

Everyday Courage, Part 4: Courage in the Mirror

Andy Stanley · James 4:8-10; 1 Peter 5:5-7; 2 Corinthians 12:10

AT A GLANCE

Closing his courage series, Andy Stanley names the fear people most often mislabel: the fear of admitting they need help, asking for it, and submitting to it. Left unnamed, that fear becomes a merciless master that turns honest people into pretenders — but Scripture insists admission, not strength, is what actually draws God near.

- Misdiagnosing fear as something else - pride, uniqueness, self-sufficiency - guarantees you stay stuck with its consequences untreated.
- The fear of needing help has three separate stages: admitting it to yourself, asking for it publicly, and submitting to it.
- Your struggle isn't a secret from the people who love you - it's a secret you're keeping from yourself.

“Admission is an invitation. The courage to admit our need is an invitation for God to intervene.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

[James 4:8-10](#) — Come near to God and he will come near to you. You are sinners, so clean sin out of your lives. You are trying to follow God and the world at the same time. Make your thinking pure. Be sad, be sorry, and cry! Change your laughter into crying. Change your joy into sadness. Be humble before the Lord, and he will make you great. (ERV)

[1 Peter 5:5-7](#) — “God is against the proud, but he is kind to the humble.” So be humble under God’s powerful hand. Then he will lift you up when the right time comes. Give all your worries to him, because he cares for you. (ERV)

[2 Corinthians 12:10](#) — Yes, I am glad to have weaknesses if they are for Christ. I am glad to be insulted and have hard times. I am glad when I am persecuted and have problems, because it is when I am weak that I am really strong. (ERV)

The argument

Misdiagnosis Guarantees the Wrong Treatment — Mislabeling fear leaves it untreated and worsening

Andy Stanley opens with his own ruptured disc, self-diagnosed and mistreated until the pain knocked him out twice. The point transfers directly: "If you misdiagnosed fear, it's actually fear, but you decided something else because nobody's afraid — you know, I'm not afraid of anything. Misdiagnosed fear, label it something other than what it is, and you're stuck." The mislabeling isn't neutral; it actively prevents healing. He insists the test for fear is simple - you know what needs to be done, but you hesitate because of a potential outcome. Naming it correctly is the prerequisite for ever addressing it, just as his back required an accurate diagnosis before surgery could fix what self-treatment never touched.

Insight — You cannot address what you refuse to correctly name; fear mislabeled as something else stays untreated and grows worse.

The Fear With Three Faces — Admitting, asking, and submitting each demand their own courage

Andy Stanley isolates one specific fear for this closing message and breaks it into three sequential hurdles: "the fear to admit to ourselves I need help, the fear then to go public somewhere and ask for help, and then the fear of submitting to the help that we need." Each stage can stall a person separately - someone might privately admit a problem but never ask anyone, or ask once but resist actually submitting to the process of help. He frames all three as courage's proper terrain: not the epic, history-book courage of Goliath-sized moments, but the everyday willingness to move through each face of this fear rather than freezing at any one of them.

Insight — Courage toward help isn't one decision but three, and stalling at any stage still leaves you stuck.

The Secret You're Keeping From Yourself — Fear as a merciless master that turns honest people into pretenders

Andy Stanley tells his congregation they are never far from someone who has "been there" and would tell them the truth plainly: "The fact that you need help is not a secret. The people closest to you already know. It's a secret that you are keeping. It's a secret you keep from yourself." He names fear directly as what has taken control - "the truth is it's got you" - and describes it as "a merciless master... a ruthless master... a liar that will eventually turn you into a liar." The pretending people fear will expose them as weak is, he argues, precisely what the people who love them will recognize as courage the moment it stops.

Insight — What you're hiding from others is usually already known to them; the real concealment is from yourself.

Admission as Invitation — Scripture's claim that weakness, not strength, draws God near

Andy Stanley draws on three New Testament voices - Paul, James, and Peter - to argue that admitting weakness is what actually invites God into a life. Paul's line "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10) is read as a deliberate, public confession rather than private modesty. James's command to "come near to God... wash your hands, you sinners... humble yourselves" (James 4:8-10) he renders in plain English as "come clean," insisting the grieving and wailing James describes is what draws God's nearness. Peter's charge to "clothe yourselves with humility... cast all your anxiety on him" (1 Peter 5:5-7) reinforces the same move. His summary: "Admission is an invitation... the courage to admit our need is an invitation for God to intervene and to enter our lives because God is attracted to humility."

Insight — Confessing weakness isn't a failure to overcome before God shows up; it's the very thing that invites him in.

Living for the Ultimate Outcome, Not the Immediate One — Bruna's story as evidence that a small act of courage outgrows its visible risk

Building on Peter's image of casting anxiety onto God, Andy Stanley applies the sowing-and-reaping principle: "You sowed your way into whatever it is that you're facing... your heavenly father is inviting you to begin sowing your way out." He then shows Bruna's testimony - a Brazilian immigrant who, despite fearing her English wasn't good enough, walked into a church's help room rather than to her car, and whose resulting healing and translated ministry material is now used across dozens of churches in Brazil. His conclusion: "You might be correct about the immediate outcome of your decision to come clean... but you don't know the ultimate outcome. So live for ultimate, not for immediate."

Insight — The fear of how a moment of honesty will land now says nothing about what that honesty might grow into later.

DEVOTIONAL

There is a particular kind of pain that convinces you, lying flat on your back staring at the ceiling, that you have found a way to live with it. You reorganize your ambitions around the wound. You call it something manageable - a bad night, a rough season, a thing you've got handled - because naming it plainly would mean admitting you cannot fix it alone. This is the quiet architecture of every unaddressed fear: not loud denial, but a slow, reasonable-sounding negotiation with what's actually happening inside you. What's striking is how ordinary the secret usually is to everyone but the one keeping it. The people nearest you have already noticed. They've tried, gently or clumsily, to ask. You've waved them off with the practiced ease of someone who has said "I'm fine" so many times it no longer feels like a lie, even though it is

one. Fear specializes in this kind of quiet fraud - not dramatic deception, just the steady erosion of honesty, one deflected question at a time. And yet the invitation on offer is not to be stronger. It is to be honest. To walk, as one woman did, past the parking lot and toward the room where someone will ask how they can help - not because the fear disappeared, but because something inside finally outweighed it. To wash your hands. To come clean. To cast the whole tangled weight of what might happen onto the one who already knows what will. Not a single act of self-improvement, but a single act of surrender - the kind that, looked back on, becomes the first sentence of a much better story than the one fear was writing.

Reflection

- Where in your life have you mislabeled fear as something else - independence, uniqueness, being fine - to avoid facing it directly?
- Who are the people within twenty or thirty feet of you who already sense something is unspoken, and what has kept you from letting them in?
- What would it look like this week to treat admitting a need as an invitation for God to act, rather than as a failure to hide?

Closing prayer

Father, thank you for this story and for the reminder it carries. Wherever this needs to land with us, or with someone we know, or with someone we're related to - would you use what we've heard today and do something extraordinary. Begin the process in the lives of dozens, and maybe hundreds, of people who need the courage to admit, to ask, and to submit to the help you're offering. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

Fear you refuse to name will master you; admitting you need help is the first courageous step toward being free of it.

This week

This week, read 1 Peter 5:6-7 slowly and pray it as your own words, naming one specific fear or need out loud to God instead of managing it silently. Then tell one trusted person what you named, even briefly.

Return to [1 Peter 5:6-7](#)