

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:

Paul says to the Philippians: have the mind of Christ. Paul gives an illustration of the hymn of Christ to show that following Christ means more than just knowing things *about* him; we must know him so well that *his* mind becomes *our* mind. We must learn his move of downward mobility, his song of humility, his dance of love. This is not an easy song to learn because it runs counter to everything the world expects or celebrates from us. But we must imitate Christ in our humility, our concern for others, and in our thinking of others first. Often, this might look like we are losing. But our victory is with the one who humbled himself to be a servant, who washed feet, and ate with sinners, and healed the overlooked and forgotten. The one whom God exalted Lord over all creation.

Key Scriptures

Philippians 1:1-30; 2:1-13

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. Reread Philippians 2:1-4 on Paul's call to unity through practicing humility. Do you believe this sort of selfless living, regard for others, and humility is possible within church community?
2. When have you seen a powerful example of humility in your life, experience, or community?
3. Does it change your understanding of verses 5-11 to consider them as a song or a hymn?
4. Have you ever considered worship as an exercise of "learning the moves" of Christ? How does this impact or change your understanding of worship?

Going Deeper on the themes of humility and service; finding courage to be last

Read Matthew 20:20-28:

- How is the request of the mother of two of the disciples misguided?
- How does our understanding of the Kingdom impact the requests we make of God? If there is an impact, what can we do to better understand the inbreaking Kingdom and reign of God?
- How does Jesus' response reveal the values of the Kingdom?
- How does Jesus' response impact our own sense of ambition in the world? Are you ever tempted by the path of upward mobility (fame, recognition, promotion, award)? Do you find that there are certain roles you are not willing to do?
- Theologian Frederick Buechner defines vocation as the place where "your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Where do you feel passionate to serve right now? Where do you see opportunities to serve our neighbors beyond our local church?

Read Matthew 23:1-11:

The Pharisees held much spiritual authority in Jewish society. They were considered scholars and were the ones responsible for interpreting scriptures and the law for holy living in a changing world.

- In your conversation, list some of the accusations Jesus makes against the Pharisees. What are they doing? And why is it so wrong? (If you are feeling brave, you could add on vv 13-36 to the reading).
- Do any of these warnings resonate with you? Or how could these warnings and accusations against the religious authorities of the day challenge us today?
- Do you think Christians are ever tempted to pursue being right over being righteous? What's the difference? How can we avoid falling into self-righteousness over pursuing the righteousness of Christ?
- VV 11-12 says, "The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." What can humbling ourselves look like today, specifically within the context of Christian community?
- How can we seek to be a servant to all, while also setting healthy boundaries? [Remember, Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves, not to love our neighbors and hate ourselves].

Family-friendly questions:

Consider sharing the quotation from Frederick Buechner above and ask your kids,

- What do you see as the world's greatest needs right now? Or simply put, what do you think our neighbors need right now?
- What do you enjoy doing? What are you good at? Do you have a special gift?
- Do you see a way emerge that could combine your gift with a need of your neighbor? How could you use your gift to serve your neighbor this week?
- How could this service witness to the love of Christ?