



# Glyfada Christian Center



09/03/2025

**Preacher** Artemis; Stavros Antoniades

**Series** God's gifts

**Service** Sunday Service

**Passages** 1 Chronicles 16:34-36; Genesis 32:22-31; Genesis 25:25-26;  
Genesis 31:3; Genesis 32:26; Genesis 26:27-28; Psalm 46:10

## Gifted – The Call to Courage

### Pastor Brian – Welcome

1. Good morning to all, those in here, those out there, we welcome you all this morning. We're going to get ready to worship, so you can stand if you don't mind. If you have your Bibles, turn with me to 1 Chronicles 16, and we're going to remind ourselves this morning what we're here for. The word says beginning at 1 Chronicles 16:34-36, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

his love endures forever. Cry out, "Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise."

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said "Amen" and "Praise the Lord."

2. Verse 35 is what got my attention today. “deliver us from the nations,” there is so much going on in the world today, and we can get our mind fixed on what is happening, or we can remember that God has brought us into a place where we’re going to a new home, and we don’t have to worry about it, because He has delivered us from the nations and He has saved us. It says, “do that, that we may give thanks to Your holy name, and glory in Your praise.” That’s the end of verse 35. And then verse 36, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said “Amen” and “Praise the Lord.” So, let’s say ‘Amen and praise the Lord.’

3. Bless the Lord. He is a good, good Father. That is who He is. There’s one last verse we didn’t sing. It says, ‘You are here, turning lives around. We worship You. And You are here mending every heart. And we worship You.’ Isn’t He a good, good Father? Amen? Come on, rejoice in the Lord a little bit this morning, He is a good Father.

4. Well, we want to welcome those who are here now, and we want to welcome those that will be coming in. Good Sunday morning, March 9th, 2025. We are almost done with 25% of the year already. And I can’t even remember when 2024 started. Time is passing quickly. So much going on. I do want to bring you greetings this morning from pastor Gail. As always, we’ll be reminding you, she’ll be preaching this morning. I imagine, she’ll also worship. First service will be at 09:30 their time, so that will be 15:30 our time, since they change their clocks today.

5. I thank God that that didn’t happen to us this morning, because I wasn’t ready for that. I just flew in yesterday afternoon. My good man Stavros came to pick me up at the airport, and I was looking for his car, and all of a sudden came rolling up this little Mini Cooper convertible, with the top down. So, he picked me up in style and brought me home.

6. I tried to sleep through the night., by about 45-minute increments, but I am happy to be with you here today. I do want to report to you that pastor Gail and I were ministering at the same conference, and she preached the last service, and I think that the Glyfada Christian Center would have been very, very proud. We had an incredible ending to the conference. It didn’t hurt that we brought the worship team from Oral Roberts University with us. We had such a wonderful time. We had people healed, people delivered, but what excited me the most, was that we had several young people come forward to express a commitment to ministry. At least 5 of them committed to go to foreign mission fields. And I must confess that it’s been a long time where I’ve seen young people commit themselves to a life time of ministry. It was a good, good time.

7. My ministry time was so powerful, that we had a guy in the front row, have a heart attack, I watched him go into a seizure and fall from his chair, so we stopped what we were doing and prayed. He blacked out for a few minutes, but thank God, he came back, he felt so good after we prayed for him that he said he didn’t want to leave. But since he’d had triple heart bypass surgery, two years ago, so I convinced him that wisdom was to go to the hospital. The last we heard, he’s doing fine.

8. So, you have one pastor who can get people called and healed, and you have one that can give them cause for needing healing. So, it was an eventful few days. But do pray for pastor Gail, that will be 15:30 and 17:00 our time will be the two services this morning. We also want to pray for Anton, who is ministering in church on Crete again this morning. He’ll be

back this week, if he doesn't get too in love with the island. But from what we've heard, he's been a tremendous blessing to the church there.

9. And as always, we want to remember all of the ministry that goes on, as people from this church go out. Remember to pray for Sarah and all the ministries from Hellenic Ministries. Pray for Cecilia and all the growth at creative hands. Pray for Henneke and what she is doing in the refugee camps. Michael and his family and friends for whatever they're doing at the refugee camp up north. Teachers going out and teaching kids. We are so thankful for what the Lord does through this family.

10. We do have a few announcements. So, I will look at the paper and not you. As always remember we have Wednesday night prayer and bible study beginning at 19:00.

For the rest of the announcements watch the video.

