

As I watched a TV western from the 40's, a young boy asks the old cowboy how to be brave. The old cowboy ponders, says it's hard to explain and then says the Bible says it best: "be of good courage and he will strengthen your heart all ye that hope in the Lord."

Then I began pondering. A seeming simple sentence yet I felt it said so much, but where did it come from? Over time I thought about the quote, looked it up in a "Where to Find It" book under courage, nope. Under strength, nope, under heart, nope. There were many quotes under "hope" and there it was - from Psalm 33. Different versions of the Bible had it worded differently, but I like the old cowboy's version best. And later in the adventure when the boy had to be brave, and the old cowboy asked him how he did it, he quotes the scripture.

I've thought a lot about the scripture. In today's story lines the super heroes have bravery of epic proportions! They perform amazing feats with very little personal damage.

I've come to love the line. But my view of courage is very different as I see so many people who have strong hearts, in the most difficult of circumstances and situations, and yet seem to have "hope in the Lord." My Tucson Congregation has experienced unbelievable loss over the last year. The loss of loved ones has been devastating to families and our church family. The disease and dying process takes an almost unbearable toll. And yet there are those of amazing "good courage" who have "strong hearts" when sometimes the only thing left is "hope in the Lord." The bonds of the Church are sometimes the only strength when the bonds of family are ruptured. The bonds of strength from the Church when some are alone. The bonds of love when there have been so many "good byes" to loved ones. The courage that is displayed by those traveling "the valley." The bonds of tenderness when the well of compassion becomes almost dry. The comfort and power that comes from strengthened hearts.

I feel privileged to have witnessed the stamina, forbearance, kindness and grace - the love in action of those who will survive because they have "good courage, strengthened hearts and hope in the Lord".

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