**THAT'S THE WAY THE CHARACTER CRUMBLES : CRUMBLING COURAGE**

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I was thinking recently, how many things crumble? Have you ever thought about that? Things crumble, like cookies crumble, buildings crumble. Empires crumble. Sculptures can crumble. The economy definitely can crumble. Our nation is crumbling. That's what a lot of people think. Basically when more weight is added, that can be sustained. the object will crumble.

But there's something else that is crumbling that is far greater than the objects I talked about earlier. I'm talking about our character. That's right. Our character is crumbling. It's collectively in shambles. When something crumbles, you have pieces, you have fragments. As I look around our world that kind of describes where we are, it seems that things are inverted and perverted. What is good is bad. What's bad is good. Boys are girls, and girls are boys. Everything is characterless. And I'm arguing that the only character we have left in our culture comes from God himself.

We have just a residue of character in people, and that comes from the Lord Jesus. There's definitely a chasm, a void when it comes to character. And I've been studying character recently, and I thought we would take over the next several weeks, a character tour. We would talk about the crumbling of character. But better than that, I want us to land on how to increase our character quotient.

We're going to see three things basically. Number one, character is a **choice**. Say the word choice with me. Choice. It's crazy how many choices we have that are character driven. In fact, they happen so fast. A lot of us don't think about the fact that it's a character decision. Those decisions we make in marriage and parenting and dealing with our finances and business and school and sports and all those things. **Character, I define it as an outward reflection of an inward connection.**

So we have to choose character, and we're going to see that throughout this series. This is kind of an overview, also character, and this is not fun, but it's just reality. Character always increases, it's always developed in a **crisis** situation. Say Crisis with me. Crisis. The Bible talks about testing, temptations, and talks about suffering. It compares our lives to gold and a goldsmith to silver and a silversmith. When the heats turned up, you scrape the impurities off. And then when the goldsmith or silversmith sees their reflection, they know the gold or silver is ready. That's what we're going to be driving at, a crisis situation. And maybe you're in a crisis situation right now.

So often God puts us in the opposite to bring out the character that should emerge from a particular situation. For example, let's say patience. Let's say God wants us, and he does want us to have patience. We need to wait on the Lord, the Bible says. Well, he's not just going to go, "Okay, develop patience." He might put us in situations that would tempt us, that would test us with impatience. So that's how he's going to build patience.

So, characters developed by choice in a crisis situation, also with **community**. Community. That's church. Now, the importance of rubbing shoulders with people. Hebrews 10:25. The importance of that is the fact that we're glorifying God. We're worshiping God. But also one of the benefits of being in church is this thing called community. Here I can learn and "iron sharpens iron", the Bible says. One brother, one sister sharpens another one. So together, collectively, we're building character. It's an outward reflection of an inward connection. True character comes from God himself.

Today we're going to talk about one certain aspect of character. Let me get into it this way. Have you ever seen those Low T commercials? Men, do you want to feel younger, stronger, leaner, and have more energy? You don't have to slow down past 40. You need testosterone. And these low T clinics are everywhere. Have you seen these? Have you seen these? Okay. A Brahma bull could walk into one of those clinics and they would say, "You have low T." You're going to have low T if you walk into a low T clinic.

But our problem guys, it's not low T, it's low C, courage. I've been talking about courage lately. Encourage is the lost commodity, isn't it? It's part of this character tour. **Courage is the God given ability to stand for the truth.** It takes a lot of courage. I mentioned it earlier when I talked about character, just to live an average every day suburbanite life. We don't realize it, but it does. Courage to keep your marriage as a priority. Courage to parent your kids, to discipline your kids, to follow through on that courage, to get up and say, "You know what? We are going to church on Sunday.", even though we don't feel like it, even though the kids go, "Well, all my friends from school aren't there." Or It's a blue birthday. No, no, no. It takes courage to do that. It takes courage to live a pure life. It takes courage not to log on to that website. It takes courage to turn from that group that are doing things you shouldn't do that don't glorify God and turn and follow the Lord. And sometimes you are absolutely alone. It takes courage. Have you ever thought about this, to tithe? Are you kidding me? The first 10% of what I make of what you make goes to the house of God. It takes courage to do that. So we have a lot of courageous people right here. So give yourselves a round of applause.

But some of us are struggling with low C, and we need to ramp up our courage quotient. We need courage. We need courage every single day. Courage can be increased. The quotient can be ramped up when we understand two basic real estate deals. The first real estate deal blew up. It crumbled. The second real estate deal happened. The title was exchanged and all the papers were signed, the lawyers were there, and the people took over the land. I'm talking about God's people. God’s chosen people, the Israelites, you remember them. God had promised them a land, the promised Land, and we're taking a trip to Israel in November. I would love to have you sign up to go. It's a trip of a lifetime. It's worth it. It'll be the best trip you've ever taken. I can tell you right now, it will, if you haven't signed up, sign up. We're going to that promised land that holy land, 300,000 square miles of real estate.

