

2024

# Fall Affinity Group Curriculum: Professional Discernment

LEADERSHIP  
IN A CULTURE OF GRACE



# LEADERSHIP IN A CULTURE OF GRACE



## 2024 Fall Affinity Group Curriculum: Professional Discernment

### WEEK 1 (week of Sept. 15) “Welcome!”

**Goals:** Begin to get to know one another and our professional situations. Develop a shared vocabulary around discernment and leadership. Learn the examen - a spiritual tool for discernment.

#### Gathering (10 minutes):

If you feel comfortable, come up with your own prayer on the spot. If you are uncomfortable, here's one you can pray: *“Holy God, we thank you for this day and for the gift of each person you have gathered here. Bless our conversation and be present with us, as you have promised, during this time. Amen.”*

The facilitator should introduce themselves, share a bit about why you are leading this group, and share a personal word of welcome.

#### Read this out loud from Pastor Sarah:

Welcome! If you're in a discernment group, you are likely feeling unsettled in some area of your life. Through this group, I hope you will form a genuine, faith-based community around issues of meaning, purpose, contentment, giftedness, grief, and transition.

I've been in professional discernment for much of my life. I spent years as a young adult unsure of what I should do. I have been mid-career, wondering if I should make a change. And I have accompanied family members through unemployment and underemployment.

Professional discernment is challenging, but it's also a beautiful and holy time when you can be open to the Holy Spirit and connected to what matters most. The more you bring authenticity, listening, and vulnerability to the group, the more you will grow.

#### Throughout these weeks, please make 3 commitments:

- 1) Come to the sessions with open hearts.
- 2) Do the examen most days (more on that below).
- 3) Pray for everyone in this group most days.

Thank you for joining this group on this journey! I will be praying for you! - Sarah

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### Introductions (15 minutes):

In the large group. Share your name, and in one minute, complete this sentence: “In my professional life, I....”  
(you’ll share more about the details of your professional life later).

### Scripture Reading (5 minutes):

*Someone read this out loud*

**The call of Moses: Exodus 3:1-8, 10-12**

**3** Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. **3** Then Moses said, ‘I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.’ **4** When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ **5** Then he said, ‘Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.’ **6** He said further, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

**7** Then the LORD said, ‘I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, **8** and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey... **10** So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.’ **11** But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ **12** He said, ‘I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.’

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## Small Group Discussions (15 minutes):

Break into groups of 3-4 and discuss.

1. Briefly summarize what happened.
2. This passage describes a professional change for Moses. Moses was given some pretty clear signs. I'm guessing no one has seen a burning bush, but in your professional discernment, what has captured your attention. In other words, why are you here?
3. Moses asks the question: "Who am I that I should go?" Moses felt ill-equipped, fearful, insecure, and not worthy of this task. But God saw potential - in Moses and in you. What about you? Are you asking the question, "Who am I?" Are you asking something else?

## Definitions - Vocation and Leadership (5 minutes):

As a shepherd, Moses contributed to the world by tending sheep, and in his new calling, he would help his people become free. Both were important. We tend to make hierarchies of callings and think some people are more important than others, but from God's perspective, all are important, and there are various ways to serve.

**Vocation:** At Westwood, we think everyone has a **vocation** - a calling. We say it like this: **"In our baptism, we are both claimed and called to be God's hands and feet in all the realms of our lives."** Calling is not something reserved for a niche gift or passion, but calling is a part of every aspect of our lives. Parent, employee, student, child, citizen, neighbor, etc., there is no time or place in which you are not called.

**Leadership:** Leadership was defined in the rally Sunday Sermon as **having the capacity, i.e. the skills/gifts/time, and the agency, i.e. the power and ability, to make a difference.** ("You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit." John 12:16).

Our group won't focus as much on leadership as other groups, but the concept will keep coming up in various ways. Keep on remembering - you are a leader!

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## Sharing (20 minutes):

Still in your groups of 3-4 people. Each person should have 5 minutes to share more deeply where they are in their professional discernment, what is good, what is hard, and whatever is important. Keep the definitions of leadership and vocation in mind.

