, "Obey the Lord by doing what I tell you. Then it will go well with you, and your life will be spared.

21. But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the Lord has revealed to me:

22. All the women left in the palace of the king of Judah will be brought out to the officials of the King of Babylon. Those women will say to you: 'They misled you and overcame you—those trusted friends of yours. Your feet are sunk in the mud; your friends have deserted you.'

23. All your wives and children will be brought out to the Babylonians. You yourself will not escape from their hands but will be captured by the king of Babylonian; and this city will be burned down."

The king's fear was real. In his mind the results would be much different than Jeremiah's scenario. Already there were Jews in the Babylonian camp. He feared they would kill him.

Zedekiah vacillated back and forth with Jeremiah. In the two chapters containing the verses you have studied he made contact with Jeremiah on four occasions and each time rejected the Word of God given to him.

The bottom line was that Zedekiah did not have the faith to believe the Word of God. He did not have the courage to do what God asked of him. These passages highlight the lack of courage in Zedekiah's character and the stalwart courage of Jeremiah. Even the threat to Zedekiah's wives and children brought no change in his decision.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Lead the group to follow God's Word and not the inclinations of their own minds. To follow God by faith takes courage. It is harder to rely upon God in faith when times are desperate than when times are calm. But, faith is necessary in all times. Do not rely upon feelings as Zedekiah did.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Responding Courageously

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Jeremiah 37:1-2, 6-17; 38:14-23

Background

Jeremiah 37:1—39:10

Main Idea

Faithful living calls for responding courageously to God's guidance.

Question to Explore

Why do people resist God's message?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to tell ways we can be more receptive to God's guidance.

Connect with Life:

Wars continue to occur in many places of the world. Some who study this lesson will be living in those war-torn places. Following Jesus is a daily commitment of faith when enemies are real and present. Begin by praying for courage to face the difficulties of life wherever we may live.

Guide the Study:

Say to the group: When you read the Bible you will find that those who obey God's Word have more courage than those who do not. There is a marked contrast between the courage of Jeremiah and the lack of courage with king Zedekiah. There will always be trials in life. The question is, "Do you want help in facing them?"

The message of Jeremiah did not change over the forty years he prophesied. The heart of it was for Judah to repent, obey God's Word, and be blessed. Anything else would result in a curse.

Question: How did the officers of the kingdom, priests and people treat Jeremiah? What did they think he was, a true prophet or a traitor?

I. No One is Listening (Jeremiah 37:1-2).

Call upon a student to read the verses.

Ask: Why would Zedekiah be called a "puppet" king?

Ask: Why do you think no one listened to Jeremiah?

Discuss this: What was the situation facing Judah at this time?

Say to the students: The times were grim. Judah faced a formidable enemy.

Ask: Do you believe you would have acted any different? Have there been times when you and refused to listen to God's direction?

For the Leader: Describe a time when you, yourself, did not listen to God's direction.

II. This is What the Lord Says (Jeremiah 37:6-10).

Ask someone to read the passage.

Seek opinions: What is the significance of the repetition of the phrase "This is what the Lord says?"

Remind the group that God wanted Judah to rely upon Him and not the Egyptians.

Ask: Who was more faithful to help Judah, the Egyptians or God?

Ask: What was Zedekiah's interpretation for the Egyptian's leaving? (Answered prayer).

Let someone in the group describe a time when they misread an answer to prayer.

Remind the group: Wishful thinking will not save the day. God emphatically said the Babylonians would not leave Judah until they had conquered the city. It will not take very much for them to succeed (v. 10).

Ask: On which side of the conflict was God?

Tell the students that it is always important to be on God's side.

III. Jeremiah Attempts to go to Anathoth (Jeremiah 37:11-17).

Ask a class member to read the passage.

Remind the group of the importance of Jeremiah's purchase of a plot in Anathoth. This was an object lesson that the people, a remnant, would return one day. Land was valued and passed down from one generation to the next.

Discuss with the group: Why was the siege temporarily lifted? Was it an opportunity for Jeremiah to visit Anathoth?