God promised Abraham, and his clan because of a famine. He cruised down to Egypt with Jacob and really multiplied. So, the Egyptians took them as slaves. They were in slavery for hundreds of years. They became the number one earner in the entire Egyptian economy. God led them out of slavery. And that represents salvation. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that these dealings God's people with the Egyptians and these real estate deals happen because of an example for you and for me. They're led out of this bondage. It illustrates salvation.

The trip was supposed to take 11 days from Egypt to the Promised Land, closing this real estate deal because the deal had been done yet because of their lack of courage, because their courage just crumbled. They wandered in the desert for 40 years.

If I could come up with a phrase that illustrates the children of Israel, it would be this. “Let's get ready to crumble!” That's Michael Buffer. They crumbled. Is your character crumbling? It's a God given ability to stand for your convictions. The children of Israel, 2 million of them, they made it all the way to the brink of the Promised land. God said, "The land is yours. Just go ahead and possess your possessions." How easy is that? But remember, God says, "Possess your possessions." God said, "I've already given the land to you. Just possess it."

It's like this Christmas present. A good friend of mine gave me, I didn't open it until this week. I don't know why I'm not that guy. I love to rip open presents, but I didn't open it. I didn't open it. I possessed it. It was in my den. I just didn't open it.

That is the children of Israel. God has possessions for you to possess, yet you have to possess them. I have to possess them. God's not just going to drop some promised land into your lap or my lap. The Bible says God takes care of the birds. He feeds the birds. (Matthew 6:26) I've never seen a bird sitting on her branch with his beak open toward heaven, waiting for God to drop a worm in his beak. We have to claim it.

As we claim it, that's where character develops. Character develops in the claiming of the land. So God's people were on the brink of this incredible real estate deal. And you know the story, God told them to pick 12 leaders of the 12 tribes to do a secret reconnaissance mission. They go out and check out the land that was already theirs. They come back. Everyone thinks it's going to be awesome. Everyone thinks, we're ready to claim the land. But the Bible says something very, very human. Anytime you hear the word, but what comes after it is usually bad. Let's read it in Numbers 13:27-28. Now, these are the spies, the 12 spies of the 12 tribes of Israel. It's funny, two of them. We know Joshua and Caleb. What do you name your kids? Joshua. Caleb. How about the other 10? Do you know their names? Name the 10. Ah, you can't. I can't because they're the first group of vision vandals. A bunch of haters. A bunch of piranhas. The Bible says **Numbers 13:27-28, 27 “They gave Moses this account: ‘We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit.”** Ooh ah, ooh ah,. But the people, but say but with me. **28 “But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large.”** And the Bible says they went negative. (Numbers 13:31-32) They became the first vision vandals. You know vision vandals, you know at your company. You come up with an idea, they extinguish it. You know vision vandals at the school, on your team, at the church. And they spread this bad report, these negative people. And suddenly everyone believed the negativity. And they were like, "We don't want to have the courage it takes to claim the land. I wish we could go back to Egypt, man, I wish we'd have died in the desert." These are God's people. Let's get ready to crumble. Because they're crumbling. Their courage is crumbling.

I mentioned a piranha earlier, I used to have piranha. Did you know that? Well, you do. Now. I had 30 of them in an aquarium of 30 piranha. They were about this long. And guys, again, if you have low T, you'll appreciate this. We would throw goldfish, I hate to say this, in the aquarium. Those piranha would just shred those things. My testosterone increased when I would watch this.

I can't wait for emails and texts from all of the animal lovers. I love animals. But that's part of the wild kingdom. Goldfish don't swim very long in a tank full of piranhas. It's just the way it is. Something interesting happened with these piranhas. I began to see marks on them. I was thinking to myself, we haven't thrown any goldfish in lately. Then I saw one or two that had died. And I'm like, "Wow. They're chunks taken out." They were eating each other. And finally there was one left. I just named him Bill because I know a guy named Bill who's a pretty tough guy, and he kind of had injuries. He's kind of swimming sideways. And poor Bill clocked out too. You know any piranha people in your life? Always negative and tearing you up. Then if they tear you up, they'll turn on each other. Stay away from the piranha people.

That's why I've written that book The Right THEY. Who are THEY in your life? You better have the right THEY. Stay away from the piranha people. Joshua and Caleb almost lost it. They were almost killed and torn up by these piranha people. So Israel did not make it into the Promised Land. This first real estate deal blew up. It crumbled because of their low C.

But let's go to real estate deal number two 40 years later, and most of you know the story, but another real estate deal, Moses punches his ticket. The J-man Joshua steps into his size 14 sandals to take over. Because remember, Joshua and Caleb were the only two that made it out of 2 million vision vandals. God let these people just die. They ate each other up, kind of like the piranha. And now you have Joshua and Caleb. You have a new generation, and they're on the brink of real estate deal two. They also faced a wall of water at flood stage, the Jordan River.

