

The Rhino, The Bison, & The Lamb
The Bison - A Fortified Faith
Clay Weed

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT)

9 Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. 11 Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? 12 A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NLT)

10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. 16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Joshua 1:8 (NLT)

8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

Psalms 107:9 (NLT)

Daniel 3:13-18 (NLT)

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Which of these 3 animals (Rhino, Bison & Lamb) would you most like to see in the wild? And, why that choice? (There are wild sheep!)

Start **thinking**. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- **Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**. Why is the author trying to promote the advantages of companionship and solidarity?
- **Read Ephesians 6:10-18**. Discuss the various pieces of the whole armor of God, and why they are each chosen to represent that aspect of God (for example, the belt of truth).
- **Read Joshua 1:8**. These are God's words to Joshua. How does this message apply today under the New Covenant through Christ?

Start **sharing**. Choose a question to create openness.

- Are you putting on all of God's armor, or are there pieces you aren't putting on regularly?
- Each of the 3 animals in this series is purpose built, exemplifying an aspect of faith; going forward, dependent, and fortified. How does your current faith compare to these, and where would you like it to be?
- Do you feel purpose built for any particular aspect of faith?
- In **Daniel 3:13-18**, the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego exemplifies a fortified faith. How do you relate to this level of faith in God's protection?
- **Read Psalm 107:9**. Give an example of where you have felt this type of gratitude and recognition of God's provision.

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Take the step of reading the Word every day this week, and to put on the whole armor of God.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Encourage each other to ask God to fortify you, so that you can stand firm against all the strategies of the devil.

Start **digging**. For further study.

- Read the 2nd page and discuss it.

Question: "What does the Bible say about fortitude?"

Answer: Fortitude is the strength of character that enables a person to endure pain or adversity with courage. Although the word *fortitude* is rarely used in the most popular versions of the Bible, the concept is addressed often. Instead of *fortitude*, the word *endurance*, *strength*, or *perseverance* is used more often in our Bibles. Not only is fortitude a great quality, but we are commanded to pursue it (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:3; 1 Peter 1:5–6).

Fortitude, or courageous endurance, is mentioned in the Bible most often in conjunction with our faith in Christ Jesus. In the days when the books of the New Testament were being penned, persecution against Christians was escalating (Acts 8:1). To be a follower of Jesus could mean the loss of property, position, and even life (Acts 7:58; 12:2). So the apostles and leaders continually urged the budding new churches to stand strong, have courage, and endure for the sake of Christ (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 2:20; 4:16; Revelation 2:17).

We are also instructed to have fortitude when being disciplined by the Lord (Hebrews 12:7). Rather than become bitter and turn away from God when He takes us through fiery trials (1 Peter 4:12), we are to endure, develop fortitude, and grow in our faith and character to be more like Christ (Romans 8:29). Fortitude is not needed on sunny days at the beach; it's needed in the storms of life.

The virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31 is a woman of fortitude: "She clothes herself with fortitude, and fortifies her arms with strength" (verse 17, ISV). Daniel showed fortitude when he faced the lions' den for his prayers (Daniel 6). Esther's fortitude was evident when she went before the king saying, "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16). The lack of fortitude shown by the Israelite army facing Goliath was countered by David's strength of mind as he put off Saul's armor and picked up his sling (1 Samuel 17). And, of course, Jesus' fortitude surpasses all, as He obeyed the will of the Father and went to the cross: "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame" (Isaiah 50:7; cf. John 12:27).

We develop fortitude as we walk with Christ, following His commands, refusing to turn to the left or the right (Proverbs 4:27), and letting His Word be the lamp to our feet and the light to our path (Psalm 119:105). When we have persevered and overcome this world, the Lord promises that we will reign with Him forever (Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 20:4). Fortitude is possible by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 12:11; Mark 13:11–13) and is rewarded by our Father in heaven.

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