



# CONNECT

# RESOURCE

## Campaign Introduction

**Dates:** Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October - Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Purpose of this campaign:** To address idols in our culture and remind our people of the counter-cultural Kingdom habit we should submit to.

### Key texts for this campaign:

**Colossians 3:5** *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.*

### Explanation as to why this campaign matters:

To introduce the series and understand what idols are, how they appear in our lives and what to do with them.

Understand that idols are tough to deal with, but God has given us the ability to repent of our worship of them and begin to live an obedient life marked by the wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit, which comes through the Kingdom habit/principle.

### Key overarching point of this campaign:

Idols are everywhere in culture. We've identified four major ones and will encourage people to recognise and turn from them. Exchanging lies for truth and reestablishing a gospel-centred life marked by Christian character and Godly habits.

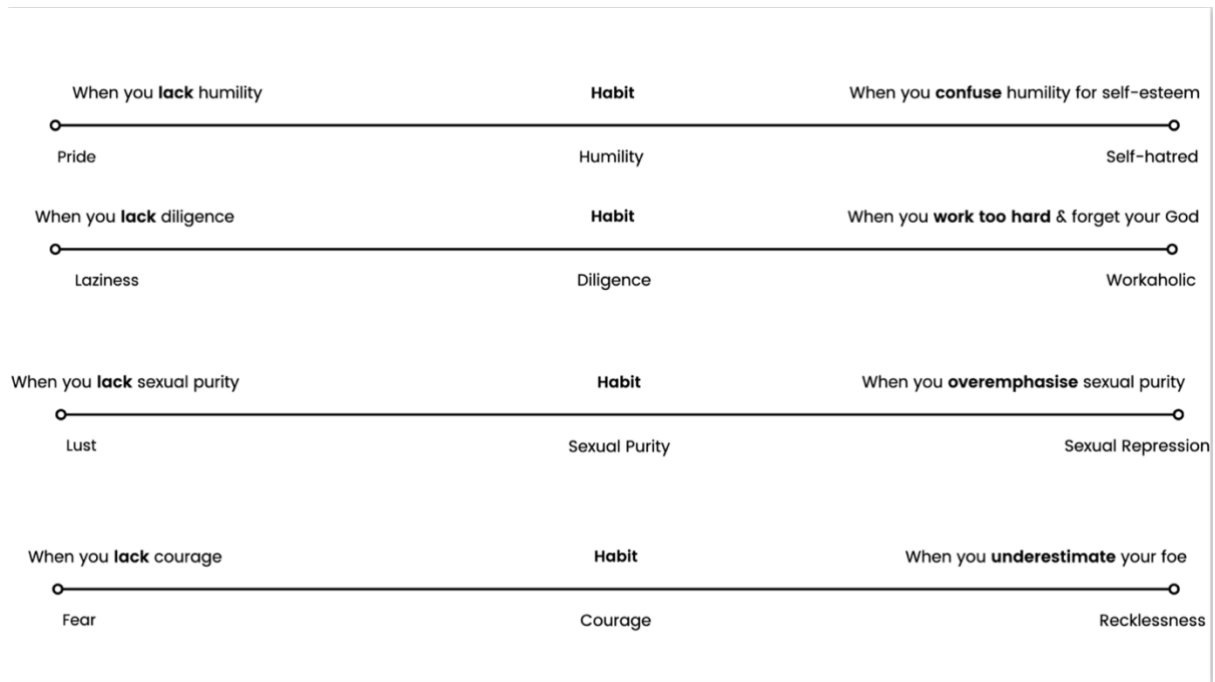
**Week 1:** What are Idols?

**Week 2:** The Idol of Ego - Humility

**Week 3:** The Idol of Comfort - Diligence

**Week 4:** The Idol of Sex - Love

**Week 5:** The Idol of Fear - Courage



The table above shows the idol in both its forms (excess and deficiency) and the habit we must have to live a balanced kingdom principle.

