

# Everyday Courage, Part 1: The Win

Andy Stanley · Matthew 6:33-34

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## AT A GLANCE

Andy Stanley reframes courage around a single word: win. Drawing on figures from Abraham to Paul, he argues that for a Jesus follower the win is never the outcome of a risky obedience but the decision itself — because outcomes belong to God and we cannot know, in the moment, who or what hangs in the balance of our yes.

- History's turning points were made by ordinary people who went first without knowing how the story would end.
- You have likely benefited from someone else's unseen courage — a parent, a mother's choice, a coach's second chance.
- For a Jesus follower, the win is the decision to obey; outcomes are handed over to the Father, not controlled by us.

*“Obey God and leave all the consequences to him.”*

## EXPOSITION

### Scripture engaged

[Matthew 6:33-34](#) — What you should want most is God's kingdom and doing what he wants you to do. Then he will give you all these other things you need. So don't worry about tomorrow. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Tomorrow will have its own worries. (ERV)

### The argument

**A Single Decision as History's Hinge — Courage rarely happens in a vacuum, but it always requires someone to go first**

Andy Stanley opens by having listeners recall their own bravest decision — one with no guarantee of a happy ending. He then widens the lens to history: Luther nailing his complaints to a church door, the signers of the Declaration risking their lives, Rosa Parks refusing to move. His point is that these are not exceptions to a rule but the rule itself: 'a single act of courage is often the catalyst for extraordinary.' Crucially, none of these people knew they were making history in the moment — 'they didn't know their story because in the moment there wasn't a

story.' The epic scale is misleading; the mechanism is ordinary.

*Insight — The same principle that shaped nations operates quietly in your own unremarkable decisions.*

### **The Courage You Didn't Choose — Your own story was likely made possible by someone else's unseen act of nerve**

Stanley turns the historical pattern personal: many people are alive, whole, or well only because someone whose name they may never celebrate chose the harder path — parents who stayed together against advice, a mother who had a child under pressure not to, grandparents who stepped back into parenting, a coach or boss who gave an undeserved second chance. He also names the mirror image: 'a lack of courage, a failure to act, can set things in motion for generations as well,' inviting listeners to imagine how differently their lives might have gone had someone lacked the nerve to get help or leave a toxic situation.

*Insight — Every life carries the fingerprints of someone else's courage — and the fingerprints of someone's fear.*

### **Redefining the Win: Obedience, Not Outcome — Jesus followers measure victory by the decision to say yes, not by what happens next**

This is the theological hinge of the message. Stanley traces courage through Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Jesus himself walking into Jerusalem knowing what awaited him, then names 'the dynamic that connects all of their stories': a different definition of winning. 'The win is not the outcome. The win is the decision to act... the decision to say yes to God's will for you.' He grounds this in Jesus's command, 'do not worry about tomorrow,' noting the word therefore ties it to what precedes — seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. That command, he stresses, was given to people who had already predecided to follow; the not-worrying is the fruit of the prior yes, not a stand-alone platitude.

*Insight — Faithfulness is the whole of your responsibility; outcomes were never yours to carry.*

### **Obey God, Leave the Consequences to Him — A father's axiom, tested in a jaw and a Senate room**

Stanley grounds the abstract principle in his own family's story: watching his father, a pastor, get physically struck in the pulpit for confronting sin, and years later hearing him tell a reporter before a contested denominational election, 'If I win, I win, and if I lose, I win, because my responsibility is to obey God.' The phrase his father coined from that season — 'obey God and leave all the consequences to him' — becomes the sermon's summary axiom. Stanley uses it to press listeners toward whatever they are currently avoiding: a confession, a confrontation, an ask for help, a departure — insisting the fear is legitimate, but the win is available the moment obedience happens, regardless of what follows.

*Insight — Peace comes not from controlling what happens next but from having already said yes.*

## Cross-references

- [Genesis 12:1](#) — Abraham leaving home for an unknown destination as an early model of courage-as-obedience
- [1 Samuel 17](#) — David facing Goliath as a child who saw the confrontation as an offense against God rather than a battle to calculate
- [Matthew 1](#) — Joseph's risk in taking Mary as his wife cited as an act of costly obedience
- [Acts 21](#) — Paul's repeated warnings on the road to Jerusalem, which he disregards to obey what he believes God has for him

## DEVOTIONAL

There is a version of courage that waits for the ending to be written before it will act — that wants the bow tied, the outcome guaranteed, before it will move. Andy Stanley names this waiting for what it is: a different god. Safety. Status quo. Reputation. Whatever we set above all else is what we actually worship, and most of us have quietly enthroned the preservation of what we have. But the invitation on offer is stranger and kinder than we expect. It says the win already happened the moment you said yes — not tomorrow, not when the dust settles, not when you can finally see how it turns out. Abraham won when he packed for an unknown country. David won in the moment he walked toward the valley, giant or no giant. Jesus won walking through the gates of a city that would kill him, because the win was never the outcome — it was the obedience. Which means the terror you feel about tomorrow, the specific loss you can already name — income, relationship, reputation — is real, and it is also, strangely, beside the point. Tomorrow was never your assignment. Your assignment was the yes. And once given, tomorrow becomes something you receive from your Father's hand rather than something you must engineer with your own. Somewhere in you there is a decision you already know you need to make. Not a hypothetical. A real one, with a real cost attached, that you have been circling for weeks or years. The question waiting under all of this is not whether you can predict how it ends. It's whether you're willing to let obedience be the whole of the win.

## Reflection

- What decision have you been postponing because you cannot yet see how it will end — and what would it mean to call your yes the win, before you know?
- Whose unseen act of courage — a parent's, a mother's, a mentor's — set the direction of your life, and have you ever named that debt to them or to God?
- What have you quietly enthroned above obedience — safety, reputation, status quo — and what would it cost to dethrone it this week?

## Closing prayer

*Father, thank you for the legacy of those who taught us to obey you and leave the consequences to you. Thank you for every precipice where we had to choose between controlling tomorrow and trusting the one who already holds it. For everyone who hears this and thinks, yes, but it's complicated — Lord, you already know it's complicated, and it will not grow simpler by waiting. Give us wisdom to know what to do with what we've heard, and give us the courage to do it. In Jesus's name, amen.*

## FORMATION

### One thing to remember

The win is the decision to obey, not the outcome you're hoping for — say yes, and leave tomorrow to God.

### This week

Name the one decision you've been postponing out of fear of the outcome. Bring it to God in prayer this week, read Matthew 6:33-34 slowly, and ask him for the courage to act — then entrust whatever follows to him rather than trying to script it yourself.

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