

ONE PRAYER; WEEK 1  
Unstoppable Courage  
Craig Groeschel

Well, if you have your Bibles with you today, or if you have the Bible on your phone at YouVersion, would you turn to 2 Samuel, Chapter 23. Our theme for One Prayer is "Unstoppable", could you all say, "Unstoppable".

I want to talk to you today about unstoppable courage, so as you're turning there in your Bibles, if you give me just a moment I want to just kind of gather my thoughts.

Alright here we go, "One Prayer", what do we have? Just hundreds of churches all over the world, no pressure here! As if I feel good enough for this, I've never felt good enough for this. I don't know enough; I mean, I feel so freaking insecure. Come on, pull it together, pull it together you can do this! You can do this! You're ready, no pressure! Everybody's watching, you're probably going to blow it anyway! Shake that thought! Here you go, you can do it, get ready and go! Check your zipper! Check your zipper! That's good, go!

You all have a spiritual enemy, his name is Satan. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The Bible tells us that he roars around, he's a lion roaring around, seeking someone to devour. His great weapon is the lie that he uses to create fear and insecurity.

If you're taking notes today, I'd like for you to write this down:

THE PATH TO YOUR GREATEST POTENTIAL IS OFTEN STRAIGHT THROUGH YOUR GREATEST FEAR.

The path to your greatest potential is often straight through your greatest fear. Today, I want to talk to you about unstoppable courage.

My name is Craig Groeschel and I'm the pastor of Lifechurch.tv, and it's my honor to welcome you, your pastor and your church. I want to tell you thank you so much for your kingdom mindset of partnering with literally thousands of churches around the world. We are so honored to partner with you in this unifying movement that God is calling "One Prayer".

Here's what I'd like for you to do today, I want you to think about what is your greatest fear. I'm not talking about fear of losing your kids, or something like that; but your personal fear, what is it that you fear more than anything else?

For some of you, you might say, "I fear failure! I'm so afraid to try because if I fail I'll feel so insecure."

Others of you, you might say, "Well, I fear conflict. I don't want anybody to push back on me", or "I fear rejection", or "I feel like I'll never be good enough, I'll never measure up no matter how hard I try, I don't feel like I'll ever be good enough".

Quite honestly for me, that is perhaps my greatest internal fear. For my whole life, I can remember feeling very insecure. No matter how hard I try I wonder, "Will it will be good enough? Will I ever measure up? Do I have what it takes, especially when it comes to ministry?" As odd as it may sound and you may say,

"Well, you've been in ministry for a long time!" I'm still plagued with such self doubts.

In fact, I was very young when I started in to ministry, 22 going on 23 or so. I served under a tremendous man of God, a great senior pastor who was an awesome mentor. He threw me into what we called the "pulpit" to preach when I was very, very young.

At the time, we were part of a very traditional, historic church and so we wore these robes which were great because they covered everything. If you ever had your zipper down baby, you were covered with a robe!

So, it was my first time to preach and he said, "You're going to be on". I had the robe and I was out greeting people as they were coming in and there was this older lady who got out of her car and was really struggling to kind of get there. She was walking rather slowly and she came up to these huge steps that led up to the front doors of the church, so I came as quickly as I could and said, "Ma'am, can I help you up the steps?"

She said, "Oh thank you, I'm so excited to hear the sermon today!" We went up step after step and I took her up and was helping her. She said, "I just love our pastor, he's so good!"

I said, "Oh, he is so good, he's one of the best I know!" And I said, "But actually, he's not preaching today."

We were getting up and she said, "Well young man, who is preaching today?"

I said, "Well, as a matter of fact I am!"

She stopped and she said, "Young man, would you take me back down to my car, because I'm going home!"

And that's exactly what we did! I took her back down and she went home. I'm like, God bless you, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I hope nothing happens to you on your way home!

That just totally messed with my mind! I already felt insecure, I'm not good enough, am I really going to be able to make a difference.

We have to understand that the path to our greatest potential is often straight through our greatest fear.

In 2 Timothy 1:7, it says this (if you have your Bibles or your notes and want to say it aloud), the Bible says:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7

God has not given us a spirit of fear. Our spiritual enemy is trying to talk you out of God's plan, by telling you that you'll never measure up, you can't do it. If you try you'll fail.

God has not given us a spirit of fear. The path to your greatest potential is often through your greatest fear. I believe that God wants to give you unstoppable courage.

