COURAGEOUS LIVING

Winter Small Group 2012
Participant Study Guide
Courageous Living
Study Guide

This study has been produced by Eagles Nest Fellowship Church for exclusive use by small group participants of ENFC. It is based upon the *book “Courageous Living” written by Michael Catt, senior pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia. The questions and forward to each chapter of the study have been written by Pastor Rodger Weese, Small Groups Pastor, ENFC.

“Courageous Living” offers us a biblical perspective for the times in which we live and issues a call to God’s people for a Godly response to the serious condition of our church, community and nation. The future of our country and the welfare of the next generation are desperately dependant upon such a response. 2 Chronicles 7:14 declares the heart of the Lord and the promise for healing our land. “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land.” (NKJ) This book and this study present us with the necessary steps to begin the process for spiritual growth and the health needed to heal our land. You are encouraged to take the first step by committing whole heartedly to this study with an open heart and mind in anxious anticipation of what God is going to do.

God’s blessings,

Pastor Rodger

As we look around us today, one thing is painfully clear. The world is in desperate need of good leadership. Evilness and depravity seem to be winning the day while we look at the horizon hoping for someone on a white horse to ride in and turn the tide. We listen for the voice of reason and righteousness but we are met with deafening silence. Many have good intentions and ask why isn’t someone doing or saying something that will make an impact. It seems that society has lost all sense, purpose and identity. What is the standard by which we shall live and who will be that voice of discernment?

Discussion questions:

1. The Bible has many heroes and our country has many heroes. Why do we not seem to have those types of heroes amongst us today? What impact do true heroes have on society?
2. Read Hebrews 11:1-16. What did all of these heroes have in common?

- According to verse 1 what is the definition of faith?
- What was their reward?

3. “The safest road to hell is the gradual one.” C.S. Lewis
According to the first part of Romans 12:2 how do we drift down the gradual road? State some examples of how society or individuals have traveled the gradual road in your lifetime.

4. Based upon the examples given in question 3, how could Christian people have influenced these trends to a different outcome?

5. What do you think God might have accomplished through the availability of more Christian disciples? What do you believe His will to be?
6. How much influence do you believe the world has upon the church from the outside? How much worldly influence do you believe exists on the inside?

7. On page 7 of the text, the author tells the story of his daughter. Read the second full paragraph. In the last line of this account she stated, “I need Africa more than Africa needs me.” What do you think she meant? What does this teach us about fear?

8. True heroes aren’t filled with fear; rather they overcome it by faith. What are the effects of a fearful attitude in regards to God’s plans for a person’s life?

9. The author writes (p.8), “The choices we make determine the roads we take.” Choices have consequences and reveal our true character.” Explain the difference between positive attitude and positive faith when confronting life’s decisions.
10. Consider the following elements of a courageous life as portrayed by the author: (p.9) Does there seem to be a process for living the courageous life God has called us to?

- passion – What is passion and why does it encourage others?
- choices – “We can play at church, or we can be radical for Christ.”
- consecration – Stepping out for God (our part), leads to separation.
- sanctification – God makes us holy (His part) and sets us apart for service.

11. “We must hear God and follow hard after Him.” (p.10) The process all begins with obedience and we cannot be obedient without hearing from God first. How likely is it that we would hear from Him if we are not regularly in His Word and prayer? In the quote above what do you think the author meant by following “hard”?

12. What role does God’s process have in making everyday decisions?
13. “Courageous people travel light.” (p.13) How might being overly committed to other things be a distraction to our spiritual walk?

14. “The devil doesn’t have to tempt us with evil if he can get us to delay or detour for a good reason.” Can you think of an example of someone not necessarily tempted by evil but under a delay or detour?

15. Read Gen. 15:1-8. “Courage doesn’t mean the absence of fear, but responding in spite of fear.” (p.15) In this story can you find the fears of Abraham? Can you find his faith in spite of his fears?

16. To achieve God sized results in your life you must walk by faith ___________. (P.15,16)
Life Application

1. Would you characterize your walk of faith as “courageous” or “mediocre”?

2. What about your faith would you describe as your “passion”?

3. Do you sense a calling from God for service in His kingdom?

4. Can you pinpoint where you are in God’s process (see question 10)?

5. “Too many people spend their lives in the valley of good intentions.” (p.12). Are you one of them? If so, what keeps you in the valley?
6. Can you remember times of renewal in your life? Sometimes it helps us to remember these times that bring us closer to God.

7. God has a purpose for every person. That purpose can make an impact for all eternity on our lives as well as the lives of others. What step must you take to begin to carry out God’s purpose in your life? If you are unsure of His purpose or what action to take, you should pray and seek Biblical counsel with a Christian you respect or a Christian pastor or counselor.
Living Courageous  
Chapter Two  

The Courage to Choose and Refuse

All choices have consequences. Life is a constant stream of choices which present themselves daily, almost hourly and sometimes minute by minute. Our future as a people is dependent upon the right choices and the righteous consequences that accompany those decisions. We are at an hour in our history when ordinary people must become extraordinary. By the power of God’s will through His Word and Holy Spirit, the Church must rise to the challenge of identifying and confronting the evil which threatens to destroy the very fabric of our culture. Only by standing firm in the unity of faith can we hope to stem the tide of things to come and only by investing in the spiritual welfare of the next generation can we secure the hope of our nation’s future.
Discussion Questions:

1. Lives of purpose: We are called to live lives of purpose, as the author says, “Be on a mission”. Match the following verses to the appropriate description characterizing “purpose”.

