

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood.
- B. When we planned this series a long time ago, today's message came later. As we watched our nation head into this week's elections, we made some changes. We moved this sermon to this weekend... because of the season our nation is in.
- C. Will you think with me today on the topic *IGNITE YOUR FEARLESSNESS*.
- D. There is woven into every human heart an instinct for self-preservation. Scientists call it the amygdala. Seth Godin calls it the lizard brain. Steven Pressman famously called it The Resistance. Let me read a little about this force:
 1. The resistance is that little voice in the back of your head, the one that tells you that it will never work, the one that insists you check your email one last time, the one that worries that people will laugh at you, the one that makes you waste time chasing every shiny thing you see.
 2. The resistance loves committees. It hates a mission.
 - a) It prefers discussion over action.
 - b) Analysis over choice.
 - c) A low profile over the risk of looking like a fool.
 - d) It shuts you down.
 3. The resistance finds excuses, it makes tasks harder than they need to be.
 4. It has a voice...
 - a) This will never work.
 - b) Things always go wrong for me.
 - c) Don't rock the boat.
 - d) It's never been done that way before.
 - e) That's not how we do it.
 - f) It's too late.
 - g) I can't go back.
 - h) Who are you to stand out?
 - i) Who are you to be special?
 - j) Who are you to expect the blessing of God?

(1) This is the voice of the dark side, the voice of the resistance, the sound of the flesh.
 5. So, the resistance demands that you study the issue one more time, or take another coffee break, or sleep on it another day until you've slept your dreams away.
 6. The resistance will do anything it can to prevent you from producing the masterpieces you were created for.
- E. Whatever steps God calls you to take, there's a force inside arguing why not to take them. The resistance has a name in the Bible... and that name is FEAR.
 1. Fear of the future. Fear of the unknown. Fear of the wrong person being elected. Fear of the economy. Fear of appearing foolish. Fear of other people's opinion. Fear of tomorrow. Fear of today. Fear of yesterday catching up. Fear of being known as a blood bought saint of God Most High.
- F. All those little fears inside you come together, wrap themselves into an ugly, green, mucousy rancid ball, and JUSTIFY you staying near to the ground when God designed you to soar.

II. Alpha Pack

- A. If you look in the Bible at Peter, James, John, Matthew, Luke... all of them were transformed by hanging out with Jesus.
- B. They were fishermen. There was a doctor, a theologian... even a tentmaker named Paul. When they encountered Jesus, something in them broke.
 1. Their fear broke.
 2. Their resistance broke.
 3. The dominance of their lizard brain broke.
- C. They rose above their fears, and became giants who changed the world. Fearless. Outside the box. Different. Bold. Creative.
- D. And I ask myself, what can I preach that would have the same effect on everyone who listens today. And it hit me.
- E. Preach Jesus. But preach him in a way they've never heard before.
- F. This whole IGNITE series is about one thing: it's about getting in your face, and getting in your face with grace.
- G. So, hi, my name is Bill. And today I would like to introduce you to Jesus. And not just Jesus as you've met Him before.
- H. But Jesus as the Alpha male, Jesus as the leader of the pack. Because that is the Jesus who broke the resistance and ignited the fearlessness of Peter, James, and John.

III. Alpha Jesus

- A. Jesus is savage, fierce, and uncontrollable. You can't tame Him. You can't contain Him. He was courteous at every turn, till it was time to overturn the status quo:
 1. *And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matthew 7:28, 29, NKJV).*
 2. *The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" (John 7:46, NKJV).*
 3. *Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. (Luke 4:31, 32, NKJV).*
- B. Jesus radiated so much authority that the on-looking world was AMAZED, and ASTONISHED. He projected power, strength, courage, wisdom, insight, and fearlessness. To read the accounts of Jesus in the Bible is to read the story of an Alpha male in the presence of beta-fied wimps.
- C. I grew up with what I would call a feminized concept of Jesus. Even the pictures of Jesus I saw were feminine. He had flowing, soft, wavy hair. He had soft features. He wore a dress. And He was usually touching a child or carrying a lamb.