We are going to look today in 2 Samuel, Chapter 23, about a guy by the name of Benaiah. Now you may say, "I think I know who that is," or you may not ever heard of Benaiah. He's a guy, that if you're not paying careful attention when you are reading through the Bible, you're going to read right by his very interesting story. In fact if you are taking notes, let me just give you some facts about this guy named Benaiah.

He was one of the top five soldiers in Israel. He was one of King David's mighty men. If you think about this, imagine one of the top five of all of the soldiers in Israel. We are talking UFC hard hitting, strength, courage and valor. If you are taking notes, he was also a General in the Israeli Army. Let me tell you what that meant. That meant that every third month, he would have full command over 24,000 troops. This guy was a leader, he was feared, and he was called to protect the country. He was also the Captain of King David's body guards. So, we are talking about a guy who was feared, revered; he was the best of the best, he was brave and courageous in every way. Here's just a glimpse of his story, 2 Samuel 23:20, the Bible says this:

Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, who performed great exploits. He struck down two of Moab's best men. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. 2 Samuel 23:20

I love this part:

He struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. 2 Samuel 23:21

That is cocky! That is courageous! Now, there's a little verse that I just read over that is so easy to miss if you're not paying very careful attention, and I want to look at this verse again. Verse 20, at the of the verse it says this, it's speaking of Benaiah, it says:

He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. 2 Samuel 23:20

It's so easy to read right past this. This unstoppable, courageous warrior, went down into a pit. It doesn't say he was attacked by the lion, it doesn't say he was trying to protect some innocent 3 year old girl. He followed this lion into a pit on a snowy day. This is before Nike high tops where you've got grippers on your shoes, he's probably wearing moccasins. He's going down and he's following a lion.

Now, I don't know about you, but I'm not big on cats, okay? I really don't like cats! Dogs are Christians, cats are not! You don't believe me, just let a cat rub up against your leg, stick it's tail up in the air, show him your bottom as he walks by, that is not a Christian thing to do!

A lion is nothing but a really, really big cat. It can crush your skull with a single bite. Where I live, we've got lots of wild animals. We kind of live out in the woods. I actually saw a mountain lion one time, nobody believes me, but someone got a picture of it. I'm telling you, if I'm lying, I'm dying! There was

a mountain lion! I also saw a bobcat! Scariest thing I've ever seen, a little bitty thing. It's like a demonic cat muscle with sharp teeth! It's just the scariest thing! I saw this little guy and when I saw him, he froze I froze, he ran the other way and I ran my way! I literally ran for my house as fast as I could and then I had daydreams that I was being chased by this little demonic cat who wanted to eat me alive!

So, here we've got a guy who goes after a lion, follows him into a cave and kills him. Crazy courage!

My good friend is a pastor, his name is Mark Batterson. He actually wrote a book on this story; it's called, "In a Pit With a Lion on a Snowy Day". What he says, is that people with real faith chase lions. I like that! Our spiritual enemy, Satan, roars around like a lion seeking someone to devour. People with unstoppable courage chase after lions. They do not let their fears stop them from doing what God calls them to do. Normal people do not do that. Normal people do not chase lions. Normal people rarely live by faith. Normal people always have excuses of why they can't do this or that. Normal people rarely ever face their fears. Normal people live with regrets, because normal people don't chase lions.

Here's what I'd like to ask you to do as you are thinking about your greatest fear, or your greatest fears. Ask yourself, how do they impact your daily living? What is the lion that you need to chase? What is it that God is calling you to do to push through your greatest fears so you can do God's divine assignment and live in such a way to bring him glory? I'm not talking about going down to the zoo and hopping the fence and finding a big cat and going, "Here Mufasa!" I'm not talking about that! I'm talking about what is it that God has called you to do that you're not doing?

Some of you, there is a ministry inside of you and you know it. There is a divine burden that is so big that you just can't stand it! There is this divine anger that you are like, why doesn't someone, and how come it isn't, and why is it this way? It's boiling up within you and there is some fear keeping you from chasing that dream.

Others of you, you've got this idea for a business and you are in a place where you don't like it and you're dissatisfied and you've got this idea, but you've been unwilling to attack it.

Some of you, it could be something like there's an addiction and you need to face your fear of going public and saying, "I really am, I'm addicted"; and chase that lion and go and check yourself in to rehab so you can overcome this thing that is stopping you.

Some of you, there's a part of the world, you've got a heart for this part of the world, and God is calling you to lead a mission experience to take people there to transform those you take and those you serve. Yet, there's all of these excuses as to why you haven't done it yet.

Maybe some of you, you've got a book that's in you and you know it! You're pregnant with a book with this idea. Yet there's excuse, after excuse, after excuse, as to why you don't try this.