___ 1. Paul demonstrates a life of purpose   A. Acts 11:23
___ 2. God loves purpose from our hearts   B. Prov. 16:9
___ 3. God has a plan for each of us   C. Dan. 1:8
___ 4. Daniel purposed in his heart   D. 2Cor. 9:7
___ 5. Paul purposed in the Spirit   E. Rom. 8:28
___ 6. Demonstrates purpose in unity   F. Jer. 29:11
___ 7. Jesus purposed in Himself   G. 2Tim. 3:10-11
___ 9. God works His purpose regardless of circumstances   I. Eph.1:9-10

2. From the previous question we have seen that Paul lived a life of purpose as did Daniel and Jesus. We have also seen that God has a purpose for His people both individually and collectively. He delights when we declare purpose in our hearts and faithfully follow through regardless of circumstances. Now let’s take a look at the spiritual dimension of “purpose”.

12
Read Ephesians 3:8-13. Fill in the blanks in the following statement:

God had an __________ purpose which He accomplished in Jesus. This purpose was hidden in God from __________________________. The intent of His purpose was to make known His wisdom to the __________ which will declare it to the __________________________________________.

3. Based upon the last answer, who is the Church communicating to? (see Eph.6:12) Would this include God’s angels?

4. “Fearful parents rarely raise courageous kids”. (p.20) How does fear keep parents from utilizing good parenting skills?

5. “Moses’ parents lived by faith even in a difficult, if not unbearable, situation. The Bible reminds us that favorable conditions do not add to faith.” Discuss how a weak faith or a lack of faith might cause wrong decisions which may lead to devastating consequences.
6. It was a Jewish tradition to “bless” their children. How should 21st century Christians place a blessing upon their children? What role would this play in a “legacy” passed on?

7. In what ways may parents model priorities to their children? An example may be in our observance of Sunday as God’s day. Our culture has made sweeping changes as to Sunday observance. What choices might a parent face in order to model priorities as opposed to conformity?

8. How should churches or Christian schools handle parents who abdicate their responsibilities for the spiritual nurturing of their children?

9. Children are subject to spiritual warfare as we all are. What chance do they have without spiritual guidance and training to prepare them for life’s choices? What can the Church do to stand for the next generation?
10. Even well minded Christian parents can be taken in by the movements of society. We live in an entertainment culture. Focus on entertainment leads to prioritizing pleasure as a focus for life. Can you give examples of how this can happen to children even at a young age?

11. We live in an age of electronic marvels. Such devices have many good uses but like everything else they can have negative impacts if used improperly or obsessively. Can you think of some subtle but negative impacts of the electronic age?

12. “Dying to self is the most liberating decision of life.” Read Heb. 11:24. In what ways have you made a decision to turn your back on worldly ways to follow God? In what ways can you imagine making such a decision? How hard would that be?
13. On page 28 the author talks about tipping points. Discuss in your group where you think we are as a society. Are we dangerously approaching the “tipping point”, that place of no return in our nation where moral decay and Islamic influences will rule the day? Is there hope for the future and what role do you think the Church must play?

14. “When God’s people are silent, there is no one to confront the growing influence of false spirituality.” (p.28) It seems that the problem is too large and we dangerously accept the attitude that “we don’t know what we could possibly do”. THIS IS FAR FROM THE TRUTH. What spiritual realm benefits from this kind of thinking?

15. Do you believe that God can rise up a generation that will turn the tide?

16. Who does “busyness” serve? Can the “Church” (that is us) find the time and resources to make a difference? Read Romans 8:37. What is His promise?
17. Moses made a choice and he refused. What was his choice? Remember the caution suggested by the author on page 31. “Moses didn’t give himself to a cause or to a movement; he gave himself to Jehovah.”
Life Application

1. Do you know what purpose God has for your life? Moses “overcame four issues that paralyze most people” (p.24) Who am I? What choices should I make? What really matters? What is my purpose? Contemplate these questions for yourself and ask God to show you His will.

2. Do you realize that God’s purpose is flawless and cannot fail if you trust in Him?

3. How can you add a blessing to the life of your children or grandchildren or even your brothers or sisters?

4. What role could you play in helping to equip the next generation? Take time and ask God to reveal His will for you in this area.

5. Can you identify some ways in which you need to “die to self?” (Think about conformity to the world and possible idols we have made.) This can be liberating but difficult and will require God’s help.
6. How about priorities? What priorities can you model for others that would be a positive example?

7. Do you sense the urgency of the times we live in? God has a plan for every one of His children. Just think of the enormous possibilities in our immediate surroundings if we all just surrendered ourselves to Him and allowed His plan to work in and through us. Spend some time in prayer asking Him to speak into your life as well as your spiritual brothers and sisters. Invite His presence into all our lives and pray that He would move mightily.
The decline of every great civilization is ushered in by the decline in great leadership. What happens to a society that causes the capable people to take a back seat? Is it because the price becomes too steep? The famous Edmund Burke quote sums up our dilemma; “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” Men in particular have a given responsibility to lead. It is therefore beneficial for all of us to understand the importance of the leadership of good men in our homes, churches, communities, and nation. This should not be taken as a diminishment of the importance of women’s roles. The Bible commentator Matthew Henry said it best; “Eve was not taken out of Adam’s head to top him, neither out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved by him.” The great challenge for the church today is for a Godly movement of men who will accept their given duties and responsibilities to serve and follow God to the realization of the impossible.
Discussion Questions:

1. Read Joshua 1:1-9 and answer the following questions.
   - How many times did the Lord command Joshua to be strong and courageous?
   - What was the Lord about to give Israel?
   - What promise would this fulfill and who first received that promise?
   - What two direct promises did the Lord make to Joshua? (v. 5)
   - Which promise did He repeat in v. 9?
   - What action words are found in verse two for Joshua?

2. Read the paragraph beginning at the bottom of page 34 which starts “Where are the men…”. Are these valid questions of our nation, our church and our families? Do you think that the majority of men think that passion for faith and family, passion for God’s Word and passion for prayer are less than manly or less than courageous?

3. How important (based upon our reading from Joshua 1) do you think God regards contemplation and meditation of His Word to be? What does He say will be the result? (review v.8).

