

Heroic Faith

Week One - Introduction

Introduction: Hello, my name is. I want to welcome everyone who's joining us online. Those of you who call vintage church home and those of you who maybe spending time with us for the first time. We're glad you're here.

This week is the first week of a new teaching series we're kicking off called **Heroic Faith: where together over 6 weeks we are going to learn how to trust God in uncertain times.**

- **I want to encourage you to host a watch party from this Facebook premier.** Those are great because you can invite friends, share on your timeline, groups and pages. **Lets still be inviting others to church!**

I want to encourage you if you haven't to join a digital small group.

These are super easy to join by video and/or if by phone if you're on the go or your internet is less than optimal.

- You can also lead a digital small group and help us keep everyone connected and cared for during the current coronavirus situation and self quarantines.

You know, as we go throughout life, all of us will face situations where we are not sure what to do or where to turn. These situations cause pressure and these pressures can cause fear and anxiety. They cause us to be stressed. Maybe you find yourself stressed and anxious today:

We as people, are no stranger to The Causes of Stress & Anxiety:

- **Economic Pressure** – times when there hasn't been enough paycheck to make it through to the end of the month. Times where personally and as a family we've had to tighten our belts. Maybe your job has shifted or you've completely had to start over in a new vocation.
- We know **Relational pressure.** Maybe you've experienced issues in your marriage or with a child or sibling. Maybe because of a misunderstanding or even a bad situation, a friendship has been fractured.
- Maybe you're no stranger to I know a number of people today that are facing **Health Pressure.** Maybe in your own lives or in the lives of loved ones. The latest report from the doctor is bringing you to a difficult place

where you find yourself questioning “What is going on in my body? Or even my mind and emotions.

- These have now been multiplied by a kind of pressure we really haven’t experienced before, a **World Pressure**. We are in an unprecedented time in modern history because now we are all feeling the same pressure at the same time all together.

All of these pressures create weight that lingers in our hearts and minds day and night, always in the back of our mind. **Maybe you find yourself under pressure, in a place of uncertainty.**

As a country and as a people, all of these pressures create in us the greatest and most transformative pressure of all, a pressure that if we’ll allow ourselves to feel, can make a big impact: all of these pressures can result in **Spiritual Transformation.**

These moments and situations remind us, teach us and train us to be more like Christ, to remember that there is more to life than what we can see:

It’s easy to ignore most pressure because you can just stay busy.

That’s the most American thing we do. Make our own way, fight through to a better future. Pull ourselves up by our boot straps.

I want to remind you as your pastor that: God does the most in you during seasons of fear, anxiety and pressure. *It’s in these moments that He, if you allow him, wants to redirect your attention and focus on him, why?*

John 16:33 Jesus reminds us that

***33** “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*

Lets remember that pressure is not always a bad thing – it is very much a part of life. *HOWEVER, if we don’t handle pressure correctly and respond to it appropriately, it can yield some very negative consequences in our lives.*

Here is our what can happen as a Result of **Negative Responses to Pressure**, if we’re not careful: *In the face of pressure:*

- **We can get lost in confusion.** What that means is - we stop thinking clearly. We stop asking the tough questions. We put off important decisions "until later." We get lost in our own thinking and feelings. This path leads us down the road to hopelessness. **We have a hope in Jesus.**
- **We can withdraw or isolate.** We can pull the whole ostrich thing. We place our heads in the sand and just wait, endure and hope that the situation just goes away. Where does that lead? Isolation. Don't isolate, why? because **we have a spiritual family.**
- **We can get mean and overreact.** (and hurt others - as well as ourselves.) Listen to this, aggression often wins the battle, but it also loses the war. Victims are mean and overreact but as Sons and Daughters of God, **we reflect peace in chaos.**

You know, the Bible is filled with people that have found themselves facing pressures and difficulty, uncertainly. In this series we are going to discover biblical principles that will settle our lives in God, help us to gain supernatural peace and equip us to move forward.

During this series: We are going to learn from the children of Israel, the Hebrews, and their leader - Moses. Let me give you a little **background.**

You guys all know Abraham. Sing: Father Abraham had many sons... Well, his son (of promise) was Isaac. And Isaac ended up having a number of sons. You may even remember Jacob and Esau. These guys all lived in Canaan, or modern-day Israel.

- **So, Jacob had twelve sons.** The back of the book of Genesis really goes through the family of Jacob and his twelve sons. One of his twelve sons, **Joseph**, in **Genesis 37**, had this powerful dream one day and tells it to his brothers. In that dream, he sees his brothers bowing down to him and serving him.
- His brothers get jealous and insecure. They sell him into slavery to Midianite slave traders that take Joseph far from his homeland - **to Egypt.**
- It was there in Egypt that the hand of God comes upon Joseph and God promotes and prospers him. So much so, that over the course of years, he ended being the second most powerful man in all of Egypt.

