

THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE

The Christian Teachings of Virtue (Series 5, Part 6, Teaching #38)

Instructions: Read aloud, underline what stands out to you most, discuss



Leader Guide...

See the back page for detailed facilitator instructions.

The courage to forge through the fire of adversity is fortitude.

The virtue of fortitude enables one to endure difficulties and trials.

Fortitude is sixth among the seven chief virtues and third among the cardinal virtues, following prudence and justice. It is the virtue that perfects the passions in pursuit of the “arduous good.” Where prudence discerns what is right and justice demands it be done, fortitude provides the strength to carry it out—even in the face of tremendous struggle.

Fortitude gives the soul the courage to stand firm in truth, to endure suffering for faithfulness, and to persist in virtue despite fear, hardship, or opposition. It is not reckless boldness, nor is it stubborn defiance; rather, it is the steady and unyielding will to remain faithful to what is right, no matter the cost. Fortitude is the virtue of the martyrs, the saints, and all who have suffered for the sake of God’s kingdom.

Just as a charioteer must hold firm to the reins when the road grows rough, so too must you remain steadfast when trials press in. Without fortitude, the horses of passion rear in fear or falter in exhaustion—either turning away from hardship or collapsing under its weight. But with fortitude, the charioteer does not let go. The grip is steady, the resolve unbroken, the will fixed on the destination ahead.

For the faithful, true fortitude is more than human resilience—it is a supernatural grace that strengthens the soul beyond natural endurance. On your own, fear and weakness often lead you to shrink back in the face of adversity. But fortitude, infused by God, enables you to endure trials with patience, to fight for truth with conviction, and to press on even when all seems lost.

This is why Scripture so often commands, “Be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the Lord your God, am with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). The strength of fortitude is not found in self-reliance but in complete dependence on God’s power.

7 Chief Virtues

Faith

Hope

Charity

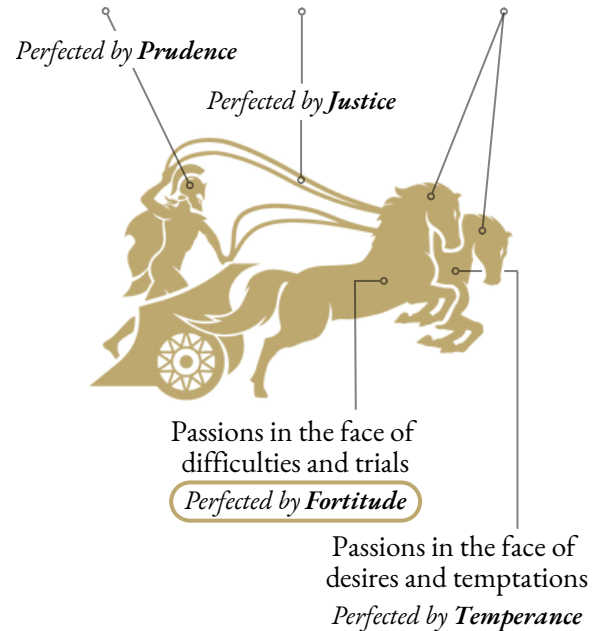
Prudence

Justice

Fortitude

Temperance

Intellect » Will » Passions
Enlightened by Faith *Strengthened by Hope* *Ordered by Charity (Love)*



Continue Learning: Scan the QR code to access the video for this teaching as well as additional resources such as related Scripture, quotes, and more.

Or, visit horseandchariot.com/the-virtue-of-fortitude



Fortitude is upheld by the pillar virtues of bravery, perseverance, and patience. Upon these pillars, fortitude stands, enabling one to endure difficulties and trials. Without all three, fortitude crumbles.

The virtue of bravery enables one to fight for the good. It ensures fortitude is not cowardly or timid but resolute in standing for truth. It is the strength to act when the good can only be attained by charging forward. There are moments in life when evil must be confronted, wrongs must be righted, and risks must be taken for righteousness' sake. Bravery equips the soul not to retreat in fear but to step forward with confidence—even when the outcome is uncertain. It is the courage to speak when silence would be easier, to defend what is right when it is unpopular, and to fight for the good even when it comes at great personal cost. Bravery does not mean recklessness, but it does mean that when the path demands action, the virtuous do not hesitate to take it. Its sub-virtues include magnanimity, magnificence, ambition, enterprise, determination, vitality, and sacrifice.

