



Introduction

Many schools follow a programme of key values throughout the school year. These values can be an important framework for helping to define and validate the work of the school 'beyond the curriculum'. Each value can be used as the theme for collective worship, the focus for classroom reflection and the subject matter for main hall or quiet corner displays.

The Bible has so much to offer in this area of positive personal, relational and community values, and its timeless wisdom can help all schools pass on to the next generation the qualities of life that are most valuable and which, as Christians, we believe are not only God-given but also can be God-energised in our lives.

Preparation

What follows is a series of ideas linked to the value of '**Courage**'.

It includes: key themes to explore, a key Bible verse to use, key concepts to unpack, ideas for displays and reflective corners, as well as Bible story links with further connections to material on the Barnabas websites.

Development

1. Key themes to explore:

Strength of will/will-power

Bravery and fortitude in the face of hardship or danger

Standing up for what is right against the odds

Sticking by one's convictions and not being swayed

Being strong-willed/strong-minded and not deflected from a chosen course of action

Being resolute, resolved, unflinching, confident with an inner strength and conviction

Courage is one of the seven classical virtues along with faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice and self-control. The word 'virtue' itself comes from a Latin word meaning valour or bravery and so virtues are a collection of the courageous way to live your life.

Maintaining convictions and opinions whatever the consequences

Ability to face danger of pain without fear



The word 'courage' has its roots in French chivalry and the French for heart; hence 'take heart' is another way of saying 'be courageous'.

2. Key Bible verses

For Christians 'having courage' or 'strength to carry on' is linked to faith in God's promises – promises of God's presence, protection and power. Famously Joshua, when taking over from Moses in the Old Testament, hears God say:

'Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go' Joshua 1:9 (NIV).

Saying 'don't be discouraged' is the same as saying 'take courage'. When we *encourage* others we are helping them to find courage. One of the most often repeated commands of God in the Bible is 'don't be afraid'. It is said that it comes at least 365 times – once for every day of the year!

In the New Testament, Paul, when faced with hardship, finds that a prayer of thanksgiving gave him new courage:

'Paul... thanked God and was encouraged' (Acts 28:15).

Jesus urged his disciples to be courageous in the face of suffering, based on the fact that God's love was ultimately victorious:

'Take heart. I have overcome the world' (John 16:33).

Similarly David encouraged his son Solomon with the words: 'Be strong and brave and don't be discouraged or be afraid of anything' (1 Chronicles 22:13, CEV).

And in Psalm 27:14 David sings: 'Trust the Lord. Be brave and strong and trust the Lord.'

Christians recognise that human courage alone is sometimes not enough. They need the assurance of God's help and presence to stick to what they know is right.

Key verses

'I am Jesus. Don't be afraid' (Mark 6:50 and John 6:20).

Jesus said: 'Don't be afraid! You are worth much more than many sparrows' (Luke 12:7).

'I am the Lord your God. I am holding your hand, so don't be afraid' (Isaiah 41:13).

3. Words about courage

Courage is being the only one who knows you're afraid.



Be bold in what you stand for but be careful in what you fall for.

Courage is the discovery that you may not win, and trying when you know you can lose.

Tom Krause

If my mind can conceive it, and my heart can believe it, I know I can achieve it.

Jesse Jackson

Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

Christopher Robin to Pooh (by A.A. Milne)

A ship is safe in harbour, but that's not what ships are for.

William Shedd

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'

Mary Anne Radmacher

Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Each time we face our fear, we gain strength, courage, and confidence in the doing.

Anon.

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear.

Mark Twain

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

Winston Churchill

Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.

C.S. Lewis

You will never do anything in this world without courage. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honour.

Aristotle

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Reinhold Niebuhr

4. Key concepts to unpack

5. a) Courage is needed in the following situations, which children in particular might relate to:

- Courage to own up when you are in the wrong
- Courage to say 'no' when everyone else is pressing you to do something you do not want to do
- Courage to stick at a task even when it is taking time and is beginning to become boring or difficult
- Courage to be first to volunteer or stand up and be counted
- Courage to admit you don't know or understand something
- Courage to stand by your beliefs despite mockery or being in a minority
- Courage to take part in something, to give it a go, although you are fearful and unsure of yourself

1. b) It would be good to explore what helps people take courage/be courageous. Is it...

- the encouragement of friends and family?
- the crowd cheering you on - as in a marathon race?
- the prospect of some reward or sense of achievement?
- a hopeful character or optimistic disposition?
- a particular memory of what was, or a vision of what will be?
- a determined attitude - a particular 'mantra' you say again and again, such as 'I think I can, I know I can'?

1. c) Overcoming fears is something that takes courage. Talk about fears with the class but keep it objective to avoid putting anyone on the spot. What helps people overcome their fears of phobias of, for example, spiders, water, flying, crowded places, dogs, performing in public, meeting new people etc.?

Where do these fears come from? Are our fears always bad? How might some fears be good for us?

1. d) There are plenty of true life hero stories about those who displayed courage, Anne Frank for example. Focus on one of these stories, maybe in some assemblies or in a story time over a week, and explore the nature of courage and bravery. What sort of bravery is being shown? Where do these people find their courage? How do they keep going? There are stories in *The Dangerous Book for Boys* (HarperCollins, 2006) and *The Daring Book for Girls* (HarperCollins, 2008) about heroes showing courage.

Other famous Christian stories of courage are those of Martin Luther King, Father Damien, Dr Barnardo, Trevor Huddleston, Jackie Pullinger, Nelson Mandela, the Apollo 11 astronauts, Rosa Parks, Mother Teresa and Gladys Aylward.

1. e) What are the challenges for the children in the year ahead? What will require their courage? For example, moving classes or schools; changing teachers; facing new learning or taking on new responsibilities. Look at the courage involved in these transitions and changes. Link this to the SEAL topic of 'changes'.

2. **5. Ideas for a hall display or reflective corner in the classroom**



Include a Bible, open at a key verse

Include some words about courage - see above

Include pictures of heroes facing and overcoming dangers, such as St George and the dragon; Scott and the Antarctic; Hillary and Everest; Columbus and the Atlantic; Livingstone and Central Africa; or maybe Frodo and Sam in the Lord of the Rings - especially where Sam courageously climbs the mountain to rescue Frodo even though he has been 'rejected'.

Include some reflective questions such as:

What helps you to be brave? Where do you find your courage? Who inspires you with courage? If you are facing danger, what objects would you want with you to give you courage? Is there a special song or piece of music that helps you feel brave?

Include some symbols of courage.

6. Ideas for assembly/collective worship

[Standing up for what you believe - Peter and John in Acts](#)

[Joshua and the Spies](#) - a story outline with classroom follow up on facing changes

7. Ideas for classroom activities based on Bible stories

[Peter and Cornelius](#) - courage to overcome prejudice - Acts 10

[Deborah](#) - a brave Judge of Israel -Judges 4and 5

[Elijah standing up to King Ahab](#) - 1 Kings 17-19

[The cross of St George](#)

[The story of Archbishop Janani Lawum of Uganda](#)