### **Pastor Brian – Welcome to Artemis**

1. We have special ministry this morning, Artemis is going to be preaching for us today. You're going to be hearing from her and Louka from time to time, in the next months. I hope you're getting to know them, if you haven't yet, talk to them after church, arrange a coffee time. Maybe invite them over and put some food in their mouth. But as they spend the time here in the Glyfada church, until June, make sure that you make them part of the family. They're in study, that's why they're here, they're studying to be pastors, and the best way for that to happen is for them to be encouraged along the way. So, let's open our ears today, not to hear Artemis, but to hear the Lord through her. Amen, so give her a good welcome as she comes.

### **Artemis- Main Message**

1. Well, no one has ever been so excited to hear me preach. And I want to introduce myself, but you did that for me. But I can say some small things, I'm 27, come originally from Hamburg in Germany. But my parents come from the north of Greece, from a small town named, Serres. And actually today, I'm excited too, because it's the first time I preach in English.

2. And because we don't know each other so well, I decided to share a story about me. I do love peanut butter. I do love peanuts and everything to do with them. But when I'm sad, I eat the peanut butter out of the jar. And sometimes, afterwards, I feel guilty because I have stomach problems, and I'm 'You should have known better. Why did you do this?' And while I was studying for my Bachelors, I had a roommate, and she always knew when I ate peanut butter, because I came out of my room like this, stooped over. Yes and I was ashamed and you could see it, I was ashamed in my face, and sometimes I came out and held the jar out and told her to put it in her room so that I wouldn't eat it. And now that I am married, Louka has to do it.

3. But I called my sermon today, 'The Call to Courage.' And this is because I want to talk about courage and vulnerability today. Similar to me as I shared my story about my peanut butter problem. I want to talk about Jacob, in the Bible. And Jacob like me, has an issue.

Much stronger, but he has an issue, that he carries with him around. And it's always there and requires courage to be freed from it.

4. We're going to read from Genesis 32:22-31. "That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So, Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So, Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip."

5. So, we're going to talk about Jacob today. And Jacob is someone who has always triggered conflicting feelings within me. And Jacob is someone who struggled his whole life, he struggled from his birth, because he was born as the second son of his parents, Isaac and Rebecca, after his brother Esau. And the Bible says the following about his birth. I'm going to read out, it's in Genesis 25:25-26, "The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so, they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so, he was named Jacob, heel holder. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them."

6. So, Jacob is a man who struggles in the womb, to be the first to see the light of day. And he is also the one who sold his brother a lentil dish, when he comes back from the field exhausted. And then also, Jacob is the one who gets the blessing of the first born, by trickery. Afterwards he has to flee because of the fear of the revenge of his brother.

7. And also, Jacob is the person of deceit himself. Because he was betrayed by Laban, when after seven years of work, is not giving him the woman he wants to marry. So, Jacob continues to fight, and he fights for the woman he wants to marry. And it is exactly this tension that triggers, conflicting feelings within me, because, on the one hand Jacob is a fighter, and this is something that you can admire, and then, on the other hand, Jacob, the heel holder, is a cheater. And that triggers a feeling of insecurity in me.

8. What's fascinating about that, is that he always carries that thing with him. He carries it with him in his name, because Jacob as it logically means 'heel holder, cheater'. Nevertheless, you have to imagine what that means, if you go to people by the first meeting, and you say, 'Hello, my name is Jacob, I'm a heel holder.' As if in the first meeting, I tell people, 'I can't control myself, while eating peanut butter,' sure everyone of us would be thinking, 'a little too much information for a first meeting.'

9. But still, it is what happens with Jacob, he's going to tell people, 'Hi, my name is Jacob, I am a deceiver.' And yet, it is his fighting spirit that I admire. Because, after it becomes increasingly difficult in the environment of Laban. He leaves and returns to the land of his fathers, to prepare to meet his brother. And he doesn't do it without a reason, because in

Genesis 31:3, we read that, “Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.”

10. So, Jacob prepares to meet his brother, the person who is most likely still angry with him, and he also hears that his brother, in meeting him, is followed by 400 men. And I thought, well I don’t know how he must have felt, but the Bible tells us that Jacob was terrified. And yet Jacob does it, he is ready to meet his brother, who most likely will have no sympathy for him. But what Jacob actually does, is he faces up to his name, he faces up to the name ‘heel holder’, and Jacob faces up to what always has been there. And it is precisely in the midst of this fear, and his brokenness, that God intervenes.