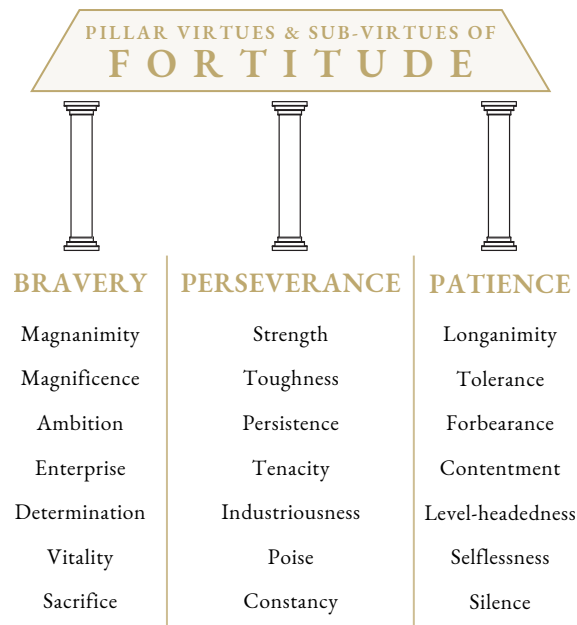
The virtue of perseverance enables one to persist for the good. It ensures fortitude is not momentary but enduring.

Some battles are not won in a single charge; rather, some goods can only be attained by pressing forward step by step, refusing to yield to exhaustion or discouragement. Perseverance is the strength to remain committed when the journey is long, the progress is slow, and the trials are many. It is the endurance to suffer for the good, to resist the temptation to surrender when the fight is draining, and to remain faithful even when the rewards are unseen. Just as a charioteer must not drop the reins when the road stretches endlessly ahead, so too must one with fortitude grasp tightly to truth, refusing to let go even when the journey is arduous. Perseverance does not seek shortcuts—it commits to the long road of virtue, no matter how difficult the terrain. Its sub-virtues include strength, toughness, persistence, tenacity, industriousness, poise, and constancy.

The virtue of patience enables one to wait for the good. It ensures strength does not become restless or impulsive. Not every battle is won by charging forward or persisting at full force—some victories can only come through waiting with trust. When the good cannot be attained any faster, when all that can be done has been done, patience is what keeps the soul steady, resisting frustration and despair. Patience is not passive resignation—it is the courage to wait well, knowing God's timing is greater than human urgency. It allows a person to endure suffering with grace, to sit in uncertainty with faith, and to withstand the delays and trials of life without bitterness. Its sub-virtues include longanimity, tolerance, forbearance, contentment, level-headedness, selflessness, and silence.

These pillars form the foundation of fortitude. To live with fortitude is to keep moving forward—to fight for the glory of God even when the battle is hard, and to trust that every trial, every hardship, and every moment of suffering is leading the soul toward its eternal reward. It is the unyielding grip of faith, the dogged will to endure, and the ardent belief that “Nothing is unbearable to those who trust in God” (St. Thomas Aquinas).

A charioteer without fortitude lets the horses slow to a halt at the first sign of difficulty—one horse pulling away in fear, the other collapsing in exhaustion. But the charioteer with fortitude presses on, gripping the reins even when the road is long, guiding the soul through trial, through suffering, and through hardship toward glory. Fortitude does not remove difficulty—it overcomes it.



Fortitude is the virtue that rises when everything else falls. It doesn't wait for ease or comfort—it shows up when things get hard. It is not the absence of fear, but the will to move forward in spite of it. Fortitude is the grit of the soul, the strength to endure suffering, resist discouragement, and remain faithful when quitting would be easier. Without fortitude, no other virtue can last. With it, the soul learns to persevere, to fight, and to finish the race.

One with fortitude puts their head down and drives their knees when the road gets steep, endures all the more when others surrender, and stands with their chin held high when the world demands they kneel. Their courage is not loud but unhesitating—a quiet resolve that does not seek attention but refuses defeat. They know suffering is not the enemy—giving up is. True fortitude is not found in strength of body, but in a heart that will not yield. Thus, their spirit does not break when tested, their will does not falter under pressure, and their faith does not collapse when challenged. They acknowledge, “Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring” (St. Catherine of Siena).