# Week 1: Ps Alex pre-recorded preach

**Weekly subtitle: INTRODUCTION TO IDOLS & IDEOLOGIES**

**Date:** Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2023

**Key Action:** To introduce the series and understand what idols are, how they appear in our lives and the kingdom habits we need to adhere to.

**Key Response:** Understand that idols are tough to deal with, but God has given us the ability to repent of our worship of them and begin to live an obedient life marked by the wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit, which comes through the habits of the Kingdom.

## Key Scriptures:

### 1 John 5:21 ESV

*“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”*

### Colossians 3:5

*“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.”*

## Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

### Supporting points to Key point:

#### What are Idols?

*“An idol is a substitute for God that takes the place of the Creator in the creature's heart.”*

— St. Augustine

*“Anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. “*

— Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods

#### What is an Ideology?

*“An ideology, like an idol, is a limited, partial account of reality that is raised to the level of the final word on things. Ideologues believe their school or party has the real and complete answer to society's problems. Above all, ideologies hide from their adherents their dependence on God.”*

— Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods.

- Idols are anything we place before God.
- Idols can be good things, but they are in an improper order before God.
- Idols can be superficial and glaringly obvious, or they can be insidious and deep.
- They may be commonplace and familiar things, yet their grip and distortions may run deep in our lives and cultures – distorting our ability to embody and reflect the image of God.

The idols we are exploring in this series are:

**Week 1:** What are Idols?

**Week 2:** The Idol of Ego – [Humility]

**Week 3:** The Idol of Comfort — [Diligence]

**Week 4:** The Idol of Sex — [Love]

**Week 5:** The Idol of Fear – [Courage]

Each of these idols pervades our cultures, both secular and sacred.

Their pervasiveness has led to the disregard for biblical wisdom & authority, the unchallenged inflation of the individual, the glorification of sloth, the acceptance of fear-driven conversation, and the casualisation of sex. Choices inside church cultures are dictated by convenience rather than a radical understanding of the cost of obedience and discipleship and an unchecked pursuit of the temporal over the eternal.

Pastor John Calvin writes that *“the human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual forge of idols”* (CI 1. 11.8). However, there is a remedy. Each week will feature two parts. The first is a diagnosis of the idol and its form in our culture. The second will describe the remedy, the kingdom habit that counters that idol.

The only way to combat idolatry is to identify and tear down the idols – to repent of our worship of them and begin to live an obedient life marked by the wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit that comes through habit. (Habits – which form our behaviour, which forms our character) As Peter encourages us, *“Make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness”* (2 Peter 1:5). The habit is like the middle road, not too much (excess), and not too little (deficit) – but a balanced life, focused on the truth, goodness, and beauty of God as our Creator and author of life. We are not simply focused on avoiding extremes.

Not so that we may present this balanced life to God for salvation but so that we may be more effective bearers of Christian character and spiritual fruit. Not so that we may offer this balanced life to God for salvation but so that we may be more effective bearers of Christian character and spiritual fruit.

**John 14:15:**

*“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*

**2 Timothy 3:12-13**

*“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”*

**Romans 14:17-19**

*“For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then, let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.”*

**Additional Scriptures**

- 1 John 5:21
- 1 Corinthians 8:4
- Romans 1:25
- Proverbs 10:9
- Proverbs 1:7
- Proverbs 4:6-7
- Ezekiel 14:3-7

## Week 2:

**Weekly subtitle: THE IDOL OF EGO**

**Date:** Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Key Point of this week:** To explain the idol of ego and give them the keys to living in humility.

**Key Response:** That we recognise the cultures and our desire for status notoriety, achievement, and credit. That we repent of this idol and that we ask God's help to focus on others around us and their incalculable worth.