- D. I don't want to deny the kindness and gentleness of Jesus. That is part of His Alpha Male manliness. But that side of His personality has been over-emphasized. I want to balance the scales and blow Jesus right out of whatever tidy, controllable, tamed little box you want to keep Him in.
- E. Let's break this down a little. Here are six Alpha qualities of Jesus... qualities that unleashed the people he met:

IV. Alpha Jesus

A. *His Speech*

1. Jesus was direct, pointed, and even blunt. He was often severe. When people needed to be faced down, Jesus faced them down. Jesus rebuked His disciples repeatedly for being stupid, foolish, and dimwitted. When one disciple asked Jesus a nosey question, Jesus told him it was none of his business: "What is that to you? Follow me!" (John 21:22).
2. In His speech, Jesus was respectful—unless He was dealing with topics beneath respect. Then, He cracked the verbal whip like nobody before or after.
3. Jesus called the religious leaders of His day fools. He ridiculed the way they were so ceremonious and officious. A couple of times Jesus called His audience a Brood of Vipers (Luke 3:7) —not very flattering.
4. He called one of His best friends SATAN, and told him in effect to get lost (Mt 16:23). Around a table full of friends, He looked Judas in the eye, and said to everybody, "One of you is a devil" (John 6:70).
5. Jesus spoke plainly. You never had to guess where you stood with Him. You knew because He told you.
6. When His religious enemies asked Jesus a question, He knew they really didn't want an answer. They just wanted to trap Him. So He refused to discuss it any further:
 - a) *Jesus replied, "I have already told you, and you don't believe me. The proof is what I do in the name of my Father. But you don't believe me because you are not part of my flock. (John 10:25, 26, NLT).*
7. Plain speaking —whatever He wanted to communicate, He just said it. Plus He said it no matter what kind of trouble it would get Him into. He didn't care about His image. He wasn't here to impress anybody. And He wasn't here to be impressed by anybody.
8. His life was risky, bold, adventurous and wild without ever being unrighteous. If Jesus were in most churches today, we would convene committees on how to tame the Untamable.
9. This makes me admire His disciples even more. Except for Judas, they all stayed loyal to Jesus till death. And it wasn't because He was nice to them; it was because He was so TRUE that by comparison, they knew that everybody else just had to be false:
 - a) *At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you going to leave, too?" Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. (John 6:66-68, NLT).*
10. If something had to be said, Jesus said it. And He said it in the fewest words possible.
11. His speech was RATIONAL. He appealed mainly to the mind and the conscience. He told stories, but didn't manipulate. He taught, but didn't push.
12. Jesus was an unschooled carpenter, but He never met a man who got the better of Him when it came to logic, debate, theology, or argument. He outwitted them all and He started at age nine.
13. And here we are measuring our syllables and seeing if people will like us, and taking our selfies, and asking people to like what we say. And so the message of the gospel of a blistering grace gets squeezed into the mold of any old religion, and duty, and just another obligation.
14. Because too often His people are afraid to speak of the One who wasn't afraid to die for them.
15. Hang out with Jesus, and his Alpha Fearlessness will rub off on you.

B. *His Fearlessness*

1. Jesus was on fire for God. And when He caught someone in the act of disrespecting God, that fire burned red hot.
2. Once, Jesus visited the Temple in Jerusalem. He saw that the temple had been turned into a religious market, where salvation was bought and sold, and the gospel was buried in a money-making scheme. He was furious. He made a whip. He *made* one.
3. He made a whip. Only Jesus could do this... only Jesus has that right, by the way. It's not for you to do. He was the Son of God, and you are not.
4. But He became a one man wrecking crew. He turned over tables, lashed out with His whip, spilled their cash registers all over the floor, and chased the merchants out of the temple. And He justified it all by saying that Passion for God's house burns within Me. (John 2:15-17).
 - a) Jesus said, "Don't think I came to bring peace, but a sword."
 - b) He told His disciples to shake the dust off their feet if people refused to hear their message of Jesus (Luke 9:5).
5. He didn't care what people thought of Him. Didn't fuss over clothing or style or hair. Didn't worry about popularity. And He never took a selfie. True courage on display.
6. Jesus was put on trial. He stood before one of His judges, a Roman governor named Pilate. Pilate wanted to set Jesus free, so he lobbed Jesus an easy question. Answer the right way, and Jesus could go free. Pilate asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" All Jesus had to do was say nothing, or shake His head, or look down, or say no.
7. There Jesus stood, beaten, flayed, skinned alive, punched, spit up, and in a kind of agony none of us could imagine. Just give the easy answer, and Jesus could go free.
8. But FEARLESSNESS doesn't operate that way. Jesus answered; "It is as you say" and Pilate sentenced Jesus to death (Mk 15:2).
9. Even while, outside, His best friend Peter was denying Him.
 - a) *The guards lit a fire in the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter joined them there. A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, "This man was one of Jesus' followers!" Peter denied it. "Woman," he said, "I don't even know the man!" After a while someone else looked at him and said, "You must be one of them!" "No, man, I'm not!" Peter*