Ask someone: Do you believe Jeremiah was under constant watch? Why?

Continue: What was the charge leveled against Jeremiah? What was his defense?

Let someone in the group tell what the officers did with Jeremiah?

Share this: Notice in verse 17 that Zedekiah once again had Jeremiah sent for so that he might ask "Is there any word from the Lord?"

Ask: Do you think Zedekiah thought that God might change His mind? Do you keep asking God for an answer hoping that your persistence might change His mind?

Remind the group that it is not for a believer to try and change the mind of God.

Tell the group: God has a plan for each one and it is the believer's task to align his life with the will of God.

IV. Zedekiah Calls for Jeremiah Again (Jeremiah 38:14-18).

Ask a member of the group to read the passage.

Say to the group: Have you noticed a pattern with Zedekiah? He keeps asking the same question hoping for a different answer. Has that been a pattern in your prayers?

Ask: Do you think Jeremiah is getting weary of the king by this time?

Remind the members once again of Zedekiah's lack of faith in God and Jeremiah.

V. Zedekiah's Lack of Faith (Jeremiah 38:19-23)

Ask another group member to read this passage.

Ask: What was the real fear the king had concerning surrendering to the Babylonians? (Some of the people had already surrendered and he feared being turned over to them. He had not been the most benevolent of rulers.)

Remind the class: In these two chapters Zedekiah had made contact with Jeremiah four times. Each time he rejected God's Word. These passages highlight his lack of faith and courage and Jeremiah's great faith and courage.

Encourage Application:

Share: The Word of God constantly challenges those who read to hear and obey. In Hebrews chapter 11 one can read about heroes who stood up for God. It takes courage to risk one's life for the cause of God's plan.

Encourage each other and stand with each other against those who oppose your faith. Be a Jeremiah in your community. Keep going no matter the cost.

Quote this old hymn to dismiss the group:

"Ye that are men now serve Him Against unnumbered foes;
Let courage rise with danger, And strength to strength oppose"⁶

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

⁶ "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus", Baptist Hymnal, pg. 419.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Responding Courageously **Jeremiah 37:1-2, 6-17; 38:14-23**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Ask for single definitions of courage.

Write the answers on a board or on paper. (Bravery, nerve, pluck, valour, guts)

Let someone in the group tell who is the most courageous person he/she knows and why?

Ask: Who was the most courageous in the lesson today? Jeremiah or Zedekiah? Why?

Ask: Have any of you had to stand alone for what you thought was right? Tell us about it.

Question: Do you think that it is important for young people, your age, to take a stand for the Word of God?

Have a volunteer lead the group in prayer asking God to give courage to each one.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Responding Courageously***
Jeremiah 37:1-2, 6-17; 38:14-23**Beginning the Service:**

Begin the service with an appropriate hymn or song of praise such as
My Life Is in You, Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #518; CCLI #17315.

Offering:

The offering is for the Lord. Make known some of the ministries for which it will be used.

Praying for the World:

The Khandelwal, whose name is derived from their place of origin (Khandla in northern Rajasthan – the largest state in India) have both Jain and Hindu followers. Jains follow a path of nonviolence and are strict vegetarians refusing to eat onion, garlic, and ginger. They believe that through their own efforts their soul can progress along a ladder to God. Anyone who has conquered his own inner enemies and achieved the state of supreme being is called “conqueror”. Jainism is one of the oldest religions in the world. Jains are typically well-educated, very literate and have influenced society at all levels – social, political and economic – yet they do not know the God of the universe who can save them from their sins.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Courageous Caleb

Joshua 14:6-15

6 Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. **7** I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, **8** but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly. **9** So on that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.’

10 “Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! **11** I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I’m just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. **12** Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.”

13 Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. **14** So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. **15** (Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.)

Then the land had rest from war.

It is not hard to see a contrast between Caleb and Zedekiah, and similarities between Caleb and Jeremiah. Caleb had courage and Zedekiah had none. Caleb listened to the Word of the Lord and Zedekiah did not. With the Lord on his side Caleb was able to conquer the giants in the land even though he was eighty-five years old. Then there was rest for those living there.