Maybe God is calling you to volunteer your talents at the church.

What lion do you need to chase? What is your fear?

Some of you, God is calling you to serve in the 2-year-old room and you're scared to death of the 2-year-olds and you should be! Because they can be dangerous!

THE PATH TO YOUR GREATEST POTENTIAL IS OFTEN THROUGH YOUR GREATEST FEAR.

What I want to do today is I want to just show you very simply, two very important qualities of those that have unstoppable courage. Think about it, in light of what lion you need to chase, what is God calling you to do that your fear has paralyzed you from pursuing? Two thoughts that I pray would inspire and encourage you to serve with passion.

The first thing if you are taking notes is this:

PEOPLE WITH UNSTOPPABLE COURAGE KNOW THAT THE BIGGER THEIR GOD IS, THE SMALLER THE LIONS BECOME.

The bigger their God is, the smaller the lions become.

The big challenge today is too many people are looking at the lions, when they should be looking at God. They are looking at what they are afraid of and their fears are growing and growing and growing, instead of looking at the one that can overcome all lions and fear.

To give you an example, when I started in the ministry I told you I was 22 or 23 and I was called into a downtown church. Just a great church that quite honestly didn't have a whole lot of young people...like none!

So they said, "Craig, your job is to go attract the young people." So, I had this idea to start a Friday night full-blown service to reach out to people in their 20's who were not yet married and such. So, I came up with all of these ideas and interestingly enough, I wasn't doing a very good job. People weren't coming to my other events and so, the leadership of the church started to say, "Craig, we are not really sure you are the right person."

When I came up with this idea, I can't tell you how many different excuses that people made of why it's not going to work. They said, "Your too young, you haven't been to seminary yet, nobody is going to come on a Friday night, there's no money behind it." They listed reason after reason after reason after reason of why this thing wasn't going to work and it was discouraging me. There was this vision that God had given me and yet I was afraid to pursue it because all of the different reasons why people said it wouldn't work.

Many of you right now, you've probably got something like that. There's a burden God has put in your heart, and yet everyone has told you why this isn't going to work and over and over again.

So, finally what I did, I had this idea. I took a big yellow pad and I went down with a big pen and I wrote, Reasons why Single Truth (that's what we called it, we are going to reach single people with the truth, Jesus is the single truth). Cutting edge title back in 1989! You see what I'm saying, "Single Truth". So, reason why Single Truth won't work and I went through the list; you are too

young, haven't been to seminary, don't know enough, nobody is interested, doesn't have any money. And then at the bottom I wrote, Reason Why it Will Work....GOD! And I put that sign right by the one single door exit where everyone at church had to walk out. On that Sunday morning, person after person went up and they saw the yellow note and they read it, and they read it, and they read it! All of a sudden something shifted and the church started to believe in this.

I did get reprimanded on Monday, because that was a rebellious thing to do! Do not do that, young student pastors! But, anyway!

The church shifted to this idea of God can do this and we believe it. When we stop looking at the excuses, but start looking at the source of all, all of a sudden what seemed impossible with man, was possible with God.

Lion chasers, people with unstoppable courage. They don't look at the lions, they look at their God.

In fact, a great example of this is Daniel, who also had a very scary day with a lion. The Bible shows the encounter in Daniel, Chapter 6:20-22, when the King came and asked him this after Daniel faced the lion. The Bible says:

When he (King Darius) came near to the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. Daniel 6:20-22

What's interesting to me is that King Darius was asking about your God. In other words, I don't know what's he capable of doing? What can your God do?

The big challenge today, is there are so many people who believe in God, but when they think of God, he is someone else's god and not their own God. It's an impersonal someone else. What can your god do? But when it shifts from what can your god do, to here's who my God is, and here's what my God can do, everything changes!

Let me ask you this, how big is your God? How big is he? Is he big enough to shut the mouths of the lions? Because my God is!

Let me tell you about my God! My God is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. My God is Ever present, All knowing and All powerful. With my God, all things are possible. My God is the God who spoke and hung the planets in the galaxy by His very words! My God spoke and created every living thing on earth and said, "It is good!" My God is the God who parted the Red Sea. My God is the God who could feed people with manna from Heaven. My God is the God who can send water from a rock. Let me tell you about my God. I don't know how big your God is, but my God is a big God! My God is a God who, if He wants to do anything He can, because he is all powerful! My God opens up blind eyes. My God can heal deaf ears. My God can raise the dead. That's how big my God is. My God is a God who is so good, that when mankind was separated from Him by our sinfulness, my God is so full of love that He sent His one and only Son Jesus, born of a virgin, that's how big my God is. And Jesus lived a perfect and sinless life and He shed innocent blood for our guilty sin. He died and my God

raised Him from the dead. My God says that the tomb is empty, the stone has been rolled away and we serve a risen Savior! That's how good my God is!