Fortitude looks like the man who speaks the truth, even when his voice shakes. It looks like the woman who faces suffering with grace, the soldier who fights with tireless honor, and the friend who remains when others walk away. It is found in the child who faces bullies with courage, the believer who holds to their faith despite ridicule, and the weary soul who prays one more time when hope feels distant.

Fortitude is David standing before Goliath with only a sling and faith, Esther risking her life to plead for her people, and Job refusing to curse God in the midst of suffering. It is the apostles preaching the Gospel despite persecution, the martyrs embracing death rather than denying Christ, and Paul pressing on despite beatings, imprisonment, and shipwrecks. Above all, it is Jesus Himself, who did not turn away from the cross but embraced it and endured it to the very end—even unto death. Declaring, “In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world” (John 16:33), He proved that true fortitude is not found in avoiding trials but in enduring them through faith.

Fortitude doesn't promise an easy path—but it makes the hard path holy. It is the virtue that keeps you standing when the world tries to knock you down. And when it is perfected by grace, it becomes a force that hell cannot take. So take courage. Stand firm. Press on. For with fortitude, you do not merely survive the trials—you overcome them.

FORTITUDE IN ACTION: *Select 1-3 areas you'd like to take action most in your life.*

I endeavor to put my fortitude into action by...

- ☐ *Pressing forward in obedience, even when I feel like quitting.*
- ☐ *Speaking truth boldly, even if my voice shakes.*
- ☐ *Enduring trials without giving in to self-pity or bitterness.*
- ☐ *Staying steadfast in prayer and faith, even when I feel spiritually dry.*
- ☐ *Choosing faithfulness over comfort, even when it hurts.*
- ☐ *Standing firm in the face of criticism, trusting God as my defender.*
- ☐ *Facing fear with courage, knowing God is with me.*
- ☐ *Continuing to show up—at home, at work, in ministry—no matter how tired I feel.*
- ☐ *Remaining loyal and loving even when relationships are hard.*
- ☐ *Remembering that suffering for the sake of righteousness is never in vain.*

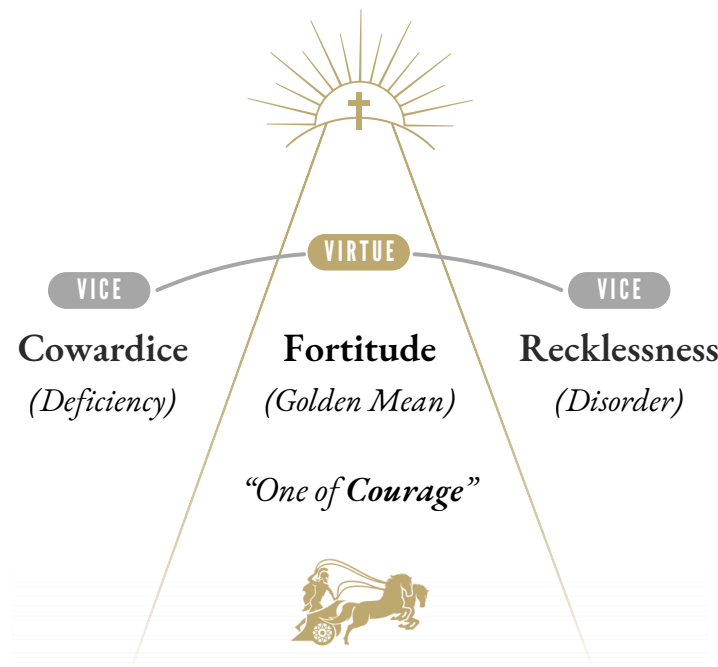
The vices opposed to fortitude are, at one extreme, a deficiency of fortitude—which is cowardice, and at the other extreme, one can never have too much fortitude, but one can have disordered fortitude—which is recklessness.