So God does a quick Ted talk. He tells them some things. And this is really the secret of how to build courage. You want to build courage? I do. Let's see what the Bible says. The Bible says in **Joshua 1:6** God says to them, **“Be strong and courageous,”** Remember the promised land promised 400 years earlier to Abraham and his clan? **“…because you will lead these people** **to inherit the land** **I swore to their forefathers to give them.”** Be Strong and courageous. That's right. **Be strong and courageous because of the promises of God.** Guess how many promises there are in the Bible? 3000. We can simply claim those promises. Now we've got to take a step of faith and claim the land that God has for us. And God has land in every single person's life for us to claim.

But we don't just sit there on a branch with our beaks open, waiting for the worm. No, no, no. We make a choice. We understand in a crisis situation there we're going to face conflict. And when we're involved in community, rubbing shoulders with the right people, suddenly because the promises of God, boom. We claim the land.

Now, why in the world with God challenged Joshua to be strong? Well, obviously he was tempted to be weak. If he was already strong, he wouldn't have said that. How many times have I faced a situation, have you faced a situation where we need courage, where we need strength, and I'm like, "God, I'm just weak." But see, when we humble ourselves, that's when God gives us the strength and courage.

He kind of was tempted, I'm sure, to blend in. He was like, "Man, I don't want to face these people again. I don't want them to hate on me again. I don't want these piranha people to bite on me and tear me up again. I don't want that." But God says, Be strong and courageous because of the promises, the promises of the land I've given you.

But here's something else. God says, **"Be strong and very courageous because of the power of My word."** I'm talking about the word of God. **Joshua 1:7, “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law My servant Moses gave you;”** Not some of it, not a little bit. All of it. They only had five books of the Bible back then. We've got 66 today. **“…do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.”** God wants success for you. Now, success is living in the will of God. It's not health and wealth and living problem free and illness free and crisis free. No, no, no, But he says, be strong and courageous once, and be strong and very courageous. Twice the power, the sheer octane of the word of God. When I hear the word of God, read the word of God and obey the word of God, I'm infused with courage.

I love to say this because we live in the land of Bible studies. The last thing a lot of us need is another Bible study. Let me say it again. The last thing you need is another Bible study. You don't need another Bible study. You need the Bible to study you. You need to apply the word of God. I'm not saying you shouldn't know the Bible, I'm all about that. But information without application is an abomination.

The word “strong” in the original language. “Be strong and very courageous.” You will not believe what it means, guys with low T. It means “to be a man.” So our issue woo, thank you, was that Rick Flair. Woo. So our issue, woo, is not low T, it's low C, be a man.

Hey guys, are you leading in your homes? Have you talked to your kids regularly about their relationship with Jesus? Does your family see you taking the lead and going to church? Being generous. It's time for us to be a man because too many of us see Jesus as a pale, frail, blue, wide decaf, sipping white boy. Jesus was all about and is all about courage. He's not the Prozac Jesus. He's a powerful, bold, courageous lion of Judah. And sadly, we have declawed the lion of Judah.

The third one. **Be strong and courageous because of the presence of God's spirit.** The presence of God's spirit. **Joshua 1:9, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified;”** Obviously, he was dealing with fear too. **“…do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”**

I got to drop a name here. Do you mind? I'm 61 years old. I can name drop now. I'll never forget this. Troy Aikman and I were going out for sushi. I promise you one day, okay? I won't tell you the story. People are laughing at me. I'm okay. I'm not going to tell the story. I'll tell it later. No, really. We were going out for sushi one time, and it was during the height of the Cowboys Super Bowl run. One of the Super Bowl runs back when they had Jimmy Johnson.

There were some big controversies, and we were driving to this restaurant and we're in this SUV and Troy's driving. I'm looking down and I'm seeing all these bros, bro, guys, you can tell they were listening to talk radio and they were talking all about the Cowboys and this and that, and what's Troy Aikman going to do, and how about the situation with Jimmy Johnson and Jerry Jones and Michael Irvin. Some serious problems. I'm thinking to myself, if these bros knew that Troy Aman was right there next to them in traffic, they would lose their minds.

How often have I been in a situation and I had no idea the proximity of Jesus? Sometimes we pray, "God be with us." No, no, he's already with us. We have to realize he's with us.

So, men, do you want to feel younger, stronger, leaner, and have much more energy? You don't have to slow down past 40, you can have courage.

Father, thank you for this message. Thank you for this opening installment of this series on character. God, I know that in my life and in all of our lives, we struggled with things that crumble, and I pray that we would stand character up and live this solid life as we reflect you, our sinless savior, the lion of Judah, in Jesus' name, amen.