11. And what happens next is thrilling and it’s also terrifying, and you maybe you can close your eyes if you want to, but I also have an AI generated picture of it. So, Jacob is in the dark, and then someone attacks him, and then he just begins to fight. So, Jacob is doing what he has done his whole life, he just starts to fight. And then something exciting happens, because God dislocates his hip., and yet he does not defeat him. And that has nothing to do with the fact that God could not defeat him, because He could, and Jacob already realizes who he was fighting with.

12. And so, he continues to fight. He’s not scared, and he says to God, ‘I will not let You go till You bless me.’ (Genesis 32:26) So, he’s fighting for the blessing he’s longing for so much his whole life. And then God’s reaction to this, is the turning point for me in the whole story. God is not getting angry and leaves him alone there. He asks Jacob for his name. And you have to imagine that carefully. I explained that earlier, what Jacob’s name means. And God knew who he was talking to. But He asks anyway. And Jacob answers with his name. The shameful name, Jacob, heel holder, deceiver.

13. So, Jacob gives exactly the answer God wants here, not to defeat him, but to gift him with a new identity. And how does God do this? God addresses Jacob’s life issue, and He says, ‘You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have fought with God and with men and you have won.’ (Genesis 26:27-28) So, in the end God blesses him, and He gifts him with much more, because he’s now freed and has a new identity. I imagine this scene to be so idyllic. How Jacob leaves this place broken, limping in the sunrise, and yet he is freed from his life’s theme and has a new identity.

14. I want to take a closer look at three points that I think are essential as to why Jacob came to that point where God could gift him with a new ending.

- a. So, the first one is: Being courageous means getting hurt.
- b. Leaving your comfort zone in order to grow and
- c. In the end we want to look how it helps us that we know God, and how this helps us to overcome our shame to come to the point where He gifts us with a new ending.

15. The first one is being courageous, which means getting hurt. So, when I look at Jacob’s story this is what I find here. Jacob wants to take a step forward, he wants to sort out the mess he has caused, and he courageously goes ahead to face his brother, and along the way he encounters God. And when he met God, it was more than painful. Because if we imagine that happening, it was physically painful and Jacob’s hip was dislocated and he continued to

fight. And even the moment God addresses the shameful laden reputation, it is emotionally hurtful. So, for me this whole scene embodies Jacob in his vulnerability.

16. So, I called my sermon today, 'The Call to Courage.' This is no coincidence. It's a book title of an author, Rene Brown. She's a renowned researcher and she researches, 'Shame, Courage and Vulnerability.' So, in one of her talks, she has a story and an incident and she says, she recently told someone, and she told that person, 'I'm researching vulnerability and courage.' And the person she was talking to, said, 'Very interesting, researching opposite poles, how interesting.' And then she starts laughing and the never-ending audience less, because her appeal to the call to courage, shows that there is no courage without vulnerability.

17. She even says that in her field of research, you can see or measure how courageous somebody is by how willing he is to be vulnerable. So, she goes on, the story is long, but in her words, her point is there is no innovation in your life. If you want to stay forward in your life, if you want to grow, if you want to make your gifts available for other people, then it's that you will get hurt. And that's what happens when people put themselves out there.

18. But her realization is, it's not a maybe, it's a necessity. If you want to grow in your life, and if you want to have innovation and if you want to be renewed, then you will get hurt. And this is also reflected from Jacob's behavior, because Jacob, makes himself incredibly vulnerable when he decides to go and meet his brother. And we have just spoken about the encounter with God, and how this is Jacob's holistic vulnerability. But still, despite all his physical injuries, he decides to fight on, and he needed to do that to grow.

19. So, my second point was, Jacob leaves his comfort zone and then he gets a new identity by God. So, we want to look into this. So, Jacob certainly had to decide that day to be brave. I mentioned it earlier; he was a fighter. He knew what could happen when he meets his brother; he still decides to do it. Even when we think about the start with Laban, Jacob isn't someone who hasn't stepped out of his comfort zone. So, that day when he decides to meet his brother, he's risking that he will get hurt. But Jacob does that because he has changed. Because God told him to leave.

20. And there's another phrase that Rene used and I think I want to share it, and it's so powerful, because she talks always about courage over comfort. And I'm pretty sure that she knows that it's always easier for us to stay in our four walls where we're safe, it's always safer just to stay out of everything that could get you hurt. Nevertheless, she's always talking about this matter and saying, 'I'm choosing this today. I can't promise for tomorrow, but today, I choose courage over comfort.'