4. Where then does “courage” come from? When you look at the moral failure and the lack of courage displayed by today’s leaders do you think this is a result of the absence of God’s Word in their lives?
5. It has been said that courage is the ability to move forward in the face of fear. If one fails to have courage then they are left only with _____.

The author writes (p.35), “Fear will disable a man and an army. Fear will dismantle a country.” He further gives the example of a world that is afraid to take a stand against “radical Islam”. Should we be a people who are afraid of Islam?

6. Do you think courage is contagious?

7. “One day they were in the wilderness; the next day they were in the promised land.” (p.37). Could they have gotten there without courage? If not where would they have been on the next day? What represents the promised land in your life?

8. On page 37 the author makes this statement; “Joshua was a great leader because he was a great ________.” Why is this distinction important?

9. What does all of this have to do with “Lordship”? 
10. “There are no shortcuts to spirituality. There’s no pill for courage. It is developed and defined in the quiet place.” (p.38). In the face of adversity we cannot expect to access what isn’t there. What must we do to prepare for life’s challenges?

   - Verse 4:24 tells us to be ___________ in our minds
   - Verse 6:19 tells us to “be _________”
   What transformational relationship can be found between these two verses?

12. Which symbolic piece of the armor protects us from discouragement?

13. A great acronym for fear: False Evidence Appearing Real 2Tim.1:7 – For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. List the three things God has given us: ____________, ____________, ______________.
14. God gave Joshua the Promised Land but it didn’t come without some battles. In Joshua 6:2 we read “See! I have given Jericho into your hand...” Do you think God would give us our county? Who does the fighting? See Deut. 20:4

15. Why is avoiding making a decision just like making one?

16. 2Chron.7:14 “...if my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”
   - Who were God’s people in the Joshua story?
   - Who are God’s people today who are called by His name?
   - What were Joshua’s people called to do to inherit the land?
   - What are we called to do to heal the land?
Underline the action words in this text.

17. “But until right stands up and looks like right, then wrong doesn’t take it into consideration.” (p.44). God wants us to think differently. Our first step must be in the process of __________ our minds.
Life Application

1. What first step must you take to be a person of courage or to live courageously?

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17. What do you think this verse says to you about living a “Christ-like” day? Ask God to give you this perspective for your daily walk with Him.

3. What do you fear in life? Find a Bible promise that would relate to your fear and claim that promise as yours. Ask God to grant you courage in the face of your fears.

4. In what way could you demonstrate courage that would be contagious to someone else?

5. In this session we learned that being a good “follower” is an important characteristic of a good leader. Even if you do not see yourself as a leader how can you benefit by being a good follower?
6. Re-read Eph.4:24 and Eph. 6 19. The renewing of our mind changes our perspective and brings it into sync with God’s view. Practice the daily renewing of your mind by offering God your challenges, searching His Word and seeking His face in prayer.

7. Every believer has a duty to be part of God’s plan to take back our land. It is important to know how He wants you to serve. Ask Him for a deeper understanding of your purpose and gifts. Consult with a Pastor or group leader if you need additional help in this area.
“It is a humbling experience to knock at God’s door — you have to knock with the crucified thief.” Oswald Chambers, “My Utmost for His Highest” 6/10. We should take note of the transformation that must take place when we knock at the door of God. By the very fact that we must knock suggests that the door is initially closed. “…and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Luke 11:10. There is a process between the knocking and the opening. During this process we must come to the realization of our true inner nature. The thief recognized his guilt and shame in contrast to the purity of Christ. Jesus then opened the door.

Discussion Questions:

1. Webster defines “hero” as an “illustrious warrior”. Have you ever thought of yourself as a hero? Christians are to be faceless heroes. Why do you think we have a shortage of heroes today (particularly in the church)? What does a hero in the Church look like?

2. Name some heroes from history that you admire and give a reason why.
3. In the movie “Courageous” the concept of “honor begins at home” is promoted. Why is just being good, not good enough? What is the distinction between being “good” and being “godly”?

4. Consider your group. We can choose to look at others flaws or shortcomings or we can try to see the potential God has placed in each person. Share any encouraging possibilities you may see in others in your group.

5. Consider the comments from the previous question. Remember that God is not particularly interested in what we perceive as our strengths and our weaknesses do not hinder His plan. Does someone else see something in you that you have not seen to this point?

6. God is not only interested in the glory for Himself, but He demands it. Why is humility an important characteristic to God? What is required of a person to be truly humble?
7. We sometimes miss where God is working or what He is doing because we are too focused on the shortcomings or flaws we see in the other person or event. How does humility help us overcome this bad habit? How might we miss the potential of what God wants to do in someone else?

8. We live in a world filled with more criticism than encouragement. Sometimes the encouragement offered by others isn’t truly positive. Sometimes we are encouraged to settle for less than God’s best. How can we sift through the advice of others and gain God’s perspective? (see 1John4:1)

9. Read the story of Gideon found in Judges 6:11-16.
   - How did the angel describe Gideon in verse 12?
   - Was this descriptive of his life at that time or was this perhaps God’s view of Gideon’s potential?
   - Was Gideon’s first response one of faith or doubt?
   - Was he focused on circumstances or God?
   - When called of God did he recount his strengths or his weaknesses?
10. In verse 14 we read the Lord’s response to Gideon; “Go in this might of yours…”. What might is spoken of here?

11. We also see in the words in verse 14, “Have I not sent you?” What is the connection between “being sent” and God’s might?

12. Hudson Taylor’s comment on p. 54 reads “All of God’s great men have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them; they counted on His faithfulness.” In other words they trusted in His ____________ and trusted that He would ____________.