- Simultaneously, there is a **famine that happened in Canaan**/Israel and Jacob, Joseph's father, sends his sons, Joseph's brothers, down to Egypt to get food and bring it back. After a miraculous reconciliation with Joseph, the entire family, moved from Israel to Egypt to join Joseph. Over the course of the **next 400 years this family grew** and multiplied to over two million people, the Hebrews, all living in Egypt.
- **The book of Exodus** opens up with a new Pharaoh becoming very concerned about the growth of all of the Hebrew people. This new guy didn't know Joseph like the previous rulers did and he got real nervous of the power, strength and numbers of the Hebrews. Because of that, this new Pharaoh began to oppress them and made them into slaves.
- In the next chapter, **Exodus 2**, we see the **birth of Moses**, who becomes the deliverer of the children of Israel. Exodus chapters three all the way to Exodus 13 shows the conflict between Pharaoh and God's spokesman, Moses, as Moses repeatedly declared on God's behalf "**Let my people go.**"
- **Moses and Pharaoh get into this intense series of conflicts – which results in the ten plagues.** Finally, after the tenth and final plague, Pharaoh releases the children of Israel from their bondage to slavery and they quickly begin moving east - back towards their homeland – Canaan, or modern-day Israel.

However, almost immediately after letting them go, Pharaoh's heart was hardened and before the children are able to cross over the Red Sea and back into their homeland, Pharaoh once again pursues to conquer the children of Israel.

We pick up the story in **Exodus 14**, where the children of Israel have Pharaoh and his army pressing in from behind them, and the Red Sea before them. Now, that sounds like **pressure** to me.

Let's begin in **Exodus 14:9**: So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth before Baal Zephon.

Let's stop a minute and think what may have been going through the minds of the Hebrew people at this point. "Hey, wait a minute!" "We're supposed to be free." "Didn't God just give us the 'Get out of jail' card?" **"How could God allow this?"**

Lets pause here and ask: **Why Do We Experience Pressure:**

- Sometimes it's because **We do something unwise**. We just make some poor choices and find ourselves in very difficult places.
- Sometimes it's because **Other people make bad choices**. A lot of the challenges we face are the result of a fallen world and the results of the actions of others.
- But sometimes we end up in pressure situations because **God led us there**. That is where we find the children of Israel. I can just imagine them saying "Hey God. We didn't do anything wrong! You said to leave, so we left.

Wow. That's pressure. They have left Egypt. Two million of them. They now find themselves pressed – with a sea in front of them, and an army behind them.

Let's read on in **Exodus 14:10** As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and **panicked** when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. **They cried out to the Lord,**

I bet they were afraid. Talk about finding yourself being between a rock and a hard place. They found themselves crying out to God – looking for help. **They start out right but as the pressure begins to build,** their attitude changes and so does their response:

Exodus 14: 11-12: ... and they said to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? 12 Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'"

Here we see the Israelites move from trust in God to blaming God. In a crisis it's easier to complain and blame than to trust God.

Funny: This reminds me of a funny story I heard about a guy joins a monastery and takes a vow of silence: he's allowed to say two words every seven years. After the first seven years, the elders bring him in and ask for his two words. "Cold floors," he says. They nod and send him away. Seven more years pass. They bring him back in and ask for his two words. He clears his throats and says, "Bad food." They nod and send him away. Seven more years pass. They bring him in for his two words. "I quit," he says. "That's not surprising," the elders say. "You've done nothing but complain since you got here."

Again, I think it is very important that we note the shift in the people of Israel between **verses 10** and this passage. They started with crying out to the Lord. But as we look at **verses 11 and 12**, there is a **notable change**.

Here's a truth about Pressure: Pressure doesn't change who you are, it reveals who you are.

I see the Israelites moving from **holding up their hands to shaking their fists**. anxiety can cause you to forget God's power and goodness. In other words, **Fear can cause you to lose faith in God**.

I want to spend some time right now and look at that difference between lifting our hands and shaking our fists.

When we hyper focus on why, our attitude sours: The pressures we face in life will cause us to question: What are we going to believe? Who are we going to believe? Do we respond to the storms or stop and listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit? Lots of voices, only one matters. The question is – **How does God Use Pressure and Uncertainty?**

- 1. God uses pressure to demonstrate His power.** God is not so arrogant that he is out to flaunt His power. But, on the contrary, God is the all-powerful One and sometimes we have to go through the valley before we can find ourselves in a place where we are looking up to Him. **It is here that we recognize who He is and what He can do.**
- 2. God uses pressure to grow our trust and dependence on Him.** Remember, God is more concerned about our relationship and trust in Him

than our convenience and comforts. He wants to see us grow in our faith and trust in Him.

For example, God spoke to these same Hebrew people when they were in the wilderness. **Deuteronomy 8:2** says: Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands.

- 3. God uses pressure to grow us spiritually.** That leads me to this last point – God is not wanting us to be just dependent on Him, afraid to make decisions - ambiguous and confused. He wants us to walk in a strong confidence in Him, moving forward in life and seizing the destiny that He has placed on us and in front of us.

Before we close today, let's look at how God speaks to Moses and the children of Israel about how to respond to pressure in this situation. **Exodus 14:13-15** says: And Moses said to the people, "**Do not be afraid. Stand still,** and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. 14 The LORD will fight for you, and you shall **hold your peace.**" 15 And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to **go forward.**"

In these three verses we see four very powerful ways that we can respond to the pressures and uncertainties that we face in life.

How We Respond To Pressure:

- 1. Fear Not.**
- 2. Stand Still.**
- 3. Hold your peace.**
- 4. Go Forward.**

Over the course of the next five weeks we are going to unpack each one of these concepts and my prayer at the end this series is that, you will discover biblical principles that will settle your lives in God, help you to gain supernatural peace and equip you to move forward in life - regardless of the difficulties you face.

I want to close with this encouragement from the Apostle Paul:

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. ⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, **pray about everything**. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray: