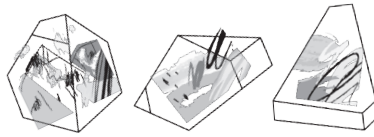


FEARLESS

CONQUERING THE FEAR THAT HOLDS YOU BACK



Session 3:
FEARLESS IN EMBRACING
GOD'S MISSION

What We Want Students to Learn: That while natural, worry about the hard parts of living out their faith shouldn't keep them from being on board with God's mission.

Main Scripture: Matthew 26:36-46

Supporting Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

Session Snapshot: Sometimes it's hard to take a stand. Sometimes it seems like you're the only person who is trying to stay true to what you believe. When it feels like this, it can be easy to want to find another way out. Jesus did. Hours before His crucifixion, He asked God if there was a different way. A way that wasn't so difficult. And yet, even in His asking, Jesus was fearless. "Let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." As your students seek to live as Christ-followers, they are called to model Jesus' boldness. Yes, the road is hard sometimes. But being a part of God's mission to redeem the world makes it worth it. This lesson will challenge your students to embrace the tough times by imitating Jesus' fearlessness.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each Small Group Leader's Guide comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are simply short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your FEARLESS lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video, login to your account, navigate to your Small Group lesson 3, and click on the "Background" tab in your Lesson Manager. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video at the top of the Lesson Manager window.

THE DETAILS

WHO WROTE THIS BOOK?

Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE FOR ITS WRITING?

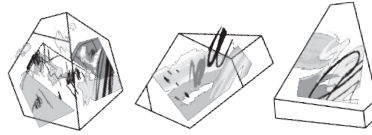
Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point for students in this lesson is that even Jesus acknowledged that living on mission for God is difficult. Jesus knew what was coming. He knew the cross lay in His path. He knew the spiritual and physical pain He would experience would be great. And He asked the Father for another, less trying way.

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We should be thankful that He did, because in this moment, we see Jesus fully identifying with our humanity. But, because of who Jesus is, even as He asked for another way He expressed a bold resoluteness to carry on with the Father's will. Even when the going got tough, Jesus was bold.

THE TAKEAWAY

The takeaway for students is that they can be bold too! Jesus modeled for them what it looks like to face a tough situation and remain committed to God's mission. As students live out their faith, there will be moments of great trial. They will be tested. And when they are, they can remember Jesus' example and stay true to God's mission, being bold and not fearful.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called Getting Started; the Bible study section called Digging In; and an application-focused segment called Wrapping Up.

GETTING STARTED

- **Student Book Pages**
 - o This lesson will utilize pages 21-25 in the FEARLESS Student Book.
 - o This activity will use page 22.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - o Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, have a volunteer read the Session 3 intro on page 21 of their Student Books. When he or she has finished, instruct them to look at page 22. Inform students that these are three stories of young people who showed great daring in the face of various challenges. Then, read or have students read the three stories listed on the page.

NEXT, when you have finished, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **Which of these was your favorite story? Why?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **What is the most daring thing you've ever done?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **If you could be assured 100% that you wouldn't fail, what would you want to try?**
 - o Answers will vary.

FINALLY, wrap up your discussion and prepare to transition to the Bible study portion of your session by saying something like the following:

- **These stories are pretty awesome, and they each demonstrate a key concept: most daring feats involve risk. The hard stuff is dangerous, isn't it? If climbing Everest were easy, everyone would do it. There have been millions of US men and women fight for their country. But only a few thousand have won the Congressional Medal of Honor. Why? Because it's so demanding. But just because stuff is hard doesn't stop people from doing it. People accept that their mission, whether it's motocross or military service, naturally involves difficulty. It's part of it. And while they may be afraid at times, they don't let fear keep them from achieving their goals. Guess what? Your faith is the same way. Let's take a look at I mean.**

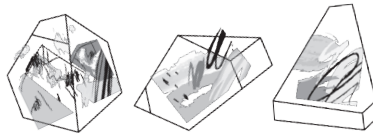
DIGGING IN

- **Student Book Pages**
 - o This activity will utilize pages 23-24 in the FEARLESS Student Book.

FEARLESS

CONQUERING THE FEAR THAT HOLDS YOU BACK

Session 3:
FEARLESS IN EMBRACING
GOD'S MISSION



- **Additional Instructions**

- o You'll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app.

BEGIN, your Bible study time by having students turn to Matthew 26. Explain to them that the narrative they will be reading is Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. See if any students can give you the backdrop for what is happening, i.e., where this comes in the overall story of Jesus' life, what had just happened, what was about to happen, etc.

