**Introduction:**

This four-part Bible study series will explore the theme of Courageous Discipleship by looking at biblical examples of disciples who exhibited courage, key teachings on courage in the face of challenges, and practical applications for Christians today. Each session will involve Scripture readings, discussion questions, and reflections on how to live boldly for Christ in everyday life.

The four sessions are as follows:

* The foundation of courageous discipleship
* Courage in the face of opposition
* Courage to follow God’s call
* Courage to live counter-culturally

**Session 1: The Foundation of Courageous Discipleship**

**Objectives:**

* Explore the biblical definition of courage.
* Reflect on God’s command to be strong and courageous.
* Discuss how the Great Commission calls for courageous obedience.

**Scripture Focus:** Joshua 1:1-9; Matthew 28:18-20

**Scripture Reflections:**

The source of true courage is found in God; courage in discipleship begins with God’s promise of his presence and power. Courage is then trusting God wholeheartedly with his promises.

In Joshua 1:1-9, God repeats the phrase, ‘Be strong and courageous’ three times, even clarifying in verse 9 that it is a command. Joshua’s victory was assured, as he was called by God. Israel’s success could not be put down to Joshua’s skills or leadership, but the fact that God reigns over all and is trustworthy with his promises. When God speaks, ‘I am with you’, this should be enough for us to proceed with the victory that has already been given to us. In verse 5 God states, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’, and this is then quoted in Hebrews 13:5, applying this statement to all believers – to us.

This is a decision of faith to push away fear and pick up courage for the things God has called us to. Courage to obey God’s commands increases as we understand who God is, when we understand the power of the one who lives within us and therefore what we are capable of.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does God’s promise to Joshua apply to us as disciples today?
2. What does it mean to be strong and courageous in the context of the Great Commission?
3. How does the assurance of God’s presence help us face fear in our discipleship journey?

**Application:**

* Identify areas in your life where fear is holding you back from fully obeying Christ.
* Identify strategies of courage and support in those areas.
* Pray for courage to take the next steps in your walk with God.

**Session 2: Courage in the Face of Opposition**

**Objectives:**

* Study how the early Church leaders responded with courage in the face of threats.
* Understand the role of the Holy Spirit in giving boldness.
* Discuss how we can prepare for spiritual opposition today.

**Scripture Focus:** Acts 4:1-21; 1 Peter 3:13-17

**Scripture Reflections:**

Discipleship often requires standing firm in the face of persecution and trials; we are called to have boldness in adversity. Fear of man can often overtake our fear of God, but Peter and John did not cower to the Sanhedrin amidst their power play, for they knew a greater ruler. Even a night in prison did not deter their mission. It was their courage that enabled the truth to break through, for the Sanhedrin saw in them a quality that Peter and John should not humanly possess. They saw a glimpse of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, forcing them to acknowledge his power.

We see this familiar theme echoed in 1 Peter 3:13-17 as we are encouraged again not to fear man, but instead to revere Christ and be prepared to give an answer for the hope we hold. This may not seem easy in the face of persecution, yet once again, since we are made in the image and likeness of God, his qualities will shine through our human nature and allow us the opportunity to glorify his name. In the Western world, persecution isn’t a common occurrence, though opposition from Satan is. We are tempted with worldliness, pride, a need for acceptance, and constant success. We must stay vigilant to the spiritual opposition surrounding us and stand with boldness, like Peter and John, against the things which pull us away from adapting the character of Christ as his disciples.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us to be courageous disciples?
2. How can we apply 1 Peter 3:15–17 when facing challenges to our faith?
3. What Godly qualities could we cultivate to prepare ourselves for spiritual or physical opposition?

**Application:**

* Share a time when you faced opposition or discomfort because of your faith and how you overcame it.
* Identify three ways you will prepare for spiritual or physical challenges based on these Scripture passages.
* Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower you with boldness and   
  wisdom in the face of future challenges.