### Key Scriptures:

#### Romans 12:11

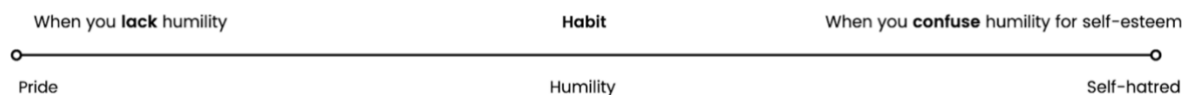
*"Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in Spirit,[a] serve the Lord."*

#### 1 John 3:16

*"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."*

### Supporting points to Key point:

The idol of the ego is rife in our culture. A disordered preoccupation with our desires, status, and achievements can lead to arrogance, selfishness, and a lack of concern for others. This is the idol of the ego. When we are focused on our own glory, we are blind to the needs and worth of those around us. We ignore the needs of others and the Kingdom's call to elevate God and others over ourselves.



The habit of selflessness or humility is the antidote to the idol of ego.

Altruism involves:

1. a selfless concern for others (Rom 12:10, 1 John 3:16)
2. a willingness to put their needs ahead of our own (Philippians 2:3-4)
3. and a desire to serve rather than be served (Gal 5:13).

Jesus is the ultimate example of selflessness (*Matthew 20:27-28*), laying down his life for others (*Romans 5:8, Luke 10:25-37*) and teaching us to love our neighbours as ourselves. (*Matthew 22: 35-40*)

**1 Peter 5:5** says to "*clothe yourself with humility*".

#### Luke 14:11 NIV

*"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

**KEY STORY: WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES FEET**

This is a counter-cultural moment in a society favouring arrogance, entourage, parades, and spectacle; the greatest leader, the Son of God, the King of kings, doesn't come under that idol and brings a kingdom habit that we are called to emulate.

### **STUDY John 13:1-17**

Washing the Disciples' Feet: On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus humbly washes the feet of his disciples, an act typically performed by a servant. This act symbolises his selfless love and willingness to serve others, encouraging his followers to adopt a similar attitude of humility and service.

In washing his disciples' feet, Jesus simply uses water and a towel, yet the extravagance is no less. Indeed, it is nothing short of scandalous that the one who comes from God and is going to God should take on the menial task of a slave. This act points to the even greater scandal to come in the dark hours ahead, when Jesus will lay down his life, crucified on a Roman cross — the form of execution reserved for rebels and slaves.

Peter's reaction is critical here, John 13:8 – *“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”* But Jesus brings the Kingdom principle:

#### **John 13: 12-17**

*“12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. 15. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do.*

*In the Old Testament, it was the sin of arrogance and pride in the people of God and the nation of Israel that God sent the prophet Amos to address. The blessing and protection that God had placed over that nation became a source of arrogance and pride. Amos 6:8 8 The Sovereign Lord has sworn by himself—the Lord God Almighty declares: “I abhor the pride of Jacob*

*and detest his fortresses;*

*I will deliver up the city*

*and everything in it.”*

By cultivating the habit of true selflessness (James 2:14-17), we can overcome the idol of ego and live a life of sacrificial love. (John 15:13)

#### **Key scriptures on humility:**

- Micah 6:8
- Colossians 3:12
- Ephesians 4:2, James 4:10
- <https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-humility/>

#### **Key scriptures about Pride:**

- James 4:6
- Proverbs 8:13
- Jeremiah 50:3
- Amos 6:8
- Isaiah 2:12
- <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/God-Opposes-The-Proud>



# CONNECT QUESTIONS

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October

THE IDOL OF EGO

## GATHER:

- We can all give examples of those puffed up with pride but how have you seen low self-esteem steal someone's potential?
- Who are some of your heroes, who were never famous in their lifetime but made a lasting contribution by putting others and serving ahead of themselves?

## GROW:

- Hagar called God, "El Roi" or the "God who sees me". How can our 'audience of one' help when the world is telling you, you want to be famous?
- When do you most struggle with the Kingdom's call to elevate God and others over yourself?

