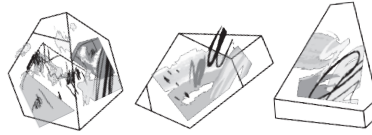


FEARLESS

CONQUERING THE FEAR THAT HOLDS YOU BACK



Session 4:
FEARLESS IN THE
FACE OF OPPOSITION

What We Want Students to Learn: That no matter what the world throws at them, they can be bold in the face of opposition because of who God is.

Main Scripture: Luke 12:4-7

Supporting Scripture: John 16:33

Session Snapshot: Let's face it: it's tough to be a teenager. Our students live in a world where people come at them from every angle, criticizing, ridiculing, and abusing trust. It can be overwhelming for our students to navigate the relational waters of their worlds. But students can take heart! These struggles are not a surprise to God. Jesus experienced great opposition. And He knew His followers would too. He reminds and encourages us to remember that He is with us, and that in the end, He and His people will be victorious. As you wrap up your study of Fearless, this lesson will help give your students confidence to face anything that others throw at them, all through their trust in God.

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 4 Teacher Prep Video, login to your account, navigate to your Small Group lesson 4, 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?

Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian and a companion of Paul.

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE FOR ITS WRITING?

Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

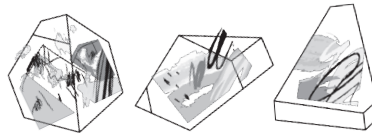
THE MAIN POINT

In this passage, Jesus makes an important distinction between people and God. The Pharisees were a constant thorn in the side of Jesus and His followers. The Pharisees were the religious leaders of Jesus' day. Scripture positions them as a group that was unwilling to allow for the fact that Jesus could have actually been the long-awaited Messiah. They gave no legitimacy to Jesus' ministry and were threatening and hostile to Jesus and His followers.

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In this passage, Jesus is giving His audience a dose of perspective. He encourages them not to fear the Pharisees. After all, the worst the Pharisees could do was kill them. Jesus instead told His followers to fear God, who not only held the power of life and death, but, in contrast to the Pharisees, had the power of either eternal salvation or condemnation. The Pharisees might kill you, but God had the power to decide your fate after death. Jesus urged His followers to base their “fear” on this understanding.

Jesus ends what can sound like somewhat of a harsh teaching to our ears with a reminder about God’s care and concern for His children (v. 6-7). Yes, God has the power of life and death in His hands. But He wields this power from a place of the greatest love and mercy.

THE TAKEAWAY

The takeaway for Jesus’ original audience and us today is similar in principle, if a little different in scale. Your students will encounter people who oppose them because of their faith. Thankfully, these people can’t haul them off to a religious court to have them imprisoned like the Pharisees could. But Jesus’ words ring true regardless of who it is doing the persecuting: we are to waste no time fearing another human being. Our fear should be reserved for God.

Fear in the biblical sense is not simply the kind of fear we understand today. Yes, there should be a healthy dose of “fear and trembling” in our approach to God. To do so acknowledges the awesome power of God to rightfully condemn us for the judgment our sin deserves. But, the fear we should have for God is to make room for holy awe and ultimate reverence. It is a kind of extreme respect we are to show Him and Him alone.

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 29-33 in the FEARLESS Student Book.
 - o This activity will use pages 29-30.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - o Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, have a volunteer read the Session 4 intro on page 29 of their Student Books. Then, direct their attention to page 30 in their Student Book. Explain that what they are looking at is seven opinion statements. Ask for a volunteer to give you his or her definition of an opinion. (Dictionary.com defines it as “a personal view, attitude, or appraisal.”) Say something like:

- **We all have opinions. Some of us have more than others, or at least feel a little more strongly than others. For instance, my favorite food is (INSERT YOUR FAVORITE FOOD HERE). I like it because (GIVE A REASON HERE). See how that worked? We’re going to do the same thing for the thoughts listed on page 30 to see what you really feel about certain subjects.**

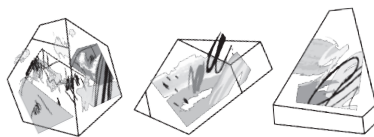
THEN, work through the list as a group, going through each statement and allowing a volunteer to fill in the blanks with his or her own thoughts. Encourage students to have fun with this, but not at the expense of anyone else.

