

**Text:** [Philippians 3:10-16 \(CEB\)](#)

**Date:** September 29, 2024

**Title:** "Courage to Be First" - Courageous Series Week 4

**Theme:** Following Jesus sometimes means being willing to do the hard thing.

## 1

There are moments when all of us are tempted to do the quick,  
safe, and easy thing

I get it

Sometimes doing the right thing in the right way feels incredibly  
difficult

How many times have I started a small home repair project only  
to find...whoa

To fix this right, I don't just have to fix THIS piece

I'm going to have to take this other thing apart and re-do it too

So many times, the choice is whether you want it done right

Or whether you want it to go easy

Like in a relationship

It's just easier some days to gloss over something that hurt you

To bite your tongue and move right past it

Because you don't want to bring it up

So you say to yourself, "it's not a big deal"

But do that over a long enough period of time

When you just keep swallowing the hurt

It will eventually turn your stomach

And likely begin to affect the relationship

Because you can't fix what you aren't willing to talk about

Likewise, at work  
In every workplace there are decisions that get made you don't  
necessarily agree with  
You've got to decide when, where and how to speak up  
To either make yourself heard –  
and make peace with the fact that at least you said what you  
needed to say, even if nothing changes  
Or, just to let it build until you need to walk away

## 2

In nearly every human situation, we'll find ourselves presented  
with options to cut corners  
The temptation to take the easy way  
And sometimes that will seem like the best choice to us

Unfortunately, we follow a Savior who had a habit of saying things  
like:

“If you want to be my disciple, you've got to take up your cross  
and follow me” (Matthew 16:24)

Or, “Small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and  
only a few find it” (Matthew 7:14)

Jesus wasn't one for quick fixes or easy solutions

## 3

Today's theme is the “Courage to Be First”

And what we're talking about is the courage required to be the  
first to speak, the first to act, the first to take a stand

This kind of courage comes a little bit more naturally to some than  
to others

But even if it doesn't come as naturally to you, I think it's  
important to ponder when this kind of courage might be  
necessary

Because that it is part of growing in righteousness  
It's part of our discipleship

Here's where I see that in Paul's letter that we read today:  
"The righteousness that I have comes from knowing Christ,  
The power of his resurrection  
and the participation in his sufferings.  
it includes being conformed to his death,  
so that I may perhaps reach the goal of the resurrection of the  
dead." (Philippians 3:10 CEB)

Righteousness is not just about participating in Jesus'  
resurrection

It's also participating in Jesus' sufferings  
Even when sometimes they feel a little like death

Now, Paul knows what he's talking about when it comes to  
suffering

If any preacher ever suffered for the gospel, it was Paul  
There's an extended section in 2 Corinthians 11 where he talks  
about being imprisoned, flogged, pelted with stones,  
shipwrecked, hungry, thirsty, tired and cold (vv.23-27)

And, as I've said before, even as he wrote the letter to the  
Philippians, he did so from prison

#### 4

We don't like to hear this

Because we want to believe that following Jesus means our lives  
get a whole lot easier

That when you do right, your path gets clearer

On some level, of course that's true  
Because Christ is our greatest source of peace and power and  
strength

**\*\*But it's also true that following Jesus will mess up your life\*\***  
You're going to find that you care about a lot of things that you  
didn't care nearly as much about before  
It's going to bother you when you see people getting left out  
It's going to bother you when folks aren't telling the truth  
It's going to bother you when people dismiss, and demean, and  
dehumanize others

When the Holy Spirit is at work in you, you're going to love more  
fiercely than you've ever loved  
And that means stepping up for people in ways you maybe never  
imagined

So when you look around the room  
And see people unwilling to say the thing that needs to be said  
You may swallow hard and stand up  
Even if your mouth gets dry and your hands shake

When you see people drawing hard lines against someone else  
And they want to condemn rather than understand  
You may feel like you're the one who needs to go and try to  
understand, so that you can see whether there's any  
opportunity to mend the relationship

The courage to be first is really the courage to do the thing that  
goes against the grain  
Even when it might cost you something

You may discover that in order to find peace within  
You may sacrifice – at least temporarily – some peace without

**\*\*In other words, doing the RIGHT thing may rub people the  
WRONG way\*\***

And you've got to be prepared for that

There's not a lot of people lining up to make that choice

That's why the world looks like it does

And that's Jesus' point when he says about the narrow path that  
few find

## **5**

The courage I'm talking about today – the courage to be first

**\*\*It's not necessarily about what God needs from us**

**\*\*Instead it's all about what our neighbors need from us**

It's about our willingness to put ourselves out there for THEM

Jesus calls us to courage because that's what's needed if we're  
going to love people the way that God loves people

Jesus showed us

Paul showed us

And now it's our turn

To use Paul's words, we reach toward the goal

We press on to it, despite all difficulty

For this upward calling that Jesus has placed on our lives

This week, there may be a moment when you are tempted to take  
the easy way out

To avoid a hard conversation

To put off a difficult choice

To ignore someone or something who is just at the edge of your  
attention because you don't want to get involved

I challenge you this week to  
First, PRAY for  
And then to CHOOSE courage

To be willing to be the first  
Even when that comes at a cost

Amen.

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