



Week 1 Small Group | Courage to be Vulnerable

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, we invite you into this time of community, study and prayer. We pray for a humble heart that is open and vulnerable. We ask that you transform our minds to be in line with your word. Amen.

Quote

“Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy, the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.” Brene Brown

Breaking the Ice:

What courageous character in movies, tv, or literature have you admired?

Wrestling with the Word:

Read: Philippians 2:5-11

- Who is Jesus according to this passage?
- What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped”?
- How does Jesus choose to use his power and authority?

Next Steps:

- Have you ever considered that Jesus could have come as a “demanding king” instead of as a “humble servant”? Why does this matter?
- In verse 7, the NRSV says Jesus “emptied himself.” In the CEV it says, “he gave up everything.” What is the difference between choosing this and being forced to do this? How might you be called to do the same? How might the church read this verse?
- In our relationships to God, our family and friends, the church, the community and the world, how might we choose to follow this example of Jesus?

Prayer for the Week:

Jesus, we look to you as a model of humility and love. Give us the courage to be vulnerable. In whatever situations we find ourselves may we humble ourselves so that only you receive the glory. Amen.



Week 2 Small Group | Courage to be Gracious

Opening Prayer:

Dear God, we come here looking for guidance, help us to recognize the amazing work of grace you have begun in each of our lives and be thankful. May the time we share in conversation, in study and prayer lead us to the courage to be gracious to one another. Amen.

Quote

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." Albert Schweitzer

Breaking the Ice:

Who is someone that you are grateful for their influence on your life today?

Wrestling with the Word:

Read: Philippians 1:2-14

- How would you describe Paul's relationship with the people in the church of Philippi based on how this book starts?
- How does Paul refocus his hardship for the benefit of others?
- What does Paul mean when he says, "all of you share in God's grace with me" Phil 1:7?

Next Steps:

- Paul writes this letter from jail; what gives him hope in this difficult situation? How could you adopt this attitude?
- In the face of hardship, Paul has become more courageous to share the gospel. How might you be able to use your challenges to do the same?
- Take some time this week to share with someone how grateful you are for their presence in your life. Intentionally include them in your prayers too.

Prayer for the Week:

Dear God, we thank you for all those who have encouraged us on this journey of faith. We ask that you give us the courage to be gracious with all those who are in our lives. May our lives and our actions be a reflection of your grace. Amen.



Week 3 Small Group | Courage to be Last

Opening Prayer:

Dear God, we come to this time longing to be more like Jesus. Help us to recognize and respond to the needs of others. Let us be of one mind, united as one, so that we may be a reflection of your love. Amen.

Quote

“Above all the grace and the gifts that Christ gives to his beloved is that of overcoming self.” Francis of Assisi

Breaking the Ice:

Are you competitive? While everyone might not have a competitive spirit, most people have an area where they would like to be recognized. What is that for you?

Wrestling with the Word:

Read: Philippians 2:1-5

- Why is unity such a prevalent theme in Paul’s writings?
- What are the qualities of unity that Paul lifts up?
- How might their “encouragement in Christ” (verse 1) help the Philippians live out what Paul is asking in verses 2-5?

Next Steps:

- Why might we consider the interests of others are more important than our own?
- Is there a difference between being “like minded” and “being the same”? Can there be unity without uniformity?
- In practical terms, what does it look like to live out Phil. 2:3-4? Read a variety of translations for a full picture of Paul’s words.

Prayer for the Week:

Holy Spirit, we thank you for your presence, as we strive to have the courage to be last. We pray that we may live together in spiritual unity and harmony. Help me to value the needs and concerns of another more than my own and keep me humble in heart and mind. Amen.



Week 4 Small Group | Courage to be First

Opening Prayer:

Dear God, we pray that our thoughts, words and deeds are in line with the goal that you have set before us. Prepare us to walk in the ways of Jesus. Amen.

Quote

"Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest." Maya Angelou

Breaking the Ice:

Are you a goal setter? What are the things that drive you to meet a goal, maybe in sports, living healthier, or finishing a project?

Wrestling with the Word:

Read: Philippians 3:10-16

- Paul talks about setting a goal to get the prize. What prize is he reaching for?
- What does Paul mean when he says he "knows Christ"? And what does that phrase mean to you?
- According to Paul, what is the goal of Christian living?

Next Steps:

- How do we balance reaching a goal with humility and seeing others' needs before our own, as we spoke about last week?
- What goals can you set to better "know Christ"?
- What does it mean to be mature? As we close this study how will you set a goal to continue to grow in your Christian maturity?

Prayer for the Week:

Dear God, we thank you for this time we have shared together, for the scriptures that have directed and challenged us, for the prayers that have sustained us, for the companionship that has blessed us. May we go forth from this time together ready for a life and ministry with courage to be extraordinary for you. Amen.