## GO:

- What are some of the unglamorous service tasks in our society and how can you engage with those people?
- Is there someone in your world that you can encourage, that God sees their service?

## CONNECT GROUP RESOURCES

*The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, Timothy Keller

Queen Elizabeth's Christmas speech 1993



## Week 3

### Weekly subtitle: THE IDOL OF COMFORT

**Date:** Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Key Point of this week:** Being comfortable isn't bad in and of itself. But when comfort becomes an idol, it can manifest itself as a lack of diligence, discipline, and sincere effort in pursuing what is good and meaningful. (Proverbs 10:4)

**Key Response:** For our people to approach work and responsibilities diligently while acknowledging that their ultimate service is to God and their reward is in eternity.

#### Key Scriptures:

##### Colossians 3:23-24

*"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."*

#### Proverbs 13

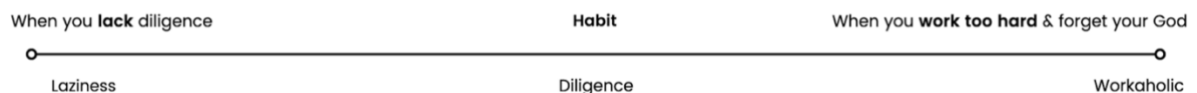
##### Supporting points to Key point:

"Hustle Culture" is a narrative that promotes the idea that there's always more to strive for, more money to make, a more significant title or promotion to secure and a higher ceiling to smash through.

Our culture despises delayed gratification. After-pay, Netflix, scrolling through social media multiple times per day. The list goes on. We live in a culture that wants to optimise, take shortcuts, and avoid challenging tasks. We prioritise short-term enjoyment over long-term goals. Why? A lot of the time, the answer is convenience or comfort.

It can lead to apathy, boredom, and a sense of purposelessness. When we are lazy and complacent, we miss out on the opportunities to grow, learn, and serve. (Colossians 3:23-24)

However, a twin error emerges when we are tempted to replace God as our provider (Genesis 22:14): **workaholicism**. We become addicted to productivity – to the hustle. The world says hustle; whereas God says, "strive to enter my rest." (Hebrews 4:11, Matthew 6:26-34) Our idol of comfort emerges in the form of taking control of God's ways and his provision.



The habit of diligence is an antidote against sloth and helps us counteract the idol of comfort. Diligence involves a persistent effort to do what is good and right, even when difficult or unpleasant. It requires self-discipline, focus, and a commitment to excellence. In the book of Proverbs, diligence is praised as a key to success and fulfilment. (Proverbs 13:4) By cultivating the habit of diligence, we can overcome the idol of sloth and live a life of purpose and productivity. (Proverbs 21:5)

**Colossians 3:23-24**

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

**Galatians 6:9**

*“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

*“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”*

This passage urges us to approach our work and responsibilities diligently while acknowledging that their ultimate service is to God and their reward is in eternity. It prompts us to repent for moments of laziness and wastefulness, seeking God's forgiveness and grace. We recognise the need to rely on Him as our Provider rather than shouldering the burden of self-sufficiency.

**KEY STORY:**

Matthew 25:14-30 Parable of the Gold Bags/ Talents

**Key scriptures to stand on diligence:**

- Hebrews 6:10-12
- Proverbs 10:4
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-diligence/>

**Key scriptures about being lazy:**

- Proverbs 10:4-5
- Proverbs 12:11
- Proverbs 12:24
- Proverbs 6:9-12
- Luke 16:10

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-laziness/>

## Week 4:

**Weekly subtitle: THE IDOL OF SEX**

**Date:** Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Key Point of this week (in context of the overarching point):** The idol of sex is characterised by a disordered preoccupation with sexual pleasure and satisfaction, often at the expense of love and commitment.

**Key Response:** Repent of the idol of sex and the vice of lust. Culture runs in a contrarian direction to the Kingdom, and we need to recover the vision of biblical sexual flourishing.