**Session 3: Courage to Follow God’s Call**

**Objectives:**

* Examine the stories of Abraham and Peter as examples of faith-filled courage.
* Discuss the connection between faith and courage in following God’s leading.
* Reflect on the challenges that arise when we are called to step out in faith.

**Scripture Focus:** Genesis 12:1-9; Matthew 14:22-33

**Scripture Reflections:**

Courageous discipleship often means trusting God amidst uncertainty and stepping into new challenges beyond our comfort zone. Having courage to step into the unknown can be difficult, exemplified through the life of Abraham. Genesis 12:1-3 implies that God had already made his promise to Abraham (then known as Abram), and it was the death of his father that made him eventually obey. Abraham’s partial obedience did not remove God’s promise. Rather, it was delayed until Abraham was ready. We can often relate to Abraham as an example of growing in faith and obedience.

God is gracious and patient with us as we grow in faith and obedience to him, but this is also a helpful reminder that our lack of faith or disobedience can slow down the plans which God has for us. May we be courageous enough to trust God in the unknown, much like Peter taking that first firm step on to the stormy water. As seen by Peter’s story, the key to faith-filled courage is keeping our eyes on Jesus, rather than our circumstances. As Peter drew his gaze from his Saviour to his surroundings, he began to sink. We serve a miracle-working God who moves beyond the norms of this world, so our physical or seemingly impossible circumstances which could cause fear and doubt in us are no match for God. We should keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, walk with him into the unknown and keep a hand stretched out for him to pull us back out of any difficulties along the way.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you think gave Abraham the courage to leave everything behind and follow God?
2. How did Peter’s experience of walking on water illustrate both courage and doubt?
3. Where is God calling you to step out in faith, and what fears are holding you back?

**Application:**

* Write down one area where you feel God calling you to take a step of faith.
* In that area, what could cause you to ‘sink’ like Peter?
* Commit to praying for the courage to take that step,   
  trusting in God’s provision and guidance.

**Session 4: Courage to Live Counter-Culturally**

**Objectives:**

* Reflect on the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s refusal to bow to cultural pressures.
* Discuss how Romans 12:2 calls believers to be transformed rather than conforming to the world.
* Explore what it means to live with conviction in today’s culture.

**Scripture Focus:** Daniel 3:8-28; Romans 12:1-2

**Scripture Reflections:**

Discipleship requires the courage to live differently in a culture that often contradicts God’s ways. As disciples we are called to stand firm in our faith in a world that rejects it. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s courage to not conform to their cultural expectations led those cultural norms to shift and break.

If we stand firm in God’s unchanging word, we can set culture and break culture. The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s stand is so powerful now that we know the ending, but we can imagine the enormous pressure put on these men to compromise, to conform. We too may have been pressured to conform to some social norms that do not glorify God, in order not to cause any disruption. But Jesus was a social disruptor of things that were not honouring to his Father. Let us have the courage and conviction to live counter-culturally, no matter the cost, and follow the challenge of Romans to live as pleasing sacrifices to God.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego demonstrate courageous faith, and what can we learn from their example?
2. What does it mean to be ‘transformed by the renewing of your mind’ (Romans 12:2) in a world that opposes Christian values?
3. What cultural pressures are challenging your faith, and how can you courageously stand firm?

**Application:**

* Identify one area where you are tempted to conform to cultural values rather than biblical ones.
* Discuss practical ways to live counter-culturally.
* Pray for strength to stay true to God’s call.

**Conclusion and Next Steps:**

* Recap the key lessons from each session.
* Encourage participants to reflect on their personal growth in courage over the course of the study.
* There are bookmarks available, focusing on a key character from each session. Participants may wish to take any that are relevant to them.
* Suggest ways to continue developing courageous discipleship through ongoing spiritual disciplines, service and community involvement.
* Close in prayer, asking for continued courage to live boldly for Christ in all areas of life.
* You may wish to continue this theme of courageous discipleship, through small groups or corporate worship.

Bookmarks, and prayer and worship ideas can be found at [www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/discipleship/courageous-discipleship](http://www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/discipleship/courageous-discipleship)