13. Read Judges 7:2-7. What did God do with the “fearful men?” What did He do with the less watchful? How much faith do you think it took for the remaining 300 to trust in this situation? Where do you think their courage came from?
14. Thomas Paine authored the famous quote “lead, follow or get out of the way”. We seem devoid of leaders, we may be equally devoid of followers, does that mean that most people are just “getting out of the way?” If so, then of what use are they to God?

15. “Fear sees with the eyes of the _______; courage sees with eyes of __________.” (p.56)

16. “God is not looking for great people; He’s looking for ____________ people who will follow Him.” (p.57)

17. Read the Ron Dunn quote on p.57. Fill in the blanks.
   ● “God can” is not ____________ faith.
   ● “______________” falls short of the biblical ideal.
   ● “______________” claims it is already done.
1. Read through the verses at the bottom of p.52 regarding the power of God. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 meaning almost never and 5 being always) rank how these verses describe your daily walk with God.

2. Are you fearful of some or most challenges in your life? We all face fear. What is important for a Christian believer is how we handle that fear. Ask God to give you faith for His presence and provision.

3. Gideon (p.53) had to make things right at home first before he could be used by God to deliver his people. What things, if any, need to be made right in your home before God can use you? What things need to be made right in your life before God can use you? Remember, you already have access to God, if you truly are a believer. This exercise will help you in your walk with Him and He has the power to bring you and your household into a right relationship.
4. False gods in a person’s life are always a problem for spiritual growth. For instance, many trust too much in worldly security which may become a false god. It can be a fine line between good stewardship and trusting in riches. Do you suspect any false gods in your life? Ask God to reveal to you anything that you may be holding too tightly. Ask for His wisdom to trust Him in a greater way than the thing or person you are trusting.

5. Do you see God as a god, “who can”, “who will” or “who has”?

6. Would it take courage for you to be truly humble? What things, desires or beliefs would you have to let go of to be completely surrendered to God?

7. Do you present yourself humbly daily in a time of devotion to God? Do you see your need to be like the thief on the cross who came to understand His unworthiness yet came to see the righteousness of Christ?
The Courage to Face an Uncertain Future

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Phil.4:6 (KJV). The truth is, we live in uncertain times and we don’t like it. There is more than enough uncertainty available to us either globally or personally and none of us have the ability to face it on our own without experiencing its negative impact. Fear produces anxiety and anxiety produces doubt. Doubt produces discouragement and despair and then we feel hopeless. The Philippians verse reminds us that we can place our uncertainty upon Christ and He will grant us peace which will guard our hearts and minds against the negative process of uncertainty. Uncertainty in this life is normal and should be expected. We must learn to be prepared to operate on the positive process that God has given us through Christ Jesus for those who believe in Him.
Discussion Questions:

1. “Fear is believing a lie”, according to the author (p.60). Previously we studied an acronym for fear (False Evidence Appearing Real). Read chapter 1 of the Book of Ruth. What lie confronted Ruth? How could she have reacted to the false evidence before her?

2. Discuss the atmosphere of grief that hung over the three women in the story. How can we find courage in the face of grief and pain which causes deep felt emotions in us?

3. In the face of personal tragedy people will often offer up well meaning but worldly words of comfort. In other times it seems as if there are no words of comfort available to us. How can faith in Christ help our understanding during such trials?

4. How did Ruth’s reaction to Naomi mirror God’s promise to the people of Israel? (p.64)
5. How did Naomi face her circumstances? What then was her attitude toward God?


7. What does favor mean according to the author (p.67)?

8. Read Leviticus 25:47-55. What is a kinsman-redeemer? (p.67). What reason did God provide for such treatment?
   - Who was the kinsman-redeemer in the story of Ruth?
   - How does this characteristic of God’s nature operate for us today?


10. How does faith demand courage? What are the risks?
Life Application

1. Identify the items of uncertainty in your life. Do they produce anxiety, fear or doubt? Find a Bible promise for each one of them and stand firm in prayer claiming God’s promise.

2. Can you identify the lies associated with each area of uncertainty?

3. God’s promises can also prepare you for future uncertainties. The more we internalize the Word of God and trust Him for our daily lives, the more prepared we will be to face future challenges. Ruth made a radical decision to follow Naomi. What radical decisions must you make to follow Jesus daily?

4. On p.66 the author presents the story of Corrie ten Boom. He says that she devoted her life to the thought: “There is no pain so deep that God’s love cannot reach it.” Do you believe this? Have you experienced this? Do you need to experience this?
5. Do you sense God’s favor in your life?

6. Describe how Jesus has been your kinsman-redeemer personally.

7. Ruth placed herself in a “position of submission and surrender” to Boaz. Have you placed yourself totally in the same position to Jesus making Him the Lord (not just Savior) of your life?
A millennial is a term used to describe a person born during the approximate time of 1980 to 2000, give or take a few years. Characterized by their broad use and familiarity with communications, media and digital technology they present new challenges to the education system, workforce and churches of our time. Largely as a group they do not profess Christianity or religious affiliations but it has been noted that Christian millennials are uninterested churches that fail to demonstrate a depth of conviction in their preaching and teaching. Oddly enough, in a world so devoid of leaders with character, they seem to sense the need and are refusing to settle for less. This leaves us with a few all important questions as we face the future of our nation and the church. As a church, how do we build character when the process has been broken? How do we attract the next generation who will seize the day and take back what this generation has squandered?
Discussion Questions:

1. The author speaks of his own experience as a youth pastor (p.74) and is critical that many of our churches are more interested in entertaining young people and fail at passing on any “expectations”. Why do you think this is so? Could it be that many adult Christians are more interested in being entertained themselves than having expectations to live up to?

2. Do you think the churches are guilty of failing to have expectations of their people?

3. On pp.74,75 Sammy Tippitt recounts a story from his ministry in East Berlin. What were some of the results (direct or indirect) of the girl’s faith?

4. “They drew courage from the cross”. Discuss what it means to draw courage from the cross. Why is it always important for us to return to the cross? How easy is it for us to face things and forget the meaning of the cross?
5. What other element of faith did they practice?

