

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.

**Series: Courageous**

Our world often tells us that being courageous is about strength, bravery, and heroic acts. To be courageous means to be tough in the face of adversity. But scripture gives us a different model. We are called to be courageous, but often that doesn't look like success, strength, or winning. This January we explore how courage helps us raise others up, transform our communities, and face new and challenging situations. Because together in Christ, we can do hard and courageous things.

Message description:

We have heard it said that we should "run the race marked out for us with perseverance," but what does Paul mean by press on toward the prize? What is the goal of the spiritual life? And what should "striving" look like in it? Press on, keep going, pursue Christ with all that you have; but remember this is a marathon not a sprint. And sometimes, in some seasons, the growth may be slow. In some seasons, the race may not feel like it's progressing... quickly. But let us have the courage to press on and to keep our eyes focused on the true end of the good life; Christ resurrected. Everything else is just rubbish.

Key Scriptures

Philippians 3:4b-14

Questions Related to This Week's Teaching:

1. Did you set personal goals for the new year, why or why not? What are some goals you have?
2. According to Paul, what is the goal or end purpose of our Christian lives? Do you find that your personal goals match this same purpose? Or should these personal and spiritual goals be separate?
3. What do you think of Paul's bold language of calling all human "gain" or relying on own accomplishment as rubbish or excrement?
4. What does pressing on in faith look like for you right now? What does it mean for you or for us to mind the "tragic gap"?
5. What brings you hope right now?

Going Deeper

Review Philippians 3:1-14

- What are some attributes or accomplishments Paul gives for reasons he could “boast in the flesh”?
- [Recall, that “boast in the flesh” is a direct reference to Jewish teachers among the church in Philippi who are trying to convince new Gentile converts that they must follow the Torah to be justified or consider holy or in the family, most notably, by being circumcised. Paul is reminding them, we cannot boast in any works of law or righteousness, like laws of circumcision, but we should only boast in Christ.]
- Where or when do you think Christians are tempted to boast in this way today? Or where do we rely on our own accomplishments or perceived righteousness instead of in Christ alone?
- Do you think such boasting is a struggle of the spiritual life today?
- What do you think Paul means by “forgetting what lies behind me”? Review a little bit about Paul’s history, listed in this passage but also in his great zeal to defend the law and persecute Christians. How could his past impact his ability to “press on” toward Christ? Do you think he was still haunted by his past or feeling shame?
- Do you still carry shame from mistakes you know Christ has forgiven you from? How does it impact your ability to continue pursuing Christ today?
- How can we process our past sins and shame in healthy ways so that we can experience the true freedom of forgiveness and reconciliation with Christ?
- Where are you needing courage to “press on” in your life today? How can we encourage you?

Read Philippians 4:

Though we did not cover it in this particular series, read the rest of the letter from Paul to the Philippians to see how it fits with our theme and study. (It may help to begin by reading Philippians 3:17-20, the end of the chapter before, since Paul begins chapter 4 with “therefore.”)

- What phrases stick out to you in this chapter?
- Do you read or hear anything that might fit with our theme of courage: to be vulnerable, gracious, last, and to press on in faith?
- Does Paul mention any situation that you think requires courage?
- Verses 4-9 are Paul’s most practical application in this letter. How do the instructions in this passage serve the purpose of keeping our eyes focused on Christ and pressing on toward our goal of our heavenly calling from chapter 3?
- How is Paul able to be content in all things? Do you believe this kind of contentment is possible for us today? How?