

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:

The gospel requires a partnership among all the saints. God is not done with us when we accept Jesus Christ, but faithfulness must take root in communities through how we live and share our faith together. Paul makes this abundantly clear in his opening lines of his letter to the Philippians, a church whom he knows and loves well because of how they partnered with him to spread the gospel. Because of the grace experienced through them, Paul has the power and strength to extend grace to those around him while in prison. It takes courage to accept help and grace *from* others. The next step of courage comes when we extend that same grace and forgiveness with the love of Christ *to* others.

Key Scriptures

Philippians 1:1-14

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. In his letter Paul writes, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (vv 3-5). Who is someone that you are grateful for their influence on your life today? Is there a particular person you are grateful for because of how they showed you grace?
2. How would you describe Paul's relationship with the people in the church of Philippi based on how this book starts? What strikes you as different in how he starts this letter as opposed to others (Galatians, 1 Corinthians, Romans, etc.)?
3. Share about a time you could describe as "extra grace required."
4. What does Paul mean when he says, "all of you share in God's grace with me" in Philippians 1:7?

Going Deeper

On Paul in prison- Read one or both of the following articles and then ask the questions below:

<https://www.olivetree.com/blog/imprisonment-in-the-roman-world/>

[Preview of article unless you subscribe to Christianity Today]

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-47/stench-pain-and-misery.html>

Paul is writing this letter to the Philippians from prison. It probably would have been easier for Paul to turn inward in this time in prison, to become defensive, jaded, or vengeful with the situation in which he found himself. Or perhaps it would have been easy for him to feel he deserved this. Remember that in his "former life" as Saul, Paul was a persecutor of Christians. Instead of either of these reactions, Paul grounds himself in the grace and peace that God provides through Jesus (verse 2).

- What surprises you about Paul's reaction to being held in these conditions?
- How does it impact your understanding of this letter that Paul was being held for execution, which probably happened a short time after this letter was written?
- What gives Paul hope in this difficult situation?
- Paul was intentional about cultivating joy and gratitude, even as he awaited death, and he encouraged the Philippians to do the same. Though we do not find ourselves persecuted for our faith or waiting in a prison right today, what are some ways we can avoid resentment and seek joy in our life together?
- The grace Paul received from his fellow believers was a great source of courage in his moment of struggle. When have you received similar grace that empowered you to continue or to persevere?

On Forgiveness:

Read Matthew 18:15-22 [add the parable of the unforgiving servant if you have time, Matthew 15:23-35]

- What is at stake in a faith community if we do not intentionally seek forgiveness?
- What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation? Is there one?
- Are there areas where you need to let go of resentment and hurt and move toward forgiveness (of yourself, others, or God)?
- Are there things you need to ask forgiveness for (from others, God, or yourself)?

Forgiveness takes courage! But it also can free us to be more courageous.