Let me tell you what my God did for me! My God saved me! He did! He took the most angry, bitter, rebellious, selfish guy and when I just asked Him if He was real, He showed Himself to me. I knelt down in a softball field one guy, and I stood up a different guy! Different forever! Forever! Changed! New creation, the old is gone, behold the new is here. Transformed, forgiven, healed, delivered from addictions, a new heart, a new vision, a new passion, a new calling. That's who my God is.

Let me tell you who my God is. When I'm overwhelmed, He is my peace. When I am weak, He is my strength. When I'm hurting, He is my comfort. When I am lost, He is my way. When I am thirsty, He is my living water. When I am alone, He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. His power is real. He is living inside of me. That's who my God is.

My God said, "There is no mountain too big that if you have faith like a mustard seed, He can not remove that mountain...", that's who my...how big is your God? How big is your God?

If you know my God, you won't let any lion saying, "Meow" talk you out of what your God says you can do. My God is a good God.

When you have unstoppable courage you don't look at the lions, you look at God who says that all things are possible.

People with unstoppable courage, they know that their God is bigger than the lions.

The second thing if you are taking notes is that:

THEY UNDERSTAND THAT PLAYING IT SAFE IS RISKY.

They understand that playing it safe is risky. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without what?"

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Hebrews 11:6

What you have to understand is that the goal of faith is not the elimination of risk. There is no such thing as risk-free faith. One of the tragedies today I believe of so many churches, is that we want to eliminate risk.

In fact, if I would ask most of you, "What are your goals for five years from now? What would you like life to be like five years from now?" Most people would say, "Whatever it is." But their plans would include the elimination of risk and the increase of security. When in reality, when you are living by faith, the risk increases and our man-made security decreases. And yet, most of us as Christians, we are pursuing the exact opposite of what God wants us to have. Real faith, you can see it, you can feel it, because you go against what people think and you do what God thinks.

For me, when God called us to start this church, I told you I felt insecure, not good enough and I have always felt that way. What did starting a church do? It increased the risk, and it decreased the security, "What's going to happen?" God

called me to chase that lion and I am more blown away to know that because God gave me the courage to chase that lion, there are churches around the world uniting right now. Imagine if I didn't chase that lion? Imagine if David didn't chase that giant! Imagine if Jesus had walked away from the cross. Courage, courage.

God is going to call some of you to increase your risk and decrease your security and live by faith.

Here's the amazing thing about One Prayer. Check this out, I want you to all to know this. Your church is in One Prayer, here's what you are a part of. There have been about 3,000 churches in the last couple of years gather together and give crazy offerings, to make a difference to plant churches around the world. I want you to feel this, I want you to feel this. Because of you, because of what God is doing, there have been over 1,600 new churches planted in India, Cambodia, China and Sudan, because there are some crazy, unstoppable people like you believing that all things are possible with God.

What would happen if the church came together? What if we were united? What if we dropped denominational differences and what if we were united around Christ? What if we believed we were one body? What if we believe that our God is so big that we could actually stand together and make a difference together? What if...what if...what if...what if! Chase the lion, Satan roars around, run him out!

Some of you, God has given you a vision and you have all the reasons why this isn't going to, and we couldn't, and it might not, and you are going to be afraid! Let me guarantee you, Benaiah, he was afraid! He was afraid when he faced the Egyptian, he was afraid when he chased the lion, that is the way we are. If that's you right now, feel the fear and do it anyway! Do it anyway! Take the step forth! Feel the fear and look at your God who says, "All things are possible with God".

Those words that went through my mind, the little thought you know, you're not good enough. I've got to tell you, those are not very far from the things I feel everyday! And here is what I do, I feel so insecure. Before I teach every time, here's what I do. Every time and this is so special to me. I stand before and then I simply do this, I take a step forward. What I am doing is I am saying I'm stepping out of Craig Groeschel and I'm stepping into the authority and the power and the position of Christ. I'm stepping out of myself into Him. Let me tell you what I'm doing, I'm stepping through my fear, I'm stepping through my fear. Just because I've stepped through it before, doesn't mean I don't have to step through it again. I have to step through it daily. Step into it. What's God calling you to do? Step into it! Step into it! Step out of fear and step into faith. Step out of doubts, and step into security. Step out of all of the reasons why you can't and step into the faith of a God who says, "You can, with God all things are possible." We walk not by sight, but we walk by faith. Do it, take a step. You do what you can do, trust God to do what you cannot do. You do the credible, let Him do the incredible. You do the believable, let Him do the unbelievable. You do the ordinary, let Him do the extraordinary. Why? Because you have unstoppable courage.