### **Key Scriptures:**

#### **Genesis 1:27-28**

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him; male and female, he created them.*

*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

#### **1 Corinthians 6:13**

*"You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body."*

### **Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:**

In today's society, where sexual promiscuity, casual relationships, and the pursuit of personal gratification are often celebrated, the concept of purity and sexual integrity is frequently viewed as outdated, restrictive, or even repressive.

The prevailing cultural narrative promotes a distorted understanding of human sexuality, detached from its intended purpose within the context of committed relationships and moral boundaries. As a result, the Church's emphasis on purity can be perceived as archaic or irrelevant. However, it is essential for the Church to reassert the significance of purity, reclaiming its true meaning as a pathway to holistic flourishing, emotional well-being, and the nurturing of genuine intimacy.

By providing a counter-cultural perspective rooted in biblical teachings, the Church can offer a transformative vision of sexuality that upholds the dignity of individuals, respects the sanctity of relationships, and fosters the true flourishing of human beings in their pursuit of love, self-giving, and authentic intimacy.

### **Supporting points to Key point:**

The idol of sex is characterised by a disordered preoccupation with sexual pleasure and satisfaction, often at the expense of love and commitment.

When lust enters our life, it wreaks havoc. (Matthew 5:28) Many people in our culture, and even in the church view sex as a means of personal fulfillment and ultimate happiness.

Common examples of this idol and vice include pornography use or addiction, sexual promiscuity, casual sex, infidelity, no-fault divorce, a general disregard for the sanctity of sex and a truncated view of the twin sexual vocations of celibacy and marriage.

When we idolise sex incorrectly, we tend to commit one or both twin errors. Total suppression and even condemnation of God-given, natural desires lead to an unhealthy relationship with sexuality, or we drift into total indulgence, leading to a lack of self-control and a disregard for the sanctity of sex and relationships.

Through the recognition of this idolatry, we are free to repent and reject this broken image. This is where chastity and the fruit of self-control can be cultivated alongside the habit of love. Chastity involves the proper use and control of one's sexuality according to one's state in life. (Singleness/Marriage/Celibacy)

A biblically ordered sexual vision recognises the beauty and goodness of human sexuality while also acknowledging its proper place within the context of committed love and marriage. (Gen 1:27-28, Gen 39, Matthew 19) Marriage and sex are signposts for the heavenly union that is to come. A foretaste of the great intimacy. Christ will have with His Bride (Eph 5:21-33)



**Please note:** Purity is not abstinence but sexual purity in marriage, singleness, and celibacy.

In contrast to the vice of lust and the idolisation of sex, the habit of love stands. A selfless concern for the good of the other characterises love (John 3:16). Virtuous examples of love can be found in the lives of people like Ruth, who demonstrated a deep loyalty and devotion to her mother-in-law Naomi, and ultimately, in the life of Jesus, who sacrificed his life for the sake of humanity. (1 John 4:10-11)

By intentionally cultivating the habit of love, we can overcome the idol of sex and the vice of lust and find true fulfilment in our relationships. (Romans 12:9-11)

We can identify how humanity was designed to flourish and stop living by whatever rules or sexual codes society offers. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) We can become people who are radically committed to loving and serving others and who find joy in the intimacy and connection that come from healthy and loving relationships.

## **KEY TEXT: WARNING OF PAUL**

### **1 Thessalonians 4:3-7**

*It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone*

*who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

**Please Note:** Address sexual purity within marriage.

**Hebrews 13:4**

*“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”*

**Key scriptures to stand on purity:**

- 1 Timothy 4:12
- Psalm 51:10
- Psalm 119:9
- Romans 13;14
- Titus 2:5
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

# CONNECT QUESTIONS

12<sup>th</sup> November 2023

The Idol of Sex

## **GATHER:**

- What are the areas where you find yourself most exposed to the world's views on sex (examples: social media, magazines, advertising, drama series)?
- How can you protect yourself from accepting these views as normal?

