



# Taking courage

## Five Bible studies from the Gospel of Matthew

(Adapted from [engageworship.org](https://www.engageworship.org))



 Dancers in Rwanda. Photo: Andrew Philip

This resource is designed to help reflect on courage using various texts in the gospel of Matthew. You can do this by yourself but it might be best if you're able to do this as a family or a household (if this is possible within your current situation and local distancing guidelines).

Take your time with the reflections - take time to consider your emotional responses to these stories; use your imagination - put yourself in the stories, consider the characters in the stories and possibly use your imagination to consider engaging with them. Ask the Spirit to guide your imagination.

With the actions, decide before you start how you want to do these. Make these ACTION exercises your own according to what works well for you and your family/household: you may wish to skip them, do some of them, all of them, or do your own versions of them. Note: often these sorts of exercises might seem silly and unimportant, but they can be surprisingly helpful to slow us down, get us 'out of our heads', and help us reflect on these topics in deep and transformative ways.

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# 1. Courage to follow

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.'

At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.



**Matthew 4:18–22 (NIV)**

## Reflection

- What did the disciples leave behind to follow Jesus?
- Why do you think they just left? What made them take that life-changing decision?
- What kinds of things have you 'left behind' to follow Jesus? What are the 'costs' of following Jesus for you?
- What will it mean to follow Jesus in your life?

## Action

**ITEMS NEEDED: Lots of A4 paper; felt-tip pens and scissors**

Draw around your shoe or foot and cut out. Reflect on your courage to follow Jesus - where might it take you? Ask God to give you the courage to follow in Jesus' footsteps. Form your thoughts into a prayer of words or images on your cut-out foot.

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## 2. Courage through the storm

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!' He replied, 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'

**Matthew 8:23–27 (NIV)**

### Reflection

- Imagine what it must have felt like to be the disciples. Think of words to describe their feelings and use the black marker pens to write those words on the waves.
- The disciples were afraid despite Jesus being there with them in the boat? Why do you think that was?
- Are you aware of Jesus being present in your storms? Does this change your feelings of fear? What does it mean for you to have Jesus present with you in your 'storms'?
- In what ways do you forget or neglect God's presence with you in the 'storms of life'?



### Action

**ITEMS NEEDED:** large picture of wavy water; black and red markers

Consider the storms you're finding yourself in at the moment. Present these to God by naming them and writing them on the waves with red marker pen. Ask God to give you courage through the storm, knowing that he is present.

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## 3. Courage to go

Read **Matthew 10:5-39** - Jesus' speech as he sends out the 12 disciples

### Reflection

- Imagine what it must have been like to be one of the disciples listening to Jesus sending them out. What do you think were their specific fears? Do you think Jesus' words changed how they felt?
- Have you ever experienced being sent somewhere by Jesus? If you want to, tell someone about this: where were you sent? Were you afraid? Did God give you courage? How did you feel in the middle of it? How did you feel afterwards?
- Do you discern Jesus calling you to 'go'? At the moment, as a result of Covid-19, many people have restrictions on where they can 'go'. What would it look like for you to adhere to local health guidelines and government restriction, but to still love and serve the community around you, particularly the lonely and vulnerable?



### Action

#### ITEMS NEEDED: sticky labels and felt-tip pens

Choose one of Jesus sending-out remarks and write it out on a sticky label. Stick this somewhere you'll see it regularly - perhaps in the morning as you're getting dressed and ready for each day; ask God to give you the courage to 'go', even in this current moment of Covid-19 restrictions.

## 4. Courage to obey

Read **Matthew 14:13-21** - Jesus feeding the 5000

### Reflection

- 'We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish' is the disciples' answer to Jesus' command to feed the crowd. How do you think they felt about their offering?
- If you had been the disciples, what would have been your thoughts when Jesus said 'Bring them here to me'?
- If it had been you in that story - would you have had the courage to find the tiny portion of food and present it to Jesus?
- What words can you use to describe how the disciples must have felt when they saw the miracle?
- What skills, resources, money, talents and qualifications do you have? Jesus says: 'Bring them here to me!'. Do you have the courage to obey, to hand the little that you have over to him? Talk to Jesus about this. Is there any relationship, resource, material thing, or personality trait that you have that you're being invited to think about in a new light?
- Specifically in our current situation with Covid-19, what resources do you have that could be used to love and serve others?



## 5. Courage to endure

Read **Matthew 26:36-44** - Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

### Reflection

- Reflect on this image below (or find another image representing this scene).
- What do you notice? How does it make you feel? In what ways do you relate to Jesus in this scene? In what ways do you relate to the disciples?
- How would you describe Jesus' emotional state in this passage?
- What do you notice about how Jesus acts and responds in this situation?



## Action

### ITEMS NEEDED: Wine or red grape juice; bread

- **THE CUP:** In these verses, Jesus talks of drinking the cup his Father has for him. Pick up the cup of juice, and consider the challenges you have in front of you. Why are you fearful of these things? Talk to God, and if you feel able, take a sip from the cup as a sign of trusting God in the midst of your challenges. Reflect on the cup as a symbol of Jesus' blood shed for you - you can trust that he goes ahead of you in your situation.
- **THE BREAD:** As you take and eat the bread, reflect on what God has given you to sustain and empower you.
- If you're in a group, reflect and pray about how you all, together as a group, share in and rely upon the same sustaining Jesus even through the toughest times. Reflect on how it unites you to have Jesus at the centre of your group.

Reflecting on the bread and the cup, pray and thank God for his enduring, sustaining, life-giving presence with you, even through challenging times.