



Leadership Collaborative



LEARNING • SUPPORT • ACCOUNTABILITY

CONFERENCE CALL 9 **REVIEWING MONTH 8 AND BELOVED COMMUNITY**

1. CONNECTING AROUND VISION

These questions are extrapolated from month eight of coaching calls. One at a time, share your thoughts by answering one or two of the following questions:

VISION

- What is the current vision that you believe God has given you and your ministry context to work toward?
- How is your vision a Godly vision? How has the idea that God is “willing and able” impacted your journey?
- What are some of the ways you’ve discerned you can help your church, organization, or group reflect on your new vision?
- How have you started implementing these three leadership practices into your vision casting?
 - Inspire hope
 - Incite change
 - Increase impact

2. COLLABORATING: BELOVED COMMUNITY

Hebrews 10:24-25 NRSV

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

As we