The vice of cowardice is a disposition void of courage in the face of difficulty or evil. The cowardly soul shrinks back when confronted with hardship, avoiding suffering at the cost of truth, justice, or morality. It is found in the one who remains silent when evil should be resisted, in the believer who compromises faith to avoid persecution, and in the person who chooses comfort over confrontation. Cowardice weakens the soul, making fear the master of its choices, ensuring what is right is abandoned whenever it becomes too costly.

The vice of recklessness is a disposition to take foolishly rash, bold, or irresponsible risks. The reckless soul rushes into danger without wisdom, mistaking recklessness for courage, seeking conflict for their own sake rather than for the sake of good. It is found in the one who takes unnecessary risks to prove bravery, in the person who speaks without thinking, and in the fighter who battles without purpose. Recklessness distorts fortitude, turning courage into foolishness, and ensuring boldness serves pride rather than truth.

Both cowardice and recklessness subvert the virtue of fortitude—one by fleeing when it should stand firm, the other by charging forward when it should proceed with wisdom. Together, they lead the soul away from true courage, either into the shadows of fear or the chaos of rashness, both of which separate one from the strength fortitude rightly provides.

Thus, whether it be by cowardice or recklessness, the outcome is the same—ruin. The ruin of integrity, the collapse of moral strength, and the failure to remain strong in the face of trial. The ruin of an uncourageous spirit fractures the soul from grace, giving way to sins such as vainglory, inconstancy, faintheartedness, and indifference. Thus, it is written, “If you are weak in a crisis, you are weak indeed” (Proverbs 24:10), for to abandon fortitude is to forfeit the strength virtue provides, and to walk the path of brokenness and defeat.



The best defense against ruin and the vices opposed to fortitude is to develop fortitude itself. And fortitude does not grow in theory—it grows in practice. For “a gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials” (Seneca). It is easy to speak of courage when there is no danger, to claim perseverance when there is no hardship, and to believe in patience when waiting is not required. But the moment difficulty arrives, many shrink back, making excuses, choosing comfort over conviction, and mistaking avoidance for peace. Fortitude is cultivated not in what you intend to do, but in what you actually do when the moment demands it.

Most people do not lack knowledge—they lack courage. They know the right thing but hesitate to do it. They remain silent when they should speak, delay when they should act, and retreat when they should charge. They fear discomfort more than dishonor, rejection more than wrongdoing, and hardship more than mediocrity. A soul that desires fortitude must ask: Where have I chosen comfort over courage? Where have I let fear stop me from doing what I know is right? Where have I avoided difficulty instead of facing it head-on? Fortitude demands an answer—and then demands action.

True fortitude begins in small, hidden moments long before it is tested in great trials. It is found in the one who stops making excuses and does what must be done. It is found in the one who pushes through exhaustion to fulfill their duty, who keeps their word even when it costs them, and who does what is required when no one is watching. It is in the one who endures suffering with grace, who bears insult without hatred, and who presses on in faithfulness despite discouragement. Fortitude is not just standing up in the big moments—it is showing up every day and doing what is right, even when it is hard, even when it hurts.

Courage begins within, and it is fortified by prayer, Scripture, and reflection. The courageous soul does not rely on their own resolve but seeks the strength of God, who is the source of all courage. Prayer infuses the soul with God’s power, Scripture reveals examples of endurance and faithfulness, and reflection exposes both progress and areas for growth. Without these disciplines, courage falters, and perseverance wanes, for no one can truly withstand the trials of life without God’s grace. The soul that desires fortitude cultivates these practices daily, knowing they are the wellspring of strength to face every challenge with “the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:13).

As fortitude grows, it changes the soul. The one who once avoided conflict now faces it with courage. The one who once quit when things became difficult now perseveres to the end. The one who once let fear rule their decisions now acts in unwavering trust. They no longer let hardship dictate their faithfulness, nor do they let fear determine their course. They embrace suffering as the price of virtue. And, like a mountain standing against the storm, they refuse to surrender to vice.

Ultimately, “The field of battle between God and Satan is the human soul. It is in the soul that the battle rages every moment of life” (St. Padre Pio). Fortitude is the fire that forges warriors for Christ. It marks the difference between a life of purpose and one of regret. Without fortitude, even the best intentions collapse under pressure. With it, the soul becomes unbreakable—divinely strengthened to withstand trials, remain faithful through suffering, and persevere to the very end. For in the end, victory belongs not to the strong or the swift, but to those who refuse to surrender.

