



Be Brave: Strong Back | August 29, 2018

Discussion Guide

The Scoop

It's easy to be brave when there is nothing on the line. But will we be brave when it really matters? And how do we know when it really matters?

Key Verses

Matthew 21:12-14 (NIV)

"Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'" The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them."

John 5:15-18 (NIV)

"The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well. So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.' For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God."

Discussion

Kids can often teach us simple things in a really powerful way. Take for example a kid who discovers a spot deep in a closet, that to them feels dark, threatening and scary. Just by going back there, they know they are being brave. To an adult, entering into a dark closet may not feel that scary. There is nothing on the line and we know it's going to be ok. But when confronted with a situation that really matters, when we can't foresee the outcome, how many of us as adults would still seize the opportunity to be brave?

1. What is something profound you have learned recently from a child? Why do you think they are able to teach adults about important things in simple ways?
2. Do you remember being brave as a child? Is it more difficult or easier for you to do so as an adult?

Unfortunately we live in a world where leaders everywhere talk about being brave all the time, but when situations actually arise where they are encouraged to do so, they back out. They give one message with their mouth but then fail to do anything about it. As Christians, however, God is asking more of us. He asks us to step out and speak out for what's right, to be brave in situations where it may feel like we are all on our own. He tells us we must see all people as human – made in the image of God – and to stand up for those people, even when it's against popular opinion.

3. Think about a time you wanted to be brave, but when the opportunity arose for you to do so, you backed out. Why did this happen? What did you learn from it?
4. Why do you think God calls us to speak up for what is right? Have you done this before? Why or why not?

In the Bible, we have multiple examples where Jesus stands his ground and speaks up for what is right, even when it's upsetting to people. In Matthew 21:12-14, Jesus enters the temple and becomes angry about the activity he sees there. He tells them they are taking advantage of the temple and using it in a way they shouldn't be. In John 5:15-18, the Jewish leaders are upset about Jesus healing on the Sabbath, which is against Jewish law. Jesus tells them that he can heal because God the Father is always at work.

5. Is this more aggressive picture of Jesus new or surprising to you? Why or why not?
6. What do you think these examples mean for our own lives as followers of Jesus?

What's Next?

Courage is like a muscle, and we have to keep exercising it in order to feel more comfortable. The first time we are brave and speak out is definitely a little scary. But when we do it over and over again, it becomes easier. Jesus was willing to step into situations that could have become unfavorable to him. As followers of Jesus, we should be willing to do the same for people who need us.

This week, as you live out your faith, look for the places that you need to step up with a strong back. Consider where you need to speak truthfully about things that are not right, for people who aren't able to do so themselves. Pray for an opportunity to be brave and ask God to give you courage as well as the wisdom to stand strong when the opportunity arises.