THEN, direct students' attention to the top of page 23. Have students read Matthew 26:36-39 to themselves. Allow them a few minutes to record a few observations that stand out to them as important. Allow some of them to share their responses. When they have done so, lead them in a brief discussion. Ask the following questions (which are also in the student book for those students who may need to read them in order to process their response):

- **We can't know for sure, but can you imagine what must have been going through the minds of Peter, Jams, and John when they saw Jesus become "sorrowful and troubled"? What do you think they might have been feeling?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **Why would it be so unusual for them to see Jesus this way?**
 - o Answers will vary. But explain that nowhere else in the Gospels was Jesus pictured as being distressed to this degree. It would have been a real change in His persona, one that should have hinted to them that something big was coming.
- **Just so we're all on the same page, what was Jesus so distressed about?**
 - o Answer: His arrest, trial, and crucifixion.
- **Why did Jesus want the "cup" to be taken from Him?**
 - o Answer: Help students see that it wasn't simply the physical pain that Jesus knew He would endure. It was the mental, emotional, and spiritual anguish as well. Jesus was taking on the sin of the world. This would essentially create separation between Him and the Father. We can only imagine the tremendous anguish this would cause Jesus.
- **Ultimately, how did Jesus deal with the fear, sadness, and anxiety He was struggling with?**
 - o Answer: This can be answered a couple of ways. First, He went to the Father in prayer, a good example for us to follow. Second, He ultimately surrendered to God's plan, trusting in the Father to work all things for His glory.

NEXT, make sure students are tracking with the narrative, especially how Jesus dealt with the anxiety He was feeling. Then, deal with verses 40-42 in the same manner. Have students read, record their observations, and then share what they found meaningful. Then, lead students in a discussion. Ask:

- **The disciples are contrasted with Jesus here. We know Jesus' mindset. How would you describe the mindset of the disciples?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **Why was his message to Peter so fitting? What would Peter soon find himself in the midst of?**
 - o Answer: Jesus was preparing for His trial. Peter was about to experience his own, though much less traumatic. Peter, the unofficial leader of the disciples, would soon deny Jesus three times. Jesus' words to Peter almost serve more as a reminder to us more than Peter; Peter couldn't know what was about to happen. We can read this narrative with the full story in view. Jesus' words were a caution to see prayer as a way of preparing for the tough times we face.
- **Jesus went back and prayed the same prayer a second time. What does this tell you about how He was dealing with what was about to happen to Him?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **The prayers are slightly different from verse 39 to verse 42. What do you see different in verse 42? What does it say about Jesus' mindset?**
 - o Answer: He appears to be more resolute. He did not ask if the cup could be taken away. He said, "If this cannot pass unless I drink it . . ." That is a different prayer. It is as if Jesus is preparing His heart and mind to press forward with His mission knowing how vital His role in it is.

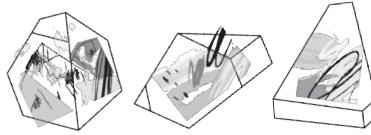
Explain to students that Jesus understood an important point: God's mission is rarely if ever easy. This is a fact. And yet, just as Jesus pressed onward, we're called to as well. Help students see that boldness in

Session 3: LESSON PLAN

FEARLESS

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Session 3:
FEARLESS IN EMBRACING
GOD'S MISSION



the face of difficult times is part of what being a Christ-follower is all about. It's OK to be afraid at times to do the difficult stuff. Jesus was. But they can never let fear keep them from acting.

THEN, have students read verses 43-46 in the same manner you have done previously. Give them time to record their observations. Then, allow those who want to share their thoughts time to do so. Then, lead them in a discussion using the following questions:

- **The moment that all of creation had been holding its breath for was about to happen. Jesus was about to go to the cross. What were the disciples doing again?**
 - Answer: Sleeping.
- **What does this say about God's view of His mission and humankind's view of His mission?**
 - Answer: This may be a tough question for students to process. But it's an interesting one. Jesus understood the importance of the moment set before them. The disciples did not. They could not. This is a reminder that God is in complete control of His mission to redeem humankind from the consequences of sin. We have a role in that mission. We can't often, if ever, know how God wants to use us. And so our call is to remain ready, always prepared to act as God moves.
- **Verse 44 says something amazing. If Jesus already knew God's answer, what was the purpose of His prayers?**
 - Answers will vary. Help students see that A) God welcomes our prayers. We can never go to Him too much or too often, and B) prayer, even prayer for Jesus, is much more about us getting on the same page with God as it is about God giving us what we want. Jesus knew the outcome. But His prayer shows us that He was in the process of readying His heart and mind for the mission.
- **So here's something to think about: When Jesus woke up the disciples, it was too late. They had slept through their chance to be with Jesus in the moment He needed them most. They failed to see God's mission at work right in front of them. What did it cost them?**
 - Answers will vary. But help students see that the disciples missed out on being present with Jesus in His time of greatest need (up to that point). They could have had a front-row seat to a touching, intimate moment with their Savior. But they missed it. Why? Because they failed to grasp the importance of what is going on. It's a good lesson for us to have our eyes wide open to what God wants to do through and in us.