NEXT, work through each statement like this until you get to the last question. Then, say:

- **Now, here we’ve come to an interesting one. With no prompt whatsoever, no hint, no direction . . . how would you answer this question? Take a second and let’s see.**

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Work through this statement with the students. There may be silence. There may be some silliness or self-deprecating humor. That's fine. The point is to get them thinking about the impact outside elements have on how they view themselves.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **We are “blank” because “blank.” Our identity is influenced by other elements, isn't it? The way we act is informed by circumstance, personality, comfort level, and so on. We may behave a certain way because that's how we were raised. We may have a certain trait (humor, for instance) because it's valued in our families. We are a product of many different forces, both outside and internal. In this final session, we're going to see that we are who we are because Jesus is who He is. And we'll be challenged to live out our faith in a bold and fearless manner. Let's get started.**

Ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to Digging In.

DIGGING IN

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 31 and 32 in the FEARLESS Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app

FIRST, remind students that this is your final session together. Have a moment where you allow students to recall anything you've discussed over the last three sessions that stood out to them as meaningful. Then, begin to transition into your time of Bible study. Say something like the following:

- **We've talked a lot about the tough parts of being a Christ-follower and how we can be bold and not fearful in living out our faith. Here's the truth: Christ-followers have always been singled out for their faith. They've always been persecuted. That's never going to change. So, what we're going to talk about in our final session together is your response to other people making your life difficult because of what you believe.**

THEN, encourage students to look at the top of page 31 as you ask the following question: (If you want to give them time to write their answers, that's fine.)

- **Let's get real for a moment. Why is it so hard to be made fun of or singled out because of your faith? Why does it make us want to shrink?**
 - Answers will vary. The goal here is to dig in to how we respond to other people's ridicule or criticism.
- **Why do we let other people's words or actions impact us so much?**
 - Answers will vary. Don't make them feel guilty for how they respond to others. Feel empathy for them. Encourage them to be honest and open.
- **What do we have to lose by allowing people to silence us or to minimize our influence?**
 - Answers will vary. In essence, we are shrinking from the mission God has given us. God has entrusted us with the opportunity to influence our worlds for His sake. When we allow people to minimize our influence, we're allowing them to knock us off the course God has set for us.
- **What is the alternative way for us to respond?**
 - Allow this to hang out there for a moment. If students have an answer, great. But just know that you're about to answer this with Scripture.

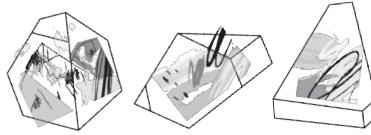
NEXT, have students turn to Luke 12. While they are doing so, provide the context for the book using the Details section of the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read Luke 12:4-7. When you've finished, lead students in a short discussion. Ask something like:

- **Right out of the gate, Jesus is addressing what we have been talking about. Summarize what Jesus says in verse 4-5.**
 - Answer: Help students to see that Jesus was saying, Jesus is being pretty forceful here. He's speaking boldly. He wants to make sure His point is made: God's opinion is the one

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that counts. We can't worry if our lives as Christ-followers cause us to wind up making enemies of others. We should make certain, however, that we approach God in such a way that we don't make an enemy of Him.

- **Jesus isn't saying we should "fear" Him in the sense of the word as we might understand it. Jesus doesn't want us to simply be afraid of Him. So, what do you think He might be saying?**
 - Answer: It's about where we put our respect and honor. It's about authority. Who is going to have authority over our lives? Those people who can hurt us with words but can't impact our eternity? Or God, who holds our lives – present and future – in His hands?
- **What do verses 4-5 say about our priorities in life?**
 - Answers will vary. Help students see that it's tempting, and maybe human nature, to give more weight to the opinions of other people. But the order of our lives should have God at the very top. There can be nothing in our lives that comes in front of Him. We must weigh our love for and obedience to God above all else.
- **Jesus mentions birds in verses 6-7. What is He saying here?**
 - Answer: Jesus is reminding His audience that even though God does indeed have the power to save or condemn, He operates from a place of love. Sparrows are an example of something insignificant. And yet, Jesus is saying that God knows everyone of them. How much more, then, are we valuable to God!
- **How does this work to reframe, and maybe even soften Jesus' tone in verses 4-5?**
 - Answer: We can trust God's authority over all things because of the great value He has for us.