Let me tell you who you are. You are worth the blood of Christ. That's how special you are! You are worth the blood of Christ. Those of you who are believers, you have the same spirit inside of you that raised Christ from the

dead. You are an overcomer by the blood of the lamb and by the words of your testimony. You are blessed coming in and you are blessed coming out. You are empowered by the spirit of God, you were planted at this moment in history, because it was at this time that God could use you best to make a difference. You are not here by accident. By courage with faith, you step into what God has called you to do. Step out of yourself and step in to His anointing, because the path to your greatest potential is often straight through your greatest fear. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a power of love and of a sound mind.

All of our One Prayer churches praying together. God, we ask that at this moment that you would speak into the lives of those who are believers and God that you would draw those who are not yet believers. God, that we would not know another God, but you would be our God and it would be a personal faith.

At all of our One Prayer churches right now, there are many of you that you've got a fear and it's been paralyzing you. There's a lion that you need to chase and it's really, really clear to you right now. What I want to do is to take a moment and pray specifically for you, that you would have the courage to do what God puts before you.

You may say, "But it's a big lion, it's a scary lion!" Simply take the step! Step forward and do what God calls you to do.

At all of our One Prayer churches, those of you who would say, "You know what, it really is, I've been afraid, I've been hesitant, I've been cautious, I've been living by sight and not by faith. I want to take this step forward in faith." If that's you today, would you just raise up your hands right now? Just all of our One Prayer churches, lift them up, just right now and say, "Yeah, God is speaking to me, God is speaking to me!"

I pray right now for all of you and God, I thank you that you are a Sovereign God who knows the call you've placed on each person. And God I pray today that their mind would be renewed with truth God, that they would realize that they do not have a spirit of fear, that this is from the enemy. But they God, that they have a spirit of power and love and of a sound mind. God I pray that they would have the courage to chase the lion, that they would push through their fear and on the other side of their fear God, they could step into the greatest divine potential that you have for them.

God, I pray that today ministries would be born. God, I pray today that businesses would be born, that books would be born. God, I pray that there would be generations that would be different because a father or a mother had the courage to step through their fear into faith.

God, I pray for those who would come to Christ because your people would step through the fear of rejection and have the courage to share the goodness of your Son, Jesus, with those who do not know Him. God I pray that we would not know someone else's god, or hear about someone else's god, but we would know You as our God. And you would give us the courage and the faith to do what you call us to do.

Still praying today at all of our One Prayer churches, there are many of you that God brought here for a very specific reason. As you look at your life you

may say, "You know I feel really inadequate, I feel like I'm not good enough. How could God ever love someone who has been as bad as I have?"

Let me just say very directly, you're right you're a mess and so am I. You are a sinner and so is everyone else who has ever lived. If you feel the weight and the burden of your sin, it's because we are separated from God by our sin. If you feel guilty maybe even for something you did last night, let me tell you this, you are here for a divine purpose. You are here because God brought you here and God is reaching out to you and He wants to show you the love of His Son, Jesus. When God became flesh and Jesus shed His blood and died for you so you could be forgiven so you could be transformed, so you could be totally new. That's why you are here today and you know it.

At all of our One Prayer churches, there are many of you, you're feeling drawn to God right now and you still may feel unworthy. What do you do? Just call on Him and when you do I promise you, the same thing will happen to you that happened to me. All of your sins will be forgiven. You will be transformed. You will become brand new. You will be filled with the Spirit of God and you will be empowered to please God on earth.

At all of our One Prayer churches, those of you who would say, "That's me! Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God and I give my life to you. Take it all and save me now!" If that's you lift your hands high right now, just lift them up and say, "That's my prayer!"

Churches all over the world, those of you as you are coming, lifting your hands now, would you all just pray aloud with me, just pray aloud. Pray Heavenly Father, save me from my sins. Make me brand new. I know I'm a sinner and I need a Savior. I give my life completely to you. Jesus be first, be my King, be the leader of my life. Thank you for new life, now you have mine. In Jesus name I pray!

And all of our One Prayer churches thanked God for new life in Christ!