6. “Because of the decay of the home and the influence of media and entertainment, students are languishing in a cesspool of uncertainty.” (p.77). “They don’t understand absolutes.” “And they are biblically illiterate.” These are strong statements of condemnation for our times. The author suggests that we need a “radical change”. Discuss what a radical change might look like in our church and community.

7. We are living in times when generations are becoming more separated than unified. The survivals of most churches are dependant upon the act of embracing all age groups. How do you relate to age groups other than the one to which you belong?

8. On p.78 the author speaks of his own children. “We expected them to have a healthy fear of God.” Describe what this means.
9. Too many homes today have a “multiple choice” menu for what to believe or follow. Read Prov. 22:6. What admonition is given for the raising of children? What promise is made for those who apply this training?

10. In the movie “Courageous” Adam needed to learn to communicate with his son and Dylan needed to respect his father. How does this process build character? With so many homes being torn apart today is it any wonder why we are experiencing a character crisis. What might Christian adults do today to help build character in the lives of young people who have no such role model?

11. Read Daniel 1:3-16. Read verse 8 again. What does it mean to defile oneself? Webster defines defile as to make dirty or pollute. How would you describe any action that conforms to the world because of political correctness if in fact that action is not God’s way?
12. Daniel had courage because he knew what he believed and who he was. If we have a generation of young people who do not understand who they are or what they believe then how difficult would it be for them to have courage?

13. Speaking of Daniel, (p.81) the author makes this statement: “His appetite for the things of God gave him no appetite for worldly things.”
   - How many things today compete for our appetite?
   - What transformation can you expect to take place as you mature in the spirit when it comes to appetites?

14. “God will use you publicly if you allow him to tutor you privately.” What expectations can we have of our witness to others if we do not regularly spend time in the Word and prayer?

15. Daniel had more than one test. If we walk faithfully can we expect to face tests?
16. On the top of page 82 the first line says “Spiritual warfare is a battle of the mind.” On page 83 we read; “It never entered Daniel’s mind to compromise.” What elements of Daniels faith do you believe were crucial to winning this spiritual battle?

17. “Some folks think if they are going to live for God, they have to be nerds or outcasts.” (p.84). Why do we feel weird when we are called to display our faith in a public setting? What element of Daniels faith would be most helpful for overcoming this obstacle?

18. What effect do you believe television has on all of us? What steps should we take to guard our minds from some of the things offered to watch? If you take steps to minimize this impact in the privacy of your own home, what advantage is this to your character?

19. Read 2Chron.7:14. Do you think we can help lead the next generation toward this promise?
Life Application

1. In a moment of brutal honesty consider how entertainment oriented you are? When you come to church do you evaluate the entertainment or are you given over to worship?

2. In the story of the East German girl, she cried out to serve God “No matter what it costs.” Is this an expression of your faith? Can you imagine the situation she was in and how real the costs were to her?

3. If the church needs to have a “radical change” then each member must also have such a change. What would you consider to be a radical step in your walk with the Lord that you would be willing to undertake?

4. If someone asked you who you are, would your first instinct be to describe your job or your discipleship?

5. Daniel had such a strong conviction that kept him from compromising his belief. Can you identify anything in your life that you might consider as a defilement of your faith?
6. An appetite for any one thing may not be a sinful act. If we elevate anything before God or have too many appetites that may restrict our time and devotion to him then this may be defilement. Evaluate the appetites in your life. Are there any adjustments in order?

7. The author quoted Vance Havner as saying, “If you lack knowledge, go to school. If you lack wisdom, get on your knees!” This lesson has served to point out our need for an awakening of God in our land. Pray that He will show you what He has for you that you may glorify Him and prove His perfect will.
“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. James 1:5-8. (KJV)

Indecision causes us to be unstable in all ways. An unstable person lacks direction, fails to honor commitments, and generally lacks conviction and or passion in life. Unfortunately we are surrounded today, in the church, by the undecided. There are generally three groups of people found anywhere. The totally devoted, those who worship idols and the undecided. Most of the undecided would probably say they have made a decision; however that decision may be flawed due to a lack of Biblical understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ. The question, is can you be just Christian enough to be saved yet not follow as a disciple?
Discussion Questions:

1. On p. 90 the author states the following; “There are a lot of neat Christian guys but very few godly men.” Explain the difference.

2. “It’s time for every husband and father to call his family to a decision.” (p.91). Why is this the time?

3. Read the story of Elijah found in 1Kings18. The author says that most church members would like to hear a sermon from Elijah but wouldn’t like him for a pastor. Why?

4. “The tide will turn when we decide enough is enough.” What do you think it will take for the Church (people) to decide it’s enough? Do you believe God will continue to remove His blessing from our nation until we repent?

5. “Elijah is known…for the deeds he did. He was a _____ ___ _________ and a _____ ___ _________. ” (p.92).
6. “What we have in this media age is a pooling of ignorance.” (p.93). In a world where we are bombarded daily by news, emails, voice messages, text messages and misinformation how are we to distinguish between what to believe and what to dismiss?

7. Everyone seems to be busy. Lives are full and time is a precious commodity. Do you think part of the decision that we must make might cause us to re-examine our priorities? Do you think this might be costly or painful?

8. “I don’t care how old you are, you aren’t a man until you ______ _______ and _______ ______ ________ . (p.93). What steps may be necessary to complete this challenge?
9. “Even in the face of death, starvation, and dehydration, the people continued to give their allegiance to false gods.” (p.94). “There must be a surrender of the will, not a surrender to a persuasive or powerful argument.” Oswald Chambers, “My Utmost for His Highest”, 12/22. It is a difficult thing for a person to completely surrender their lives to Jesus. Understanding that we need supernatural help is the first step in having a relationship with Christ. Discuss the “decision” that we all must make in order to be a stable, committed follower.

