

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

LENT 2021
LEADER GUIDE

WEEK 2: TRUE GRIT 02.28.2021

SESSION GOALS

This session's discussions and prayer will equip participants to:

- Reflect on faithful responses to being under pressure through prayers;
- Explain the significance of olives in Jewish culture and literature.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:36-46

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jesus is under some serious pressure. He is in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying before he is arrested. The name Gethsemane comes from the Hebrew *gat šēmānê*, meaning oil press. The Garden of Gethsemane was located on the Mount of Olives, near the main road in the middle of the wilderness. This main road was often used by people for pilgrimage purposes, or for fleeing into the wilderness from one's enemy. When praying in this garden, Jesus had two choices: flee into the wilderness to avoid this upcoming suffering and death, or to make this route the sacred one in joyful obedience to God the Father.

Olives were essential for ancient Near East people. They extracted oils from olives by crushing the olives in an olive press. High-quality oils were produced from olives freshly harvested, and oil presses were often located in gardens of olive trees. There are three steps in producing oil: crushing the olives, pressing or mashing the crushed olives and finally, dehydrating the oil.

Olive oil is essential in Israelites' religious practices. They were commanded to bring pure olive oils to keep the lamp burning constantly, and they used olive

oil to anoint their religious and political leaders (See Leviticus 24:2). Olive trees were often associated with the people of God (see Psalm 52:8, and Jeremiah 11:16). In the Garden of "olive press", Jesus is pressured, crushed, and dehydrated unto death, so that we may still see the light of God, stay in God's presence, and be anointed to do the good works for the Kingdom of God.

SUGGESTED LEADER PREPARATION

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your preparation, and your class as you present this guide to your participants.
2. Carefully read the scripture and take note of what stands out to you.
3. With the insight you have gained during the scripture reading, go through the leader guide to add/modify/eliminate any discussion questions or activities according to the needs of the participants.

LESSON PLAN

ENGAGE

ACTIVITY: We are often put under pressure in our work and in our relationships. Take a moment to write down what comes to your mind when you think about being under pressure. It could be feelings, what is pressuring you right now, or what you do when you are around people who are under pressure. We will take a minute to think about it and write it down. If you feel comfortable, we will have a moment of sharing after we take a minute to reflect, but you are not *pressured* to share it.

EXPLORE

ACTIVITY: Let's dig deeper into our experiences of being under pressure more. Take a moment again to fill out the blanks. Then, ask participants to share what they wrote, if they feel comfortable.

We as a society are under pressure to _____.

We as a church are under pressure to _____.

We as Christians are under pressure to _____.

We as parents/children are under pressure to _____.

We as men/women are under pressure to _____.

I as a _____ am under pressure to _____.

ASK: Why do we find ourselves under pressure in such areas of our lives?
Where does it come from?

ASK: Are all pressures unhealthy, or can there be healthy pressure?
How does healthy pressure look like versus unhealthy pressure?

COMMUNE WITH THE WORD

SAY: Jesus is under an incredible amount of pressure right before he gets arrested and killed. In Gethsemane, the garden of olive press that produces olive oil, Jesus is also pressed, crushed, and challenged to the point of sweating blood. In such a painful moment of facing death, rejection, and shame, Jesus chooses to pray.

ASK: What does Jesus ask for? (Hint: Look at verses 39, 42, 44)

EMPOWER

SAY: Jesus states what he wants freely. But it is remarkable to see what he asks eventually. Jesus is asking for God's will to be done. Prayer in such a moment under pressure as this can be as brutally honest and candid as "take this away from me" or "I don't want this." But Jesus rather takes his free will and aligns himself to the purpose of God by saying "but thy will be done."

ACTIVITY: Think about the fill in the blank activity we just did. If we were to align our free will to God's purpose, how would our prayer and response be?

God, I as a _____ am under pressure to _____,
but I choose to align my will to Your purpose, which is to _____.

So I choose to respond faithfully by (doing/being) _____.

SAY: Just as olives under pressure produces precious oil to keep the light on fire and anoint God's people, Jesus' praying under pressure to align with God's purpose sets a fire in our hearts and anoints us to do the good works for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

ASK: Where do you see God working in your life or those around you as you choose to align in God's purpose in this moment of being under pressure?

CHURCH-WIDE MISSION: SHARING SHOES & JOY IN PERU

On my first trip to Peru (in 2010 with Buckner International), I was amazed by how well our trip leader covered us in prayer. We began each day with a team devotion and prayer, asking God to be with us throughout the day.

When we arrived at each orphanage or community where we would give Christmas gifts* or new shoes to children, our leader prayed for the people we would serve and that we would be a blessing to them. Before every meal, we thanked God for his mercy, protection and provision. I had never felt so completely immersed in prayer. It helped me experience God's presence throughout our trip.

- Lanie Williams, Mission Coordinator

* Over 250 of the gift boxes we delivered were filled by Custer Road families.



Peru mission team members pray with a young man at one of the orphanages we visited.

Join us in serving families in Peru by donating new shoes and socks, volunteering to sort and prepare shoes for delivery, or donate to help build more bathrooms.

LAUNCH

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
-John Wesley