

Raising Courageous Kids Spiritual Group Guide

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

Reinhold Niebuhr

Introduction



The introduction, discussion questions, suggested reading list, and author biography that follow are intended to enhance your group's reading of Charles A. Smith's *Raising Courageous Kids: Eight Steps to Practical Heroism*. Additional questions from guides available for parents, youth, and teachers from the author's website at www.raisingcourageouskids.com can be added to the list below. This *Guide* is likely to be updated so check the version date at the bottom of each page.

Each participant in the reading group should have read Raising Courageous Kids. This guide is intended for informal use, possibly by one or more of the participants in the group. The discussion may occur at one session or over a series of meetings. In all cases, the discussion leader can choose which questions to emphasize for his or her group. Leaders are also encouraged to form their own questions that relate to the book. I welcome additional questions suggested by ministers, rabbis, priests, and other religious leaders that enrich this guide. You may contact me at casmith@ksu.edu.

For discussion

1. Within your spiritual or faith tradition, what is the significance of courage? Do your sacred texts refer to courage and heroism?
2. What do you believe is the source of courage and heroism? What insights does your faith contribute to our understanding of the origins of courage?
3. The bible states, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. [John 15:12, 13]. What do you think is meant by "friends" in this context? Is the bible suggesting that we avoid helping strangers?"

4. Chuck Smith, the author of the book, *Raising Courageous Kids*, suggests that courage originates in willpower that begins during infancy. What is the relationship between *free will* and willpower? What does your faith teach you about free will? Is there a relationship between free will and courage?
5. What does your faith say about caring, the second step in building the capacity for heroism?

Research on heroic rescuers shows that those who failed to respond to opportunities to rescue Jews during WWII were just as likely as those who responded heroically to attend church services. Does this suggest that there is no relationship between heroism and spirituality?

6. The author suggests that parents and other caregivers who affirm children's hope in the future contribute to healthy willpower. What role and purpose does hope have within your faith?
7. What is the role of suffering according to your spiritual tradition? What is the relationship between suffering, courage, and heroism?
8. Is a spiritual life important for the development of integrity and honor? If so, why?
9. Research shows that heroic rescuers share a common belief in the value of all human life. How common is this value among those who share your faith?
10. What significance does your faith traditionally give to those who act with valor?

As a child growing up in a Catholic school system, I was impressed by stories of saints who suffered for their beliefs.

For further reading

Kathleen Brehony, *Ordinary Grace: An Examination of the Roots of Compassion, Altruism, and Empathy, and the Ordinary Individuals Who Help Others in Extraordinary Ways* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999).

Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994).

John McCain, *Why Courage Matters: The Way to a Braver Life* (New York: Random House, 2004).

Samuel Oliner and Pearl Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

Charles A. Smith, *From Wonder to Wisdom: Using Stories to Help Children Grow* (New York: New American Library, 1989).

Charles A. Smith, *The Peaceful Classroom: 162 Easy Activities to Teach Preschoolers Compassion and Cooperation* (Mt. Rainier, MD: Gryphon House, 1993).

Author background

Charles A. Smith is a professor and extension specialist in the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University. He is a former play therapist, medical social worker, preschool teacher, and child development center director. He is married and the father of two children. He began working on *Raising Courageous Kids* the day after the 9-11

tragedy to call attention to the heroism that day and better understand its origins and implications for children. *Raising Courageous Kids* is his fifth book, following *The Encyclopedia of parenting* (Greenwood Press), *The peaceful classroom: 162 easy activities to teach preschoolers compassion and cooperation* (Gryphon House), *From wonder to wisdom: Using stories to help children grow* (NAL/Penguin), and *Promoting the social development of young children* (Mayfield).