*A note about listening: resist the temptation to give ideas or advice as you listen. You are not here to fix someone else's problem but to listen to them deeply, without judgment.*

## Teach the Examen (10 minutes): Try to do the Examen each day between group sessions.

*The Examen is a popular way of praying...This prayer invites us to reflect on our day and focus on two essential questions: where did I experience consolation and desolation? **Consolation** means whatever leads us to greater faith, hope, and love. **Desolation** means whatever leads us away from faith, hope, and love. The Examen is based on the belief that the key to a healthy spirituality is to find God in all things and to see God's hand at work in the whole of our experience. (paraphrased from *Sleeping with Bread*, Dennis, Sheila, and Matthew Linn).*

### How to do it:

Sit quietly and relax. Light a candle if you'd like. Reflect over the last day and ask these three questions. Write down your answers so you can continue to reflect over time.

- For what work-related moment am I most grateful? (consolation)
- For what work-related moment am I least grateful? (desolation)
- How did I contribute to somebody else's thriving today? (It does not need to be work-related.)

Spend a moment in prayer, aware of the presence of God in both the consolation and desolation. Give thanks for what these moments teach you. Release yourself into God's care, and rest in the comfort of God's everlasting love.

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## Homework:

- Get a notebook. Use it for the examen and also bring it with you each week to the group as we will have some writing exercises most weeks.
- Do the examen every day.
- Pray for the people in the group.
- Watch this video (11 mins) Daniel Pink interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m45eymlraJs>

## **Closing Prayer:**

Prayer of Good Courage

*O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with Good Courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

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WEEK 2 (week of Sept. 22)

“How did you get here?”

### Gathering (10 minutes):

**Introduction:** This week, we will examine our histories, asking, “How did I get here?” We will try to have a lot of honesty and grace for ourselves as we try to understand what has brought us to the current moment.

**Pray:** Someone lead an opening prayer, or use this one from week 1. *“Holy God, we thank you for this day and for the gift of each person you have gathered here. Bless our conversation and be present with us, as you have promised, during this time. Amen.”*

**Check-in:** Give each person a chance to say:

- Name
- One thing this past week that brought you joy (30 seconds each)
- How has the examen been going? Anything you’ve noticed?

### Scripture Reading (5 minutes):

Genesis 32: 22-30. Jacob wrestling with God.

*Introduction: Jacob stole his brother Esau’s birthright when they were children. Jacob then lived many years in exile. Now he is on his way back home but is afraid of his brother’s reaction.*

**22** The same night, [Jacob] got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. **23** He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. **24** Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. **25** When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. **26** Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the day is breaking.’ But Jacob said, ‘I will not let you go, unless you bless me.’ **27** So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob.’ **28** Then the man<sup>[a]</sup> said, ‘You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel<sup>[b]</sup> for you have striven with God and with humans,<sup>[c]</sup> and have prevailed.’ **29** Then Jacob asked him, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And there he blessed him. **30** So Jacob called the place Peniel,<sup>[d]</sup> saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.’

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## Small Group Discussions (15 minutes):

Break into groups of 3-4 and discuss.

1. Can you relate to Jacob wrestling? What are you wrestling with? What do you make of Jacob's injury? What does it mean? Do you ever feel injured by wrestling with life?
2. Jacob brings his past (his history with his brother, his wives and children etc) with him into the future. Who or what is with you in this stage of your life journey?
3. Jacob was crossing a river from one chapter of life to another. This made him especially vulnerable. In what ways do you feel especially vulnerable right now?

## Activity (15 minutes):

From Let Your Life Speak, Parker Palmer

*"Calling comes from listening. I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about - quite apart from what I would like it to be about. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity, not the standards by which I must live - but the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life."*

In an attempt to "listen to our lives," we will make a timeline of our histories. On a piece of paper, draw a timeline of your life with the major vocational points of your life. Put on things like educational milestones, significant relationships, jobs, moves, etc.

In the large group, when all are done, discuss: What did you notice? Give people 5 minutes to respond (this isn't a long activity).

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## Definitions (15 minutes):

Together, as a group, define *regret* and *shame*.

Regret:

Shame:

Though not mentioned in the scripture, it seems that Jacob was living with some serious regret and shame. Everyone is! We just don't talk about it very openly. You were asked to watch this interview, but if you didn't get a chance, we'll watch the first part together. Then, you'll journal about how regret plays into your professional discernment.

