

PRAYER of Good Courage

Small Group Curriculum

WEEK 2: Sept. 29 – Oct. 5

OPENING PRAYER:

Loving God, we give you thanks for claiming and calling each of us, and for not letting us walk this journey through life alone. Thank you for this group of friends gathered here now, and thank you for our church. Knowing your hand is holding ours, help us to reach out this week to someone who needs your support and your love in their life. We ask in Jesus' name.

WARM-UP QUESTION:

Go around again with names, and share one word or phrase that indicates a venture you're currently on, one area in your life, where you can't fully see the ending...it can be big or something small. You will be talking more about that venture in a few minutes with a partner, so hold the story. Examples: a new job, parenting, retirement, loss/grief, a choice you need to make, etc.

BIBLE REFLECTION:

Luke 19:1-10 (The Message translation)

1-4 Then Jesus entered and walked through Jericho. There was a man there, his name Zacchaeus, the head tax man and quite rich. He wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way—he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he came by.

5-7 When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home." Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good luck, delighted to take Jesus home with him. Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, "What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?"

8 Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned. He stammered apologetically, "Master, I give away half my income to the poor—and if I'm caught cheating, I pay four times the damages."

9-10 Jesus said, "Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost."

Discuss: This is a familiar story...Zacchaeus climbed a tree to check out this Jesus he's heard about, and ends up hosting him for dinner! Not exactly how he thought that afternoon would end! Some ventures are perilous, to be sure, but other ventures end with an unplanned 'gift', a surprise, something learned or gained.

- Put yourself in Zacchaeus' place (in that tree, as an unwelcome tax collector with few friends)... What would you have felt when Jesus called out your name and said he was coming over??!!!
- Considering just a few chapters before this (in chap. 15), Luke tells the stories of the lost coin, the lost sheep and the lost/prodigious son, and now this story in chapter 19---and all of these stories are ONLY found in the Gospel of Luke---what would you say Luke is up to? How might you summarize Luke's main message, gathered from all 4 of these stories? And how does that message connect to our phrase today...."ventures of which we cannot see the ending"?

The Prayer of Good Courage in Our Lives

1. *Please do this question with one partner.* In the warm-up you named one venture you currently find yourself on, maybe it's an event, a stage in life, etc. where you can't fully see the ending yet. Share what that is, but most importantly name what the hardest part of it is, and then also a hope you have for the "ending" for yourself, i.e. what could be a gift you might find in this perhaps difficult venture? *(Each person gets 5 minutes to talk.)*
2. Most of us don't love "ventures of which we cannot see the ending", right?! Name some of those things that make these ventures hard...
Because these times often induce fear, we pray for good courage! Name some places or ways where you have built up, or where you seek to build up, your well of good courage.
3. In this question, you will need to watch this 2 minute StoryCorps clip, and maybe have a laptop/ipad so you can watch it together.

Julio Diaz is a social worker from the Bronx. Every night, he ends his hour-long subway commute to the Bronx one stop early just so he can eat at his favorite diner. But one night, as Julio stepped off the train and onto a nearly empty platform, his evening took an unexpected turn when he was robbed by a teenage boy. At StoryCorps, Julio recalls what happened next.

<https://storycorps.org/stories/julio-diaz>

Thinking back on last Sunday's Gospel story where, like those books where you create your own story by making choices along the way, we also sometimes have the chance to "write our own venture" to some extent, or to re-shape at least our part in the story.

Name the several bold choices that Julio made along the way that evening that helped dictate the ending. What choices did "the bad guy" make then in response that gave this whole story a different ending for both men?

I see this as more than a moral lesson, but an example of someone with a certain worldview. How would you describe how Julio understood himself?...other people?...the world?

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:

This Sunday kicks off 3 weeks at 9:50 in the Westwood Room on "Mental Health & Good Courage". Oct. 6 is on "Demystifying Anxiety and Depression". Come and learn more about the old myths and some helpful tools for ourselves and those we know and love....breathing techniques, mindfulness, etc.