10. Review the story of Elijah found in 1Kings18. What was Elijah passionate about? Read verse 21. What did Elijah ask of the people? Discuss whether this is an appropriate question for the Church today?

11. “Once you’ve prayed, and have a word from God, __________ __ __ __ __. Walk onto the battlefield ______________ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __. (p.96).
12. What do you believe the consequence to be for our nation if the Church fails to make a decision? Why does the author believe we (America) need a Mt. Carmel moment?

13. “We’ve fought wars to maintain freedom but we are in bondage to the spirit of ______________ and ______________.” (p.97). What does it take to break spiritual bondage?

14. “We have little appetite for the meat of the Word and a call to the cross.” (p.97). None of this should really be a chore. We should long for God’s truth and be motivated by it. We should identify daily with the cross and walk accordingly. Why then is this so hard for many believers? What can make the difference?
15. When we truly become separate our focus will be stronger towards eternal things rather than temporal things. What does it mean to not be of the world? See John 17:13-19.

16. We are in dire need of repentance. Repentance comes to us as a personal revelation of the atonement of the cross. What are we actually accomplishing when we repent?
Life Application

1. What are you passionate about? What is your greatest need?

2. “Confess your trespasses to one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James 5:16 (KJV) “All the high points came as the result of the effectual prayer of a righteous man.” (p.99). What part of your journey has been dependant upon prayer? What part should prayer take? Make a decision for prayer time on a daily, if not constant, basis. Ask God for the help of His Holy Spirit.

3. Are you dressed for battle? Do you start each day putting on the armor of God?

4. Can you look around you and see the compromise and complacency? Write down a few examples.
5. On page 101 the author gives us a list of God’s priorities for our lives. The first things of importance are:
   - repentance
   - confession of sin
   - cleansing and separation from the world
   - submission to Christ’s Lordship
   - the filling of the Holy Spirit

If these things comprised your report card, what would your grades look like?

6. It’s time for a decision. Are you willing to stand up and say “enough is enough” and make a total decision for Christ? Does this mean you must make a few radical changes (with God’s help) in your life?

7. Remember, starting is easier than finishing. You will need accountability. Who can you trust to be an accountability partner that you may finish strong as a “good and faithful servant?”
“Criticism comes easier than craftsmanship.” Zeuxis (-400BC), from Pliny the Elder, Natural History. The point is that most criticism requires no talent. However, there are times when critical analysis is necessary and meaningful. How can we tell the difference? Criticism based upon preferences is generally more harmful than good. It tends to be self-serving and rarely encourages the other person, entity or event. On the other hand positive criticism is usually meant to benefit the other person, entity of event.

We all engage, from time to time, in both forms of criticism and unless we live in a cave we are most likely the target for someone else’s opinions. This session is designed to help us understand that we can expect criticism if our lives are to have any value. Furthermore, we must develop the ability to determine the difference between negative and positive criticism. Lastly, we need to be sensitive to our own use of criticism and the impact it may have upon others.
Discussion Questions

1. We can function in negative criticism even in our own thoughts about our own lives. When we say “what can I do, I’m just one person?” “What can one church accomplish?” Read James 1:6. Do you think having doubts is a form of criticism? How?

2. Read the Teddy Roosevelt quote found on page 105.
   - How important is it for us to have a “worthy cause?”
   - What was his attitude toward defeat and victory?
   - What relationship does he imply between “joy and suffering” and “victory and defeat?”
   - In his opinion, a life which consists of these things is better than being ranked with “those ________ ________” who never experience either victory or defeat.

3. “Criticism is one of the enemy’s favorite flaming arrows.” (p.106). Read Rev. 12:10. What is one of Satan’s main functions? Now read Eph. 6:12&16. What should our process be for defeating such attacks of criticism from the enemy?
4. As we grow in faith and maturity Satan may change his tactics. When his attacks of criticism have been victoriously repelled what might his next weapon look like? Every one who ministers must be on guard against this fleshly trap.

5. Why is it important to do something, even if not perfect, than to just do nothing? How does fear of criticism keep many from doing something? Most people need to be encouraged to take an active part in service. Encouragement is the counterpart of criticism. Imagine what the church might be like if we had as much encouragement as we do criticism.

   - What was the goal of Sanballat and Geshem?
   - When their first four attempts failed, how did they escalate their approach?
   - How did Nehemiah respond (verses 8&9)?

7. “Prayer was fundamental not ____________.” Discuss the difference.
8. “If you do anything great for God, you are going to need prayer support.”... “The power of a praying church cannot be measured.” (p.108). Unity in prayer is something most churches never experience. If we are to pray in unity for the church, we must understand the mission of the church and the immediate ________ facing us as a result of the war in which we are engaged.

9. “We need to build four walls in our life: ________, ________, ________, _________. Surrounding our hearts with these four walls of defense will allow us to stand in an evil day.” (p.109)

10. “So we pray and practice unity on every front.” (p.109). How likely is unity to take place without an environment of prayer?

11. “Critics make three kinds of statements:
_____________________; __________________;
_____________________.” (p.110). In chapter 4 we learned that appropriate attitude toward God is not that He “can’ or “will” but “He has”. How important then is our faith in proving the will of God? What is the affect of giving in to criticism?
12. Some people expect everything to go smoothly if you are doing God’s will. Why is this most likely to be wrong?

13. Read 1 John 5:4. How does this suggest that we should face opposition?

14. Read Nehemiah 4:1-6. Nehemiah chose not to respond but rather to turn the matter over to the Lord. Our first reaction is almost always to lash out against our critics with a harsh word. Why is silence sometimes a more powerful weapon? Which way would Satan want you to respond?

