



COURAGEOUS RELATIONSHIP Affinity Groups

EPIPHANY 2020

Week 2: Power versus Vulnerability

Big Idea: Faith is not measured by how strong or powerful others see you. Faith is a deep trust in God's gracious promise that you are a child of God in Christ no matter what comes.

Open with prayer

Framing the conversation:

Recap for those missing last week where we've been.

Refresh them on the Westwood definition of Vocation

In our baptism each of us has been both CLAIMED and CALLED to be God's hands and feet in the world in all the realms of our life. We use the word vocation to speak of this calling. Therefore, we confess that we have a "vocation" as a family member (which is the focus of these groups), as a friend, in our work lives, as a citizen of the country and world etc.

Get the conversation going:

Split into 4 groups (2 groups per scripture) Discuss how this text informs a definition of vocation. (Have it printed on sheets of paper to hand out to everyone)

- Romans 14:7-9
 - How does this inform your definition of the vocation of (family role)?
 - Have you ever been invited to consider what it would mean in your real life? *Examining the claim that "Christ is Lord" in our real work of our family lives is the main point of these 5 weeks.*

- Gal. 2:19b-21
 - How does this inform your definition of the vocation of (specific family role)?
 - Does this make any sense given your experience of life?

Come back together and share how this informs their lives of (family role: parenting/marriage, friend, etc. .) (each group reporting)

What are we talking about? An example of power vs. vulnerability:

(have someone read aloud)

When my father was 10 years old, he walked downstairs at the family home and found his 1 ½ year old sister on the floor. There had been a terrible accident in which she had been carrying a glass bottle that dropped and broke. Somehow, she had fallen, and the glass had deeply cut her abdomen. She died before the paramedics arrived. You can imagine the incredible grief of the family. When the time for the funeral arrived my grandfather, who was a pastor, informed the family of his decision that no one was to cry at the service. Why? Because it was an opportunity for them to “witness” (for others to see) to the strength/power of their faith. Crying was equated by my grandfather as weakness of faith. An incredibly tragic loss was made all the more painful by a well-intentioned, but terrible decision that is deeply imprinted in the families memory (I heard more about the family being told not to cry at the funeral and its aftermath than most of the details surrounding the death when I was growing up).

1 Peter 1:6-9 misread could be viewed as text that encouraged the sort of decision my grandfather made about the funeral. *“In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:6).”* When one reads 1 Peter 1:6 in context it’s clear that “suffering” refers to the experience of people living as a Christian minority in a society that has a different worldview than them. This is not an uncommon theme in the New Testament and one that is important. But this sort of “suffering” is different than tragic events that happen. To suggest that demonstrations of a strong faith equals denial of our feelings or that vulnerability is a sign of weakness is a very different worldview than the one found in the Christian faith. This is the logic of an honor/shame culture that seeks affirmation from how one is seen/rated as opposed to a grace culture that seeks to tell the truth as a person whose identity is secure in the promises of Holy Baptism.

And this is what my grandfather got wrong. Faith is not measured by how strong or powerful others see you. Faith is a deep trust in God’s gracious promise that you are a child of God in Christ no matter what comes. In many ways, vulnerability in individuals or in congregations are a sign of deep faith much more than inauthentic expressions of strength.

Make it personal: Power vs. Vulnerability

Have you had this experience in your family?

Did you receive messages about how you were to be seen by others?

What were the effects either of this or of a family that invited honesty and vulnerability?

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the passage from 1 Peter 1:6 and the statement of suffering. How have you heard people speak about the connection of faith and

suffering in your own lives? Has it been helpful or harmful in your journey of faith? Share as you feel comfortable. If someone was going through a time of suffering and asked you about this verse, share in your own words how you'd respond.

Spiritual practice

Compassionate self talk- Think of a time when you were young and an event occurred that made you feel confused, uncomfortable or it was painful emotionally. How old were you? Think of what you would say to a young person that same age if they told you this story.

Close with the 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

*We do not live to ourselves,
and we do not die to
ourselves. If we live, we live
to the Lord, and if we die, we
die to the Lord; so then,
whether we live or whether
we die we are the Lord's. For
to this end Christ died and*

lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Romans 14:7-9

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith

*in the Son of God, who loved
me and gave himself for me.*

Galatians 2:19b-21