Seeker of virtue, the way of fortitude is the path of unshakable strength, where fear, suffering, and hardship will test your resolve at every turn. Fortitude is not mere toughness or stubbornness; it is the unrelenting commitment to pursue the good, no matter the sacrifice. It is the courage to act when others shrink back, the endurance to press on when others surrender, and the patience to suffer when others despair. And if you choose this path, be ready—for it will demand your all.

At first, fortitude may feel like confidence—like the thrill of standing firm, of conquering obstacles, of proving yourself strong. But soon, the real trials will come. You will face battles that do not end quickly, pain that does not go away, opposition that does not yield. You will experience moments of exhaustion when everything in you screams to quit. Fear will press in on you, whispering, “The price is too great.” Doubt will tempt you to believe suffering is meaningless. The world will urge you to take the easy way out, to retreat, to compromise, to give in.

But if you hold the line, if you refuse to surrender, something extraordinary will happen: fortitude. For when fortitude is erected and fortified through trial—it becomes impenetrable. You will learn to rise when others fall, to endure adversity with patience, and to face trials with a heart that does not break. Fortitude will teach you to fight for the good, persevere in hardship, and wait with untroubled resolve. You will discover that courage is not the absence of fear, but the refusal to let it rule. You will become someone who does not crumble under pressure, who does not abandon the fight when it gets difficult, and who does not allow suffering to define them. For you will accept the sanctifying truth: “Afflictions are the steps to Heaven” (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton).

Fortitude requires grit, endurance, and trust in God’s strength rather than your own. It will cost you your comfort, your ease, and your right to give up. But it will give you everything—a soul that cannot be conquered, a heart that will not be broken, and a life lived without regret.

You can do this. Not by your own power, but by His. By grace. The path of fortitude is painful, but it is divinely courageous. You’re not alone. Lift the sails of your soul so the Holy Spirit can fill you, and the winds of grace can move you to—never run, never bow, and never break. For in the end, only the strong will endure to see the glory of God.

This teaching on fortitude challenges every Christian to remain faithful through adversity—standing firm in truth, enduring suffering with grace, and pressing forward with holy resolve.

1. Stand for truth, even when it costs you. Fortitude gives you the courage to remain faithful in the face of pressure, persecution, or public opposition. → Do you speak up for what is right, even when silence would be safer?

2. Endure suffering with grace. Fortitude transforms pain into purpose. → When trials come, do you bear them in faith—or allow them to break your spirit?

3. Stay committed when it gets hard. Fortitude is more than a single act of courage—it is faithfulness over time. → Do you keep your promises and fulfill your duties, even when they become burdensome?

4. Reject fear as your guide. Fortitude resists the tyranny of fear. → Are you making choices based on trust in God—or fear of discomfort, conflict, or failure?

5. Persevere with patience, not panic. Not all battles are won by fighting—some by waiting well. → In seasons of waiting or hardship, do you remain peaceful and faithful—or restless and bitter?

6. Suffer well for the sake of the Gospel. Fortitude transforms hardship into holy offering. → Do you view suffering as something to escape—or as a way to unite yourself more deeply to Christ?

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COURAGEOUS

A Christian strengthened by fortitude lives with resilience, faithfulness, and interior peace:

1. Brave. They face trials without shrinking back.

4. Steadfast. They stay true to Christ even when it costs them.

2. Enduring. They persevere through long and painful challenges.

5. Patient. They wait on God's timing without complaint.

3. Resilient. They rise after failure and continue the fight.

6. Faithful. They do not abandon the path when it becomes difficult.

Signs of struggling in fortitude...

- Avoiding conflict, pain, or sacrifice at all costs
- Quitting when things become difficult or uncomfortable
- Failing to follow through on responsibilities
- Compromising truth for ease or approval
- Living in fear of rejection, failure, or hardship
- Growing bitter or restless in seasons of waiting
- Mistaking recklessness or emotional outbursts for courage
- Giving up praying, hoping, or striving when discouraged

Think: Fortitude strengthens me to remain faithful in the face of fear, suffering, and adversity. It gives me courage to do what is right, even when it hurts. With God's grace, I am called to press on—steady, resilient, and unshaken—trusting that every trial endured in love draws me closer to Christ and His victorious way.