Help students see that what Jesus is ultimately trying to say here is that we can't be fearful about the people in our lives that will inevitably come against us. While we can never respond to people in a way that goes against God's will or ways, we have to stay true to what we believe regardless of what others think or say. Remind students that ultimately, we have to be accountable to God alone for how we live our lives. Fear of what others think has no place in the life of a Christ-follower.

THEN, direct students' attention to page 32. Provide a bit of context for this passage. Explain that this is an excerpt from some of Jesus' final teachings to His disciples before He would be arrested. Read or have a student read the verse. Then, focus on the word "tribulation." Ask for a volunteer to define it. Explain that tribulation is a trial of some sort, or some kind of hardship. Make sure they understand that Jesus is speaking specifically of hardships His followers experience because of their faith in Him.

FINALLY, give students 30 seconds to write in the box as many different kinds of tribulations they can think of that a person may face in this life. When they have finished, allow them to share. Make sure that in addition to any major things, they mention the kinds of interpersonal issues you've been discussing that result because of someone taking a stand for Christ. Then have students look at the questions as you discuss the rest of the verse. Ask:

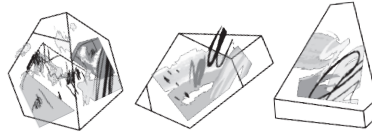
- **What does Jesus offer that is the opposite of tribulation and trouble?**
 - Answer: Peace.
- **In the midst of all the craziness and tough times that we face, how can Jesus offer peace? What does this look like?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What does it mean that Jesus has "overcome the world"?**
 - Answer: Jesus is speaking from a big-picture perspective. He is helping us see that in the end, Jesus will be victorious over sin and death, and that ultimately God will be victorious over evil. We know that if we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, we will live forever in eternity with God. This is the victory Jesus is referring to. This world may throw a lot at us. But in the end, we win. In Christ, we experience the ultimate victory.
- **How does this help us navigate the stress and the mess that we find ourselves dealing with?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Bigger question: How can this truth keep us from being fearful? How does it help us lead BOLD faith-lives?**
 - Answers will vary. But we should take confidence from this perspective shift. The fears of today aren't overwhelming. They shouldn't hold us back.

If there are no more questions, transition into the Wrapping Up section of your lesson.

Session 4: LESSON PLAN

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WRAPPING UP

- **Student Book Pages**
 - o This activity will utilize page 33 in the FEARLESS Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - o Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, direct students' attention to page 33. Have students look at the one question at the top of their page. Have a student read the question aloud:

- **What if we lived our lives with one singular motivation: that we would honor God in everything that we did?**

Say something like:

- **This is an interesting question isn't it? What if every one of our decisions was made solely by whether or not the outcome would bring glory to God? What if we could manage every single one of our thoughts, only thinking things that were God-honoring? Now, because we have a sin-nature, this is impossible in practice. But, what would it be like if everything we did was motivated by whether or not we would please God?**

THEN, give students a second to think about this. Remind them that much of what you have been talking about in this session, and in the last few, is how our own thoughts and the thoughts of others can dictate so much of who we are. We can be timid, and reserved, shrinking back from standing up for our faith. But what if we didn't? As you consider this, lead students to look at the four sections on page 33. Decide if you want to have students consider these questions individually, in groups of two or three, or in your larger group. However you decide to work through them, lead students to answer how living out the question "What if we lived our lives with one singular motivation: that we would honor God in everything that we did?" would impact the following areas of their life:

- **How would this impact your friendships?**
- **How would this change the way you engaged with people at school?**
- **What would this do to your family reactions?**
- **How would this impact your relationship with God?**

Engage students in a discussion, challenging them to practically consider what it would look like if they truly lived their life in such a way that honored God in all that they did. When the discussion has gone on as long as it should, say something like the following:

- **Here's the point of this discussion. While it's in a sense a hypothetical question, this is exactly how we're called to live. This is how God expects us to live. We're called to live boldly. Fearlessly. We're called to think "faith first." We're called to seek righteousness first. When we do this, the rest of our life falls in order. When we put God above all else, our lives will find a meaning and purpose we won't know otherwise.**

FINALLY, encourage students to go from your time together committed to live fearlessly in their pursuit of Christ. Remind them that they are not alone; they have parents and youth workers to support them, as well as other students. Ask students if they have any questions or additional comments before closing in prayer. (Don't forget to remind students of the devotions located on pages 35-42 in their Student Books.)