replied. About an hour later someone else insisted, “This must be one of Jesus’ disciples because he is a Galilean, too.” But Peter said, “Man, I don’t know what you are talking about.” And as soon as he said these words, the rooster crowed. (Luke 22:55-60, NLT).

10. This is the resistance on display.
 - a) The coward who fails to become the masterpiece will never create the masterpiece he or she was created for.
 - b) Thank God, Jesus redeemed him, and Peter became a hero and martyr of the faith.
11. Stay with Jesus. Study Him. Learn of Him, and His Alpha Fearlessness will become yours.

C. *His Death*

1. By far the most incredible demonstration of Alpha Courage in the life of Jesus was the way He approached His death.
2. Death was not forced upon Jesus. He was nobody’s victim. Jesus faced it squarely by His own choice:
 - a) “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.” (John 10:18, NKJV).
3. Think about the *physical demands* He faced. He must have been physically strong to take all that abuse. He was punched, beaten, whipped, scourged, and had His beard torn out. Yet He still had the strength to carry His cross at least part way up the hill.
4. Add to that the *emotional demands*. He suffered naked. He suffered in front of His friends and family. He suffered unfairly. Yet not one word of complaint passed His lips. He could have stopped it but He didn’t.
 - a) No tantrum. No whining. No display at all. Just unflinching courage, and honor in the face of gross injustice.
5. And then there were the *spiritual challenges*.
6. The worst part of His death was when our sins hit Him. God collected the sins of the world, and laid them on Jesus. And then God punished Jesus for our sins. This was His great unknown... the pain above every pain, the heartbreak only a true Alpha person could bear. That punishment included being FORSAKEN by God. For the first time ever in creation, the Lord Jesus Christ felt forsaken by His Heavenly Father. That was the greatest pain Jesus ever felt. So He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34).
7. Above all else, the death of Jesus was a lesson in fearlessness because He laid down His life for others. He did not have to die. He died as your sacrifice and mine. He gave up His life for others. This is the supreme sacrifice. The ultimate soldier. The ultimate Alpha.
 - a) “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. (John 15:13, NKJV).
8. You might understand Him as a manly man, an untamed man. You might understand Him as true God. But unless you understand His death as a death for others—a substitutionary death, one man dying for others—unless you get Jesus’ sacrifice, you don’t get Jesus at all.
9. If anything ever should inspire fearlessness in the follower of Christ, it is the way He faced His death.

D. *His Mission*

1. Jesus didn’t float through life. He had a passion, a purpose, a mission.
 - a) “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10, NKJV).
2. He didn’t spend time finding Himself. We have to, but He didn’t. It’s okay. Take your time. Jesus found His mission, and He did it with passion, and with joy, and in ways nobody had ever seen before. He broke the mold, and it messed with everybody’s mind.
3. It still does.
 - a) He called people by their true names, not the names the fallen world had plastered over them.
 - (1) The one the world labeled fisherman, Jesus labeled fisher of men.
 - (2) The one the world labeled adulterous, an *object* to be used, Jesus labeled Woman, a *person* to be honored, and said where are your accusers.
 - (3) The one the world labeled Prodigal, out of bounds, and lost, Jesus labeled Son, and threw a party for his return.
 - (4) For one little lamb, He’d sent out a search party.
 - (5) For one empty seat, He’d send out servants... my house must be full, He said.
 - (a) That was His mission.
4. And He told His disciples, as the Father has sent me, so send I you.
5. And they got it. They climbed mountains, and crossed seas, and gave everything to tell the world of a Savior who bled and died to redeem them to God.
6. When Paul and Silas preached Christ in one town, the people formed a mob. Paul and Silas took refuge in the house of a believer named Jason. Here’s what happened:
7. *But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. (Acts 17:6, NKJV).*
 - a) They turned the world upside down.
 - b) Why?
 - c) Because Jesus did that to them. Time with Jesus, time in His Word, time in His story, truth passing through the barriers of heart and mind and brain will evaporate resistance, and set a person free.
 - d) Free to own your piece of God’s great mission to seek and save the lost.
8. Like Jesus, the earlier disciples lived with no regrets. Nothing left undone. Their bucket list was complete, and they died with eternal rewards.
9. I want to invite you into this mission today.