Pray: Lord, give me the strength to stand firm when trials come, to speak truth when I'm afraid, and to remain faithful when the way is hard. Teach me to endure with grace, to persevere with trust, and to fight for the good with courage born of Your Spirit. Make me steady, not shaken. Brave, not boastful. Patient, not passive. Let fortitude take root in my soul, so that by Your grace, I may overcome every hardship and glorify You through my endurance. Amen.

SELF-EVALUATION & ACTION STEP

Rate yourself from 1-10

1 = I struggle to consistently live a life of fortitude

10 = I consider fortitude one of my strengths

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Struggle ← (avoid 5) → *Strength*
Why did you give yourself this rating?

(In what areas do you struggle the most?)

What benefits will you obtain from raising your rating? (consider all aspects of your life)**Of the opposing vices of cowardice and recklessness, which one do you wrestle with the most and why?****Of the pillar virtues of bravery, perseverance, and patience, which one are you the strongest and which one needs the most development?****Of the areas you underlined throughout this teaching, which stood out to you most and why?****What specific action step will you take this week to grow in the virtue of fortitude?**

Daily Affirmation: Today, by God's grace, I press on. I do not quit when it's hard, I do not shrink back in fear, and I remain faithful through challenge and trial.

NOTES

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Courageous Facilitator,

Your willingness to step forward and lead is a gift of grace to your community and a brave act of faith. God bless you for answering the call to inspire others to grow in virtue and pursue the character of Christ.

The Holy Spirit thrives in fellowship and community, working powerfully through the connections and shared experiences of small groups. That's why these lesson plans are designed to cultivate genuine relationships, inspire meaningful conversations, and foster a spirit of transformation through shared wisdom and grace.

Facilitating these lessons is both simple and impactful. While many forms of teaching rely on one-way communication, where one person speaks and others listen, true transformation happens through two-way communication. In this format, ideas aren't merely taught—they're explored together. You'll guide, but everyone will share and learn from one another, creating a rich environment where the Holy Spirit can move and grow each mind, heart, and soul.

These lesson plans succeed because they:

- **Encourage connection** in a collaborative small group setting that fosters action and accountability
- **Empower every voice** with opportunities for each participant to share and contribute
- **Inspire growth** through educational, inspirational, and transformational teachings

Your role as a facilitator is to:

- **Follow the instructions and trust the process**—the wheel is already built, you're here to guide it.
- **Honor the schedule** by being punctual and respecting the time of your group.
- **Lead with love** and rely on God's grace to inspire, guide, and uplift everyone in the group.

Your courage to create a space for growth and fellowship will not only bless others but will deepen your own journey of faith and virtue. Together, with God's help, lives will be transformed.

To God be the glory!

FACILITATOR CHECKLIST

Note: Because this is a longer teaching, consider sending it to the group in advance so they can reflect more deeply and come prepared to discuss.

1. Getting Started (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Give everyone a few minutes to join before getting started. Be friendly and greet people as they arrive. Get them talking! Come prepared with some good ice-breaker questions you can ask during this time.
- ☐ 3-5 minutes in, do quick introductions for anyone new to the group. What brought them to the group? Spend a moment getting to know them.
- ☐ Open with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).

2. Watch or Read the Teaching (15-20 mins)

- ☐ To stay within the allotted time, either watch the video of the teaching as a group (if video available) OR have a volunteer read each page aloud.
- ☐ Have everyone note what stands out to them most.

3. How it Applies (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Have a volunteer read all of page 7. Have others follow along and underline what stands out to them most.

4. Reflection & Discussion (15-20 mins)

- ☐ Have everyone quietly take 5 minutes to complete the "Self-Evaluation & Action Step" on page 8.
- ☐ Then, going around the group, have each person take a minute to share what stood out to them most about the teaching and why.
- ☐ If time allows, continue the discussion using the remaining self-evaluation questions as a guide.

5. Wrap Up (5 mins)

- ☐ Remind everyone to do the daily affirmation until you meet again next time.
- ☐ Ask for any prayer requests from the group.
- ☐ Close with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).