

First Baptist Church in Beverly

A progressive and welcoming Christian community!

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Advent 2024: Moving Through the Dark



**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
IN BEVERLY**

*A progressive and welcoming
Christian community*

*Continue journeying through our progressive 4-week
Devotional Bingo (see the card below!), with a new email
coming out weekly during Advent. Print copies are available
at FBC as well!*

Below you will find a festive FBC Beverly Bingo card, which you are invited to [click on to print](#). We will continue to check off items from this card each week as we progress through all four weeks of Advent.

Words hold meaning. The word Courage, our theme for this second week of Advent, stems from the Latin word *cor*, meaning heart. This root word can be found throughout the English language, including words like concord (harmony) or discord (conflict of the heart). The word courage asks us to “speak one’s mind telling all one’s heart.” *This is not easy*. It takes vulnerability, bravery, and the ability to speak the truth. Author Brene Brown says, “The moments we are challenged are when our values don’t align with the organizations or relationships we hold dear.”

The first invitation for reflection this week is to ponder what values are most important to you. Brown compiled a list in her book *Dare to Lead*. This list is not exhaustive and acts as an interesting invitation as we walk together this Advent season. Brown recommends that we pick only two values to hold close to our heart! This invitation may feel challenging, especially in those moments when our values are challenged through every day living. However, Advent is a time for us to be courageous in our love for God, and what better way to do that than to connect to our hearts, speak our truths and truly live as God created us. When we consistently walk in line with our core values, and not just when we are in church on Sunday mornings, we can walk with courage.

Advent brings with it joy and love, darkness and lament; but it also brings questions of vulnerability to the surface. As our world shifts, often the values we hold dear to our heart are put to the test! We can often find ourselves speaking our minds and telling the world about our hearts, while being met with words of anger, injustice, or greed.

Courage is found when we speak our heart into the world and continue to do so. This may mean that if we hear someone utter an unkind word, we can meet them with words of kindness; *this takes courage*. Living into our values allows us to create space for the vulnerability it takes to be courageous. This is seen within our daily lives, but also within scripture as courage is seen everywhere throughout the Bible!

Our scripture this week, Psalm 22: 19-21a proclaims, “But you, O Lord, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen, you have rescued me.”

What courage to **ask for help** from God! While the author of Psalm 22 may not have had the linguistic insight of root words, nor Brene Brown’s values list, the author had courage!

Our second invitation this week is a reminder to ask for help and to help another.

Asking for help may not seem like a challenge to everyone, but for some of us, this is a monumental thing to ask! It takes courage and vulnerability to ask for help. Joseph and Mary show us their courage when they inquire with the Innkeeper to see if there is a place to rest for the night. Just as it can be difficult to receive help, it can also be difficult to give help. The three wise men show us their courage when they intentionally set out on a path to Jesus; they hold their values of protection, truth, and faith far higher than the value of respecting authority. In our current society, it is difficult to walk a path of truthfulness and righteousness among the noise of injustice. But just like Mary and Joseph, The Wise Men and Psalm 22’s author, we must live by our values with courage. And as such, we must both reach out to help *and* ask for help.

Both take courage.

For our third invitation this week, join us on December 10th for a night at The Cabot for a screening of Elf! This Advent, it may still feel a bit dark, but the underlying message of our Advent theme is that we are moving through this season *together*. Being in community may take courage; if you are new to the church, introverted, feel alone, or have lost a bit of Christmas spirit. Sometimes, it can even be vulnerable to say yes to the potential joy of seeing a movie together. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE AND THE DARKNESS IS NOT BAD.** Buddy the Elf reminds us to take our courage and shift it into actions of love. Ask for help. If you want to attend the movie, but are unsure of whether you may know someone, let us know! We can connect you to the Fun Squad who will ensure their core value of fun is high on the list and that you will not be alone, should you need a hand to hold or a familiar face to sit next to.

This week, be gentle with yourself as you slowly emerge from the total darkness of lament. Offer help, accept help, say yes to something that scares you! And remember; **YOU ARE NOT ALONE AND THE DARKNESS IS NOT BAD.**

To conclude this week, **we invite you to consider the following journal prompts:**

- (1) What does courage feel or look like to you?
- (2) Contemplate a moment of your own bravery. What values did you use in that moment? Did it feel vulnerable? What does lament mean to you?
- (3) Look at *Brene Brown's List of Values*. Choose 2-3 to hold close to your heart this week. Start by circling 15. Then bring it to 10, then 5... until you are ready to choose 2-3 values. This is not an easy task, but interesting (especially if you have a dictionary to dig into meaning and root words)!

This Advent season, as we move through the dark, we know that light needs darkness. Black is the absorption of all light. White is the reflection of light. Remember that when we feel darkness, the light is not gone, but rather it is deep within us awaiting its return. God is with us on every step of the journey. God sees your courage, vulnerability and openness to hope. Our wish for you is moments of comfort, connection and community while we continue working through the discomfort of darkness.

~

Stay tuned for next Monday's devotional and thanks for joining us and playing, friends!

Advent

BINGO

Read Psalm 22	Write your own psalm	Do Lions Breath	Ask someone for help	Journal prompt: What does lament mean to you?
Help someone else	Journal prompt: What does trust look like to you?	Attend Hanging of the Greens!	Volunteer	Attend or donate to Santa Parade
Watch Elf at the Cabot!	Ponder a dark night of the soul moment in your life and how it changed you	FREE SPACE	Attend Christmas Eve services!	Journal prompt: What does courage look like to you?
Do something that scares you	Do 'Prayer Pose'	Journal prompt: What does JOY look like to you?	Journal prompt: What does balance mean to you?	Set a ten minute timer for prayer
Watch Ang Sang Wahe Guru video	Shop local	Do something that brings you joy	Share your favorite scripture with someone	Take a perceived obligation off your calendar

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