WATCH the video up to 2:10 TOGETHER. Daniel Pink interview  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m45eymlraJs>

Daniel Pink says there are four core regrets: - Foundation, Boldness, Moral, and Connection. He also says that regret isn't a bad thing. It can help us know what's important and make changes in the future.

For 5 minutes, write about this: How do regret (including fear of future regrets) - and shame - show up in your professional discernment?

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## Discussion (20 minutes):

READ These two quotes present contrasting views of vocation:

- A) “Many twenty-somethings often believe in...the bull’s-eye approach to calling. That is, we believe there is one perfect calling, the one thing I’m supposed to do, one grad school, one perfect spouse, and God is playing a game of hide-and-seek.” (*Quarterlife Calling*, Paul Sohn, pg 88)
- B) “Christian vocation is not reducible to the acquisition of a career goal or to its realization in time. It is, rather, something relating to the great issues of the spiritual life. It has to do with what one lives “for” rather than what one does.

Such an understanding...can liberate us from the tyranny of such notions that some have vocations whereas others do not, from the idea that having a vocation is incompatible with being unemployed or retired, from despair over not being able to “hear” God’s voice when looking into the future at turning points in life.” (*The Way of Life: A Theology of Christian Vocation*, Gary D. Badcock, 140-141).

Discuss these quotes in a smaller group (2-4 people). Have you ever thought you “missed the boat” of your calling? Do you find it freeing to consider that you can serve God and have a calling in a variety of ways? (In case you’re wondering, Westwood believes quote B is more faithful to the call of Jesus on our lives, and quote A is a recipe for shame and getting stuck. There are a variety of ways to live out your vocation.) If you’d like to share anything about the journaling about regret, go for it.

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## Homework:

- Do the examen every day.
- Pray for the people in the group.
- Read or listen to this brief interview about Quarterlife. Note: this is geared toward young adults but applies to people of any age. <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/22/1130755534/life-kit-navigating-the-quarterlife>

## **Closing Prayer:**

Prayer of Good Courage

*O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with Good Courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
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## WEEK 3 (week of Sept. 29) “Truthful Curiosity” *Who are you? Who and what do you love?*

### Gathering (10 minutes):

**Pray:** Someone leads an opening prayer or use the one from week 1.

**Check in.** Give each person a chance to say:

1. Name
2. Complete this sentence: When I was a child, I really loved \_\_\_\_\_. It made me feel \_\_\_\_\_. (30 sec each)
3. How has the Examen been going? Anything you’ve noticed?

### Pair and Share (10 minutes):

Pair up with someone you don’t know well or haven’t talked with much before. Tell them “your story.” This is simply for relationship building. There’s no right or wrong direction for the conversation to go. Just make sure each person gets 5 minutes.

### Scripture Reading (5 minutes):

Genesis 45:1-11 Joseph encounters his brothers.

*This passage comes years after Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. Joseph ended up high up in political power in Egypt, and managed the food supply during a famine so there was plenty in Egypt. His brothers came to Egypt begging for food, not knowing they were in front of their brother.*

*The assumption going in is that this will be a story of Joseph, now in a position of power, getting revenge on his family. Instead, it’s a story of Joseph revealing himself by his words and his tears and, interestingly, demonstrating his desire to reconnect through his curiosity. He wonders specifically about his father and calls for him to be brought to Egypt. All of this is in the context of Joseph still telling the truth about how he had been harmed. Given the pain that families can inflict on each other, this is a remarkable show of leadership by Joseph. The result is a new start for the family.*

**45** Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, ‘Send everyone away from me.’ So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. **2** And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh

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heard it. **3** Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?' But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

**4** Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come closer to me.' And they came closer. He said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. **5** And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. **6** For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. **7** God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. **8** So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. **9** Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, "Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. **10** You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. **11** I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty."

### Small Group Discussions (15 minutes):

In small groups, discuss:

1. Joseph chose to use his gifts to serve the community he was in (Egypt), even though it wasn't really his choice to be there. And he chose to forgive his brothers. What choices do you have right now?
2. There is a sense that God is using Joseph in ways he never would have imagined or predicted. How does it change your perspective on your life to consider that you might not have all the information about how God is at work through you? What are you curious about regarding your life right now?
3. What do you think Joseph valued? How did that affect his decision to show mercy to his brothers? Share a time that you have had to make a hard decision in your professional life. How did your values come into play?