Caleb's father was not an Israelite but was a Kenizzite from a tribe of the Edomites. Through marriage he was associated with Israel. It did not matter that he was not a full blooded Israelite. He was a faithful follower of God. Therefore, God chose to use him and bless him with an inheritance in Canaan.

The words of the song **Bigger Than Any Mountain** (www.namethathymn.com) illustrate well how Caleb thought. The words include “Bigger than any mountain, bigger than anything. God is bigger than any mountain that you can or cannot see.” Neither the mountains nor the men intimidated Caleb. He had God on his side.

How does Caleb's courage manifest itself in his life?. It was by his obedience, God's faithfulness, and his endurance.

He drew courage from his obedience to God. ***"I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly."*** Six times the Bible refers to Caleb in this way, "wholeheartedly" (Numbers 14:24; 32:13; Deuteronomy 1:36; Joshua 14:8, 9, 14). He carried out the instructions of the Lord with all his heart. God had promised him the land and he believed God to possess it. It accomplishes little to sit and listen to God speak if you are not willing to obey.

He drew courage from God's faithfulness. ***"He has kept me alive for forty-five years"***. He acknowledged that it was God who had kept him alive. It was God who would fulfill His purpose for his life. When he spoke this he was eighty-five years old. He waited for God to make His promise good. Therefore, he received his inheritance.

Caleb's courage was revealed in his endurance. ***"I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then"*** (v. 11). Caleb was a man who had endured the hardships of the wilderness experience and the campaigns to conquer Canaan. Caleb was not someone who just showed up at the end to receive his reward. He was ready for battle. "Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory" (William Barclay 1907-1978. First statement, written or verbal, not located).

What was ***"the inheritance of Caleb"***? It was the mountainous area of Canaan known as Hebron. It included the burial place of Abraham and Jacob (Genesis 23:19; 25:9; 50:13). It was the home of the Amalekites, a giant race of people. Caleb volunteered for the hardest assignment of all in the conquest of the land of Canaan. Interesting enough he was the only one to fully complete the task God gave to him.

According to the word of Caleb he would drive the giants from the land (v. 12). He had waited forty-five years to see his plans come true. Even though the Amalekites held the high ground and had the strategic advantage, Caleb had the power of God. He would be successful.

The Apostle Paul had that attitude while writing to the Philippians 4:13 ***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***

An eighty-five year old warrior is an example of courage for every age but especially for those who feel too old to make a contribution. Many great achievements have been made by men and women past the age of sixty-five, or even eighty-five.

Galileo made some his greatest scientific discoveries at the age of 73.

Astronaut John Glenn returned to space at the age of 75.

American Benjamin Franklin was a framer of the United States Constitution at the age of 81.

Michelangelo was still producing masterpieces at the age of 89.

A great Christian martyr, Polycarp, at the age of 86, refused to deny his Saviour and went to the stake, saying, "Eighty and six years have I served Him and He has never failed me. Will I deny Him now?"

Alice W. Rollins wrote "God's best gift to us is not things, but opportunities. Take courage no matter what your age. With God on your side there is victory."

Dream big. Keep your courage intact. Your God is as big today as the day you first met Him. Courageous Christians do not come with a throw away date. Challenges come to children as well as adults. Make sure that your eye is upon the Lord and not upon the mountain that seems so high. "God is bigger than any mountain that you can or cannot see."

Call to Commitment:

"Courage is doing what you are afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you are afraid." – Eddie Rickenbacker (www.quotationspage.com).

"Courage is fear that has said its prayers." – Karl Barth

Perhaps Mark Twain described it best. He said: "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear."

Is it time for you to recommit your life to the task for which God called you.

Concluding the Service:

Pray for courage for each member of the group as they face the challenges of the coming week. Invite those who have not submitted their life to Christ to do so today. Ultimate courage is found in Him.

Close by singing

Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105