21. So, it's similar to me preaching the first time in English. I had to choose courage over comfort, this morning. And when I look at Jacob, he's not addressed by God in any life situation, he decides to leave his comfort zone. He follows God's call, and then he's addressed by God with his name. So, he's addressed in complete vulnerability, and in the moment where he clings to God in his last strength, because he was clinging to him and saying, 'I will not let You go until You bless me.'

22. And thinking about this, this week, well you know the person I'm going to talk about better than I do, Cecilia, because this week we went and visited her, and I was thinking

about my sermon today, and she inspired me so much. Because, I thought, if you want to talk with someone, that followed God's call, stepped out of his comfort zone, and even yesterday at the woman's day, you said I offered my God my pain.

23. So, someone that took everything that happened in your life, and then lets God give you a new identity and step out of it and start that process of courage. So, if you want to talk about it with someone, talk about it with Cecilia, because this amazed me.

24. So, I said that the last part is about, what can we do, how does it help us that we know God. So, we take these steps and start this process. And then I looked into my own life, and then I asked myself, 'When did God address my personal life issues?' And I remembered the first time that it happened, and it was about an issue that scares me, and an issue I wish people would not realize how deeply rooted it is in me. And sometimes I have allowed that thought become my identity. And it was about me thinking that I was just sometimes not good enough.

25. And I'm not saying that it is always like this. Even back then it wasn't. But there could be days where I could assess myself very well, and then there were days where I just thought that I'm not good enough. And I'm sure I'm not the only person feeling this way. So, then I remembered when did God start to change that. And I remembered that it was during my time in the discipleship school, I don't know, and we had a prayer room, and I went there and I always took some verses with me, and I prayed over them. I read them out aloud, I wanted to understand them, and it wasn't understanding them like in my mind, I wanted to understand them in my heart.

26. So, that day, I asked myself, what it means when in Psalm 46:10 it says, "Be still, and know that I am God." And I know that I never absolutely comprehend in every situation who God is. But that day, I realized that it doesn't really matter. Rather, I have come to understand that being still in my heart, with everything going on around me, it's only possible when I have realized that God is God, and to be still to let go of my fear, because it was just enough for me to recognize that God is God.

27. And I realized that I'm allowed to be vulnerable, I can stand by myself, I have parts that are really strong, some vulnerable parts and that is OK, because God is God. And what I am, is just determined by my relationship to Him. And so, when we want to start that process, I think as Christians and as people that are here, we still have been gifted with an identity, we are His beloved children, everything that will come on that way who will get hurt by something, we will always fall back to that promise.

28. I want to very quickly share a story. So, I don't know if someone knows the story of Punchinello. It's a wooden figure, that the Germans know. It started from Max Lucado, and these wooden figures do something very interesting. They rate each other, they give each other dots or stars, and Punchinello always tries to get stars. But poor old Punchinello always gets dots. And then one day, he meets a girl, and the stars and the dots just don't stick on her. So, he asks her, 'Why?' And she takes him to a workshop, on a hill, and there, Punchinello meets Eli.

29. Eli is the carver who makes these wooden figures. And this girl goes to Eli every day, and Eli has given her, her identity. And Eli is the reason why these stars and dots won't stick on

her. Because that's not what she was made for. And then I thought, isn't it the same with us? When we read in Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God."

30. And I know that everything that I said sounds challenging. But as Christians, we have a great resource in Jesus, because at the end of the day, God met us in Jesus Christ, and He took our shame and our sin upon Himself, He fought for us, and then He died for us. Now when God sees us, He sees Jesus. So, we don't have to be ashamed, starting a process where we're given the room to address our life issues, and gift us with a new identity, because we already have been gifted with that.

31. So, today, I don't know where you need a call to courage. I don't know where you have to step out of your comfort zone, but I do know that Jesus wants to get into your life issues, He wants to gift you with a new identity. So, I want to encourage you to start that process and know that right now you are His beloved child.

32. And I want to close with that idyllic image of Jacob after he has followed his call to courage. The image, where he leaves here, He met God, his life's theme is spoken to and who leans towards the sunrise with the certainty, that he is now called Israel, which means, 'God fights for us.' Amen.

#### **Pastor Brian**

1. Thank the Lord for His Word today. Courage over comfort. Not natural courage, even, but God given. Come on, think about that, you are gifted with the courage of God. Artemis did a good job, hah. Give her a little encouragement.