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## Values Inventory (10 minutes):

God has made you with particular gifts, talents, and loves. In a time of discernment, it can be very helpful to be reminded of who you are and what you love. Take the values inventory (handout). Give people 5-10 minutes to take it.

Values can sometimes be in conflict with each other. And just knowing who you are and what you love doesn't mean easy decisions follow.

## Discussion (20 minutes):

The interview with the author of *Quarterlife* described the pull between stability and meaning. For instance, you may be pulled between a desire to settle down and a desire to travel, or a desire to make a lot of money no matter the job, and a desire to do work that doesn't pay much but makes a big difference. This is especially true for young adults but also for everyone. We are always pulled between different loves, values, and commitments.

In the following reading, the author discusses the blessing of conflict and the inevitability of pain.

*"Often, when you care deeply about more than one thing, the very course of life will bring you round to a situation where you can't honor both of the commitments...Just take a person who has a career, has children, and has to juggle these responsibilities daily. [It's almost certain], in some event you can't prevent from arising, you'll have to neglect one of those commitments and neglect something that's really ethically important because the very course of life has produced a terrible conflict...whatever you do you're going to be neglecting something that's really important...If you really feel what it is to love someone or some commitment and be bound to that, then when a conflict arises, you will feel deep pain."*

(Martha Nussbaum, interviewed by Bill Moyers in *"A World of Ideas: Conversations with Thoughtful Men and Women about American Life Today and the Ideas Shaping Our Future"* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 450-451.)

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## Discussion (continued from the last page):

In groups of 2-3, discuss what you discovered about your values in the values inventory. Also, discuss where you see conflicting values or ideals in your life, including your professional life, but also in other areas.

## Homework:

- Do the examen every day.
- Pray for the people in the group.

## Closing Prayer:

Prayer of Good Courage

*O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with Good Courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us through Jesus Christ our Lord.*  
*Amen.*

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## WEEK 4 (week of Oct. 6)    Belonging. Being “where you are.”

This week, we'll focus on what would happen to commit to where you are, exactly as you are, without trying to get anywhere different. We'll explore how your current professional situation is a vocation, even with all the unknowns. We'll ask, “What would it mean to be settled where you are?”

### Gathering (10 minutes):

**Pray:** Someone leads an opening prayer or use the one from week 1.

**Check in.** Give each person a chance to say:

1. Name
2. Answer this prompt: This week, I was especially aware that I value \_\_\_\_\_.
3. How has the Examen been going? Anything you've noticed?

### Scripture and Discussion (20 minutes):

Scripture: Exodus 1:15-20, Shiprah and Puah.

Shiprah and Puah are two midwives in Egypt. Their courageous act saved baby Moses from death.

**15** The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, **16** ‘When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.’ **17** But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. **18** So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, ‘Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?’ **19** The midwives said to Pharaoh, ‘Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.’ **20** So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong.

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- What do you find remarkable about this story?
- Who comes to mind as modern “midwives?”
- Consider that Shiprah and Puah probably didn’t know their impact. Discuss.
- How can you - in your current situation - trust that God is at work through you while trusting that God is making a future?

## Small Group Discussions (20 minutes):

Read these two quotes. The first one is from peace activist Dorothy Day:

*“We can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebbles in the pond and be confident that its ever-widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as our friend.” (Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*).*

The other is from Episcopal Priest Barbara Brown Taylor:

*“No one longs for what he or she already has, and yet the accumulated insight of those wise about the spiritual life suggests that the reason so many of us cannot see the red X that marks the spot is because we are standing on it. The treasure we seek requires no lengthy expedition, no expensive equipment, no superior aptitude, or special company. All we lack is the willingness to imagine that we already have everything we need. The only thing missing is our consent to be where we are.” (Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World*).*

In small groups, discuss the ways that your life is currently fruitful. (Recall John 15:16 - “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last”).

- Another way of asking that is, “How are you currently leading (acting with agency and capacity for the thriving of the neighbor)?
- Another way to ask is: “How does your love make a difference? “
- Another way of asking that is: “How would it change you to imagine ‘you already have everything you need?’”

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## Writing Exercise (10 minutes):

Write a letter to yourself from God with compassion and kindness, addressing where you are right now.