## **GROW:**

- Is there a next step you can take (a book to read, a Bible study subject, a boundary to put in place) for yourself in this area?
- What can you do this week to promote love and commitment in your relationships and not self-gratification?

## **GO:**

- How can we practically set an example for others that our relationships are about love & commitment, not about pleasing ourselves?
- What boundaries would help us when reaching out to hurting people with God's love that keeps us "above reproach"? [not putting us or them in compromising situations]

## Week 5:

**Weekly subtitle: THE IDOL OF FEAR**

**Date:** Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Key Point of this week (in context of the overarching point):** When we are consumed by fear, we are unable to engage with life and with others entirely, and we miss out on the richness of human connection and possibility.

**Key Response:** To recognise and repent of the idol of fear and to cultivate the habit of courage. To encourage a commitment to doing what is right regardless of the consequences.

**Key Scripture:**

**Psalm 31:24 NASB**

*“Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the LORD.”*

**Supporting points to Key point:**

The idol of fear is a preoccupation with danger, threat, and uncertainty. It can lead to anxiety, mistrust, and a sense of isolation. When consumed by fear, we cannot engage with life and others entirely, and we miss out on the richness of human connection and possibility.

In our culture, there is no shortage of fears. From external fears like the nightly newsreel, the economy, and the socio-political climate. To internal ones, such as our health, our future, and our anxieties. But our fears can become our idols.

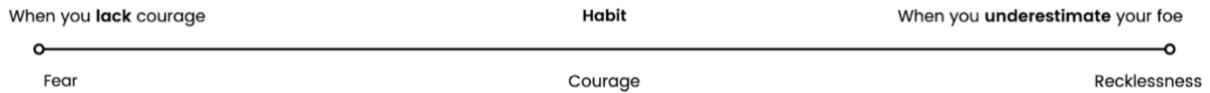
*“Idols give us a sense of being in control, and we can locate them by looking at our nightmares. What do we fear the most? What, if we lost it, would make life not worth living? We make “sacrifices” to appease and please our gods, who we believe will protect us. We look to our idols to provide us with a sense of confidence and safety.”*

– Keller, Counterfeit God’s

**Habit Antidote**

The habit of courage is an antidote to the idol of fear. (1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Tim 1:7) Courage involves a willingness to face danger, uncertainty, and adversity with confidence and resilience.

Courage requires a deep trust in God and a willingness to take risks. A commitment to doing what is right regardless of the consequences. Society will speak back and challenge the boldness of the Church.



Jesus Himself: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." He knew that we would need to take heart to be courageous.

### **KEY STORY: THE COURAGE OF ESTHER**

The books of Esther and Daniel are two books that are counter-cultural. Both are stories of people in nations that are hostile to God and are instruction books on how to live our lives in the ways of God amongst people who are not following God.

According to the Jewish people, Esther and Daniel (and his friends) are all in exile. Exile is a place of punishment by God for the sins of Israel. However, these two are shining examples of how to live your life amongst idols but keep your courage, strength, and faith in God.

### **STUDY: Esther 5**

Esther is the story of a young Jewish woman who displayed immense courage by approaching the king to save her people from a plot to annihilate them. Despite the risk to her own life, Esther chose to act on behalf of her people.

Amazingly, a woman born for such a time as this (Esther 4:16) was in Persia, not Jerusalem.

By cultivating the habit of courage, we can overcome the idol of fear and live a life of boldness and purpose. (Isaiah 41:10, Rom 8:15)

### **Practical ways to grow in the habit of courage:**

1. Learn what you're not willing to compromise on and ask the Holy Spirit to help you speak about such things.
2. Support one another through stories and experiences of boldness – celebrate stories of courage.
3. Create opportunities for people to step out and develop courage in an area of weakness.

### **Key scriptures to stand courage:**

- Joshua 1:6-9
- Isaiah 41:10
- Psalm 34:4-5
- Psalm 27:1