15. Read Adam Mitchell’s speech beginning at the bottom of p.111. Write the last line of his speech in the space provided. _____________________

____________________. Is this a battle calling for our unified prayer as a church family? How can we answer this call?
16. If you are doing the Lord’s will, then who are the critics criticizing? Read Nehemiah 4:7-9. Note verse 9. They not only prayed but what else did they do? Why is this important?

17. On page 114 the author quotes Roy Laurin. Read this quote.
   • What does the enemy wish to accomplish?
   • What is our most important response?

18. Rom. 8:31 supplies us with the courage we need to finish strong. Complete the following statement found at the bottom of page 114. “Every move of his critics was met by ________, __________, and ____________________ .”

19. “The only reason they have influence is_____________________________________. ”
Life Application

1. Examine your own thoughts about your service to God. Have you let the fear of criticism hold you back from having a ministry experience?

2. If you have been wounded by criticism or are experiencing this now, decide what steps you need to take (based upon this study) to not allow the enemy to have his way.

3. Look up the verses found on page 108 regarding Nehemiah’s work and prayer. How can you make his approach relevant to your life’s work or struggles?

4. Faith, courage, integrity and prayer were listed as the four walls we all need to build in our lives. (p. 109). Notice the emphasis on the need for building. Which of these areas do you feel the need to build in? How? If you need help, seek the counsel of someone you trust or discuss this with one of the pastor’s.
5. Are you a critical person? If so, is it possible that your criticisms are based upon your preferences and therefore not constructive? Ask God to reveal the truth about this to you and if needed, to help you see the difference.

6. Do you have another person in your life that you can trust completely? We all need someone to confide in and someone who feels the same about us. Matt.18:20 tells us if two are more are gathered He is in our midst. The first step toward church unity might be finding another person to have unity with. If you do not have such a person, ask God for His direction.

7. Ask God for the unity of our church, particularly in our prayer life. Pray that He will deliver us from the spirit of negative criticism and to sustain when we do have to face it.
“You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” (NIV). The true evidence of our spirituality is exhibited in the lives of others not as a reflection of self. Our reflection should be that of Jesus and the ministry He brings to us by means of others. In essence, authenticity speaks for itself. To become a “letter from Christ” we need to accept the investment of others, that is to be responsible for what is given to us by way of ministry, and to be willing to invest in others as the opportunity presents itself; “…written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”
Discussion Questions:

1. We live in the age of electronic communication. Discuss the effects that might be impacting our society as we communicate more but in a way that is less intimate? (less face to face and more non-verbal). What challenges do electronic communications present for having heartfelt conversations over deep subjects?

2. How important is it for those who are farther along in their journey to mentor those who are not? Read 1 John 2:12-14 and 2 John 7.

3. “There is a bland predictability about Christianity today.” (p.118) Do you believe this to be true and if so, why?

4. Read Eph.4:1-3.
   - What is our responsibility?
   - What kind of effort must we make? (v.3)
   - What are the goals for our relationship with others?
5. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. How much of this description is true of the times we live in? Discuss the meaning of “having a form of godliness but denying its power.” (NKJ).

6. On page 120, the author writes; “We can’t do it in our own strength. We need the Holy Spirit to empower us. We need others to encourage and equip us.” Read Matt. 22:27-40. We often think of the “Great Commandment” in terms of our deliberate act toward God and others. How do the author’s comments suggest that we must also view this commandment in terms of receiving benefit from God and others?

7. How important is accountability in our lives? Discuss why we might need to consider having an accountability partner in our lives who will not let us settle for status quo. How helpful is encouragement?
8. “Peter was a fisherman. Paul was a tent maker.” (p.122). After Jesus came into their lives, catching fish and making tents was not the center of their focus. Discuss what defines a person’s identity. Should be known for what we do or rather “whose we are?” How can we balance the demands of this life with living a life dedicated to Christ?

9. We must protect what has been entrusted to us. Read the scriptures listed by the author on page 123 from the book of 2 Timothy. Notice the progression of our responsibility.

- 2Tim.1:5-8 ______________________ (NKJ)
- 2Tim.2:1-7,15 ______________________ (NKJ)
- 2Tim.3:1 ______________________ (NKJ)
- 2Tim.4:1-5 ______________________ (NKJ)

Associate the following descriptions (by letter) with the appropriate verse: (Some verses may have multiple answers).

a. in the last days perilous times will come
b. we must stir up the gift of God within us
c. “I charge you…fulfill your ministry.”
d. the faithful must teach others
e. “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power…”
f. we are in a war, daily things must not entangle us
10. On p.124 the author speaks of his personal experiences of “fathering” several “sons” in the ministry. “I’ve ordained them and tried to put the fear of God in them.” What does the phrase “fear of God” mean? The following verses may be helpful:

- “Is not your fear of God your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?” (Job 4:6, NASB)

- “Is not your reverence your confidence?...” (Job 4:6, NKJ)

- “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2Cor.7:1, NKJ)

Do you think the Church (universal) has lost much of its reverence or fear of God? If you do, then describe how or why? (Remember, people make up the church.)
11. “There are many strange fires today.” (p.126). Consider the following “strange fires’ and discuss why they seem to appeal to various people:
- the prosperity gospel
- a watered down gospel
- a compromised church
- “spirituality” (new age, relative truth, etc.)

Do these things suggest that people are trying to re-make God in their image?

12. Read the quote at the top of page 127 by J. Wilbur Chapman. How can we muster the strength to “turn away” from things that hinder our relationship with Christ? Turn once again to Ephesians 6:14. Since “turning away” is a daily (sometimes hourly) challenge what benefit might we have from praying on the armor of God daily? Verse 14 requires us to put on the righteousness of Christ. This is freely given to us and God sees us as righteous when we are properly attired. Our prayer should be that we always love what is righteous and turn from all that is evil.
13. “We must call people to fire. The coals have been cold for so long that it takes time to stoke them and fan the flame again. The altar of repentance is needed to burn away the dross that destroys the image of Christ in us.” (p.128). Discuss in your group the need for repentance in ourselves, and our churches. Read the following verses aloud in your group: (NKJ).