## Homework:

- Do the examen every day.
- Pray for the people in the group.
- Read your “letter from God” a few times this week. Rework it if you’d like.

Before we go - next week is our last week together! How do we want to celebrate (treats?)?

## Closing Prayer:

Prayer of Good Courage

*O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with Good Courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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### WEEK 5 (week of Oct. 13)

### “Vulnerable Security. What if...?”

This is the final week. We will dream a little bit, asking the question, “What could happen if...?”

We’ll focus on the idea of vulnerable security. That means we embrace vulnerability, stepping out into moments that require courage, even as we rest secure in our identity as God’s children.

#### Gathering (10 minutes):

**Pray:** Someone leads an opening prayer, or use the one from week 1.

**Check-in.** Give each person a chance to say:

1. Name
2. Answer this prompt: This week, I had contentment when I \_\_\_\_\_.

**Examen Deep Dive.** Go over your examen practices. Have people re-visit their answers over the five weeks of writing them down. Did anyone notice any patterns? Give each person a chance to say what they discovered or how they grew through the examen.

#### Scripture and Discussion (20 minutes):

Vulnerable Security, David and Goliath, 1 Sam 17: 31-50.

The Israelites and the Philistines had large armies assembling for battle. One Philistine - Goliath - challenged the Israelites to send one warrior to fight him, with the winner taking all. David - a humble shepherd, told King Saul he would go.

**32** David said to Saul, ‘Let no one’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’ **33** Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.’ **34** But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, **35** I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. **36** Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has

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defied the armies of the living God.' **37** David said, 'The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.' So Saul said to David, 'Go, and may the LORD be with you!'

**38** Saul clothed David with his armour; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. **39** David strapped Saul's sword over the armour, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.' So David removed them. **40** Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

**41** The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. **42** When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. **43** The Philistine said to David, 'Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. **44** The Philistine said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.' **45** But David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. **46** This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, **47** and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give you into our hand.'

**48** When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet the Philistine. **49** David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

**50** So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand.

- What about David helped him move forward into battle with Goliath?
- What are the "goliaths" you feel you are up against in making a change?
- What "armor" do other people try to put on you? What are your slings and stones?
- And what is your community of support?

(cont.)



# LEADERSHIP IN A CULTURE OF GRACE



## Activity (30 Minutes):

Craft your personal “vision statement.”

Imagine it is a year from now. Where would you like to be? What would you like to be doing? What questions do you hope are resolved? How will you be leading (claiming your agency and capacity)? And how will you be living out a vocation to work for the thriving of the neighbor? Dream big or small. Don't be constrained by other people's expectations of you! Be like David - secure in the gifts God has given you!

This can take whatever form you'd like. You can write a letter to yourself, draw a picture, or write a poem.

After everything has been written, go around the room and share them.

## Discussion (20 minutes):

Now that we're at the end of our time together as a group reflect on where you are in your professional discernment. What have you discovered? What are you praying for? How will you know when to move or decide to stay in your current situation? Has anything shifted for you? Make sure each person has a chance to share.

## Closing (5 minutes):

Close your eyes. What does a courageous person look like in your mind? Pastor Tania wrote, “In my mind, courageous people have big muscles, personal fortitude, and grit and often become famous for their brave and heroic deeds. But did you know the root of the word ‘courage’ is cor - which is the Latin word for ‘Heart?’ Same word, *couer* in French, *corazon* in Spanish. Courage means to speak and live from your heart.

Open your eyes.

# LEADERSHIP IN A CULTURE OF GRACE



In sign language, to make the word ‘courage’ (please try this!), you put your hands on your heart and then sweep them into “muscle arms,” an image of strength. It starts at the heart. Courage is not a big, tough, brave word but a heart word. Authentic courage invites us to choose a more heartfelt way of living and engaging with others.

Whatever is next for you, you can rely on us to be with you on the journey. We are in one another’s hearts. As we pray the prayer of Good Courage one last time, we pray it with open eyes, looking at one another and trusting our journeys to God’s care.

## Closing Prayer:

Prayer of Good Courage

*O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with Good Courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

If you can’t be in worship on Sundays, please watch the livestream online or listen to our relatively new Westwood podcast of the sermons. You can listen to the ‘Real Good Courage’ podcast on [Spotify](#) or [Apple Podcast](#).