V. Praying for Lost people

- A. In your program, you received a post-it note that says, “I’m praying for”...on it. We do this year after year, and it’s incredible how God answers these prayers.

- B. I have several fear-busters for you, and this is the first one.
- C. Identify and pray for one person who doesn't know Jesus as their savior. We are praying for them to be saved this Christmas season. All our services will preach the gospel. You pray, and we'll pray with you. Write down JUST THE FIRST NAME... and post this on the wall in the doorways as you leave. Every time you pass by, pray for names on the wall, and ignite your fearlessness in evangelism.
- D. But go deeper...
- E. Is there a dream in your heart the resistance has smothered? Is there a fire the fear has quenched?
 - 1. Write that book. Go to that writer's conference. Finish the book you started.
 - 2. Start that business.
 - 3. Take that class.
 - 4. Pop that question.
 - 5. Break off that relationship.
 - 6. Fill out that application.
 - 7. Make that move. You've got to shake it up.
 - 8. Go on that mission trip.
 - 9. Take that vacation.
 - 10. Get that help.
 - 11. Take that chance.
 - a) If God is on your side, and you obey His Word, bold faith never loses, and God rewards it all.
- F. Decide here and now that you will not be afraid of what the future holds. You will not be afraid of failure. You will not be afraid to share the story of Jesus and His love. You will quit thinking that life has passed you by. And you will shed the infantile entitled mentality that says everybody owes you something.
- G. Wrong.
- H. You owe something.
 - 1. *You owe yourself, your God, and your world the best possible version of you that you can become.*
- I. Because with the power of Christ, only fear and laziness can stop you.
- J. It is time to shed the mantle of victimhood, and to fearlessly accept TODAY'S IGNITE WAKE UP CALL:
 - 1. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NKJV).*

VI. Conclusion

- A. It's time to shed the sanitized, tamed message of Jesus. Jesus was anything but tame—He SCORCHED people. He was a surgeon with a sharp scalpel. The church seems to have softened Jesus, and calmed Him down. He was not a nice person all the time. He was dangerous.
- B. And I like that. I need that. I need a dangerous Jesus to shake the spiritual laziness out of me, to disturb my complacency, to shove my face in the world's suffering and lostness, and to remind me of what lasts forever.
- C. I need a dangerous Jesus inside me to face a dangerous world outside me.
 - 1. Alpha Jesus... for Alpha Christians.
- D. Oh, one last thought here. After Jesus died, rose again, ascended to heaven, sat down at the right hand of God, and then sent His spirit to live in you.
- E. Did He suddenly settle down into a boring, middle-class wimp? Did He switch off His after-burners? Did He tame His untamed heart? Did He flip a switch from firebrand to conformist—from Braveheart to Barney? Did Jesus turn Himself into a comfortable sweater and soft pair of blue jeans?
- F. No. No. No.
- G. The same Jesus who turned water into wine and pounded the devil's head against the ground and invited homeless street people to a formal feast, and read rich people's minds and made them squirm—He hasn't changed. He's a wild man.
- H. And He lives in you. He lives in us. He hasn't changed.
 - 1. Alpha Jesus... for Alpha Christians.
- I. He's overturning the tables of legalism in your heart. He's upsetting your complacency. He's delivering a swift kick in the seat of your pants, reminding you to trust the Father, and stick your neck out for the Son in the power of the Spirit. He's wrestling down your fear, mocking your sissiness, strengthening your weakness, coaching your deficiencies, and projecting His own power, His own fierce love, His own happiness, and His own peace into your soul—into your neighborhood—into your workplace through you.
- J. An Untamed Christ in you and an untamed Christ through you. Quit trying to muzzle Him. Quit trying to churchify Him. And quit trying to sissify Him. Let Jesus live through you—do great things, unexpected things through you.