

# PRAYER of Good Courage

## Small Group Curriculum

**WEEK 5: October 20-27**  
**“Not Knowing Where We Go”**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Gracious God, we trust that you are with us even when we do not know where we are going. Be with us in times of certainty and uncertainty, in times of joy and in times of grief. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **WARM-UP QUESTION:**

Go around the group and share a high and low from the week, and name a time when you felt God was with you.

### **BIBLE REFLECTION:**

Push Out into Deep Water (Luke 5:1-11, Message version)

Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. He climbed into the boat that was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.

When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, “Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch.”

Simon said, “Master, we've been fishing hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I'll let out the nets.” It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.

Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. “Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself.” When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him. It was the same with James and John, Zebedee's sons, coworkers with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “There is nothing to fear. From now on you'll be fishing for men and women.” They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him.

### Scripture Question:

In this passage, Jesus says the disciples need to “push out into deep water” to catch fish. In pairs, name a time in your life where you have had to “push out into deep water”—a time when you had to face an unknown or do something without fully knowing how it would end. If you can't think of a specific time, think of this another way—Dr. Emilie Townes, dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School, once referred to the beginning of a school year as an “overwhelmed-but-trying-to-hang-in-there” time. Reflect together on unknown or “overwhelmed-but-trying-to-hang-in-there” times, how they felt, and how they turned out.

## The Prayer of Good Courage in Our Lives

1. Listen to the Story Corps clip linked below (also linked on the curriculum website). Background to the clip: Henry Jimenez and Akiva Johnson, both 17, are classmates and close friends at a high school in New York City. In October 2012, after Hurricane Sandy devastated much of the eastern coast of the United States, Akiva (pictured on the left) and his mother were displaced from their home. They spent parts of the next three years in homeless shelters across New York City—including last Christmas. Henry (pictured on the right) left Mexico when he was 13 and came to the United States to live with an aunt, leaving behind his parents and younger brother.

What helped each of these young men during times of their life when they didn't know how each day or week would turn out? Have you had a relationship that has helped you get through a "not knowing where we go" time? Are there people in your life (or who you know of) who are in that place, and what would it mean to be the hands and feet of God to them right now?

<https://storycorps.org/stories/akiva-johnson-and-henry-jimene-151218/>

2. Kate Bowler is a professor at Duke Divinity School who was diagnosed with stage four cancer at age 35. She has written several articles about this, and wrote a book called Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I've Loved. Below (under Readings and Media) are two excerpts from an article she wrote for the New York Times. She contrasts one unhelpful reaction to the uncertainty of her life with some more helpful words from her sister. Reflect on these two ways of approaching uncertainty. If you were to write an alternative to the phrase "everything happens for a reason," what would it be?

3. If there is extra time, continue to reflect in pairs on how you react to the unknown. When you feel rooted and grounded in God and your faith, what is your reaction to the unknown? When you are not in a great place, what is your reaction to the unknown?

### Readings and Media for Week 5:

From "What to Say When You Meet the Angel of Death at a Party" by Kate Bowler (if you want to read the full article, you can find it here:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/26/opinion/sunday/cancer-what-to-say.html>.):

First quote:

The hardest lessons come from the solutions people, who are already a little disappointed that I am not saving myself. There is always a nutritional supplement, Bible verse or mental process I have not adequately tried. "Keep smiling! Your attitude determines your destiny!" said a stranger named Jane in an email, having heard my news somewhere, and I was immediately worn out by the tyranny of prescriptive joy.

Second quote:

A friend knits me socks and another drops off cookies, and still another writes a funny email or takes me to a concert. These seemingly small efforts are anchors that hold me to the present, that keep me from floating away on thoughts of an unknown future. They say to me, like my sister Maria did on one very bad day: "Yes, the world is changed, dear heart, but do not be afraid. You are loved, you are loved. You will not disappear. I am here."

**PRAYER OF GOOD COURAGE**

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Community Meal is back! All are invited 5-6:30 each Wednesday.

This coming Sunday, October 27 is Reformation and Confirmation Sunday, when we celebrate the Reformation and our 9<sup>th</sup> graders confirm their faith. Between services, there will be a Stewardship Town Hall in the Westwood Room (update on Westwood's ministries and finances).