Acts 5:31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

Rom 2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

2 Cor 7:9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

2 Cor 7:10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

2 Tim 2:25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,
• Where does the ability to repent come from?
• Repentance is necessary for ______________ of sins.
• Repentance granted by God leads to __________.
• Repentance leads to a “knowledge ____ ____ ______.”

14. What connection do you see between the “fear of God” and “repentance”?

15. What will happen to the next generation if we fail to “stir up the fire”?

16. What will happen to the church if we fail to repent? The author suggests that the church will become “irrelevant”. Discuss whether the church is relevant in our society today or if it is already becoming irrelevant? Can you give examples for either position?

17. Discuss the hypothetical situation of “addition” verse the proposed idea of “multiplication” found on page 129. If we do our part, can we begin to believe God for a major movement among His people?
Life Application

1. Has anyone ever “invested” into your life? Have you ever “invested” into someone else’s life?

2. If you were to describe your life as a letter, what kind of a letter would it be; “Written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God?”

3. We must all be aware of practicing “a form of godliness.” Ask God to show you areas in your life where you might be practicing religion vs. relationship with Him?

4. Consider the great commandment. We are called to love God and others. How well are you doing when it comes to receiving the love of God from Him and others?
5. Consider the following questions referenced by the author?

- If not now, when? ______________ (answer “now” or “later”)
- If not you, who? _______________ (ans. “me” or “someone else”)
- If not here, where? _______________ (ans. “here” or “somewhere else”)
- If not by prayer, then how? _______________ (ans. “by prayer” or “by my own method”)

These questions may have been difficult because they are also revealing. Take time to seek God’s strength for what He has planned for you.

6. Do you have a “holy fear of God?” We’ve learned that each of us needs to be led into repentance? Ask God to fill you heart with reverence for Him and to lead you by the power of His Holy Spirit into repentance. By doing this you may receive the power of His forgiveness as well as the abundant life He promised.

7. Pray for God to raise up mentors and disciple makers in our church and the church around the world.
“But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name.” Luke 21:16-17 (NASB) Jesus predicted the persecution of the church. We live in a culture that knows very little about religious persecution. Our society, founded on the premise of religious freedom, has forgotten its identity as a Christian nation and confused the concept of protection against persecution with that of compromise and tolerance. It is one thing to protect others with freedom and liberty; but quite another to compromise our beliefs and values in the name of tolerance. Such compromise can only breed contempt for those who lost their identity in the process. Persecution of Christianity as known around the world may not be known to this land during our lifetime but have no doubt, the seeds have already been sown and the first fruits have already become visible. Whether the church shall regain its voice in our nation or have the need to stand in the face of persecution remains to be seen. In either event the need is clear. We must grow and mature as a Christian people in order to stand against the tyranny of darkness that has set itself against the true identity of God’s people.
Discussion Questions

1. “While the church is exploding in Third World countries, the church is declining in America and Europe.” (p.132). Why do you think the church grows more under persecution than prosperity?

2. Imagine the persecution of the American church. What immediate effect do you think this would have on Sunday attendance? Why?

3. On page 134 the author mentions a “strategy of slowly isolating and discriminating.” Discuss what strategies might be seen in our government that isolate or discriminate Christianity. Where do you believe this strategy comes from?

4. How does educating the next generation about the Gospel impact the future of our nation?
5. Read Acts 6:5-8 and 7:55. What words are used repeatedly to describe Stephen? Stephen was the first martyr of the church. How was he prepared to fulfill what God called him to do?

6. The author quotes Vance Havner; “There are not two gospels, one for missionaries and martyrs, the other for those who name the name of Christ but let Him bear the cross alone while they themselves go free.” (p.135). Which Gospel do you believe to be more prevalent in America? Which is the true Gospel?

7. According to the book which of the following were true of Stephen?
   - He was a man of great ambition. _____
   - He was saved less than five years. _____
   - He was empowered by the Holy Spirit. _____
   - He was courageous. _____
   - He had a good reputation. _____
8. Fill in the blanks in this statement found at the top of page 137. “The difference between the first-century church and the twenty-first-century church is that they were __________ _____________ and we are __________ __________.”

9. Stephen new the Word. “Today Americans are biblically illiterate.” (p.137). Read the last paragraph on page 137. Which of the following comments are true (for the most part) of biblically illiterate people?
   • They are unaware of God’s promises.
      _____
   • They are unaware of God’s commands.
      _____
   • They know scripture even though lazy.
      _____
   • They play at Bible study.
      _____
   • Even though they know a little they are still prepared.
      _____

10. Read 2Cor.10:5. This scripture tells is to take every thought captive? What does this mean? Why is an in depth knowledge of scripture important?

12. Read Acts 6:15. What does this verse suggest to you?

13. “The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.” (p.139). It would seem then that the safest place to be is in God’s will. Does God’s will scare you? Why? or why not?

14. According to Acts 1:8, we can expect the coming of the Holy Spirit as well as His _____________. 
15. The author offered this criticism of the American church, p. 142. “The American church is not ready for persecution. We aren’t the stuff of which martyrs are made. We are wimpy, self-serving, and self-centered, dining on pabulum and watered-down Christianity.” Do you think this is a fair and accurate assessment? If so, what must we do? What will it require?
Life Application

1. If Christian persecution arose in America tomorrow, do you think you would be able to take a stand?

2. “Are you in anyway ashamed to identify yourself as a believer in Jesus Christ?” (p.135).

3. Stephen was described as a man full of the Spirit and power. Does his describe your life? If not why do you think you lack power to serve?

4. Stephen new God’s Word. Do you consider yourself to be biblically literate or illiterate?

5. Pray for God’s guidance and a revelation of His truth for your life and for the time in which we live.