Make sure students understand the heart of what you're trying to teach them. Make the point clear. The mission God had for Jesus was hard. Maybe the hardest thing that has ever been done. Jesus felt it. It hit Him hard. But Jesus didn't let it stop Him from being a part of the amazing work God wanted to do through Him. Say something like:

- **The same must be true for us. It's not easy to be on mission for God. It's hard at times. But it is worth the joy of being used by God to do His work of making peace with all those who come to Him in faith.**

NEXT, explain that the Apostle Paul knew this too. He wrote about what it was like to live on mission for God when things got tough. Instruct students to look at the bottom of page 24. Have a volunteer read the passage. When they have finished, explain that you're going to look at this verse again in just a moment. But for now, ask students to look back at verses 8 and 9 and to circle the words that describe what Jesus may have been feeling that night in the garden.

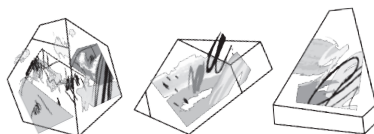
FINALLY, when they have finished, say something like:

- **Jesus may very well have felt this way. We know He felt some of these emotions. The cool thing is that feeling this way isn't sinful, or weak, or in any way disqualifying you from being used by God. If you are afraid of the hard stuff of your faith, you're in good company. But the promise of God is this: even when you feel beat down, you're not out. God is there. He's got your back. And He wants to use you in powerful ways. That's the truth of this lesson. It's an awesome promise from God that empowers you to continue to serve Him even in the midst of tough times.**

Ask if students have any questions or input. Then, transition into the Last Word.

FEARLESS

CONQUERING THE FEAR THAT HOLDS YOU BACK



Session 3:
FEARLESS IN EMBRACING
GOD'S MISSION

WRAPPING UP

- **Student Book Pages**
 - o This activity will utilize page 25 in the FEARLESS Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - o Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, have students look back at 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. Explain that these verses sum up our relationship to God's mission perfectly. Explain what Paul means by "treasure in jars of clay." Say something like:

- **When Paul said that we had a treasure in a jar of clay, he is making a pretty profound statement. He is saying that being on mission for God is like having a treasure (the gift of the Gospel) in a clay jar (our lives). To understand why this is meaningful, you have to understand what Paul meant by a clay jar.**

Explain that Paul's audience would have viewed a clay jar exactly like we view a cardboard box. Clay jars were super common and used for everyday storage. They were cheap. They were fragile. It would be an absurd thing to put a treasure in one. The clay jar was simply unfit for this task. Say something like:

- **Paul knew that our lives were like cardboard boxes. When we understand this, we understand his words in verses 8 and 9.**

Have students look at the top of page 25. Read or have a volunteer read the question aloud. Then, allow students a moment to answer the question in the space provided. Then, if anyone would like to share, allow him or her to do so.

THEN, encourage them to see the powerful message of this passage. Explain that with God, we may feel like things are pretty rough, but we're not crushed! We can be confused and hurt, but we don't give up. Have students rewrite verse 7 substituting "I" for "we" and "me" for "us." The completed sentence looks like this:

- **"But I have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to me."**

Explain that this is a powerful reminder that we can be fearless because the power is with God, and not us. We are called to be on God's mission, and we can be bold in the face of tough times because God is our power source.

NEXT, have students write down a time when standing up for what they believed in left them a little confused or hurt. Allow students a moment to answer the question in the space provided. Then, if anyone would like to share, allow him or her to do so. Encourage students that the wonderful truth that Paul writes about, and Jesus demonstrated, is that no matter what comes our way, we can overcome it and stay true to God's mission. We don't have to ever give up. Instruct students to rewrite verse 8 replacing the words "We are" with "I am." The completed sentence looks like this:

- **I am afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair.**

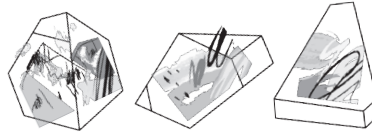
THEN, have students write down the times they are most likely to feel insecure about their faith. Allow students a moment to answer the question in the space provided. Then, if anyone would like to share, allow him or her to do so. Encourage students that even though it can be an unpopular decision to stand up for what they believe in, they are never defeated. God is with them and has called them to this task. Instruct students to rewrite verse 9 adding the phrase "I am " at the beginning. The completed sentence looks like this:

- **I am persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.**

FINALLY, remind students that these three sentences serve as a powerful reminder of the boldness they can have in Christ. They never have to let their fear keep them from living out their lives on God's mission. Encourage them to return back to this passage, and to the verses they re-wrote, in the coming weeks and months, especially when living their lives as Christ-followers can prove difficult.

FEARLESS

CONQUERING THE FEAR THAT HOLDS YOU BACK



Session 3:
FEARLESS IN EMBRACING
GOD'S MISSION

Ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. Inform students of the devotions located on pages 35-42 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them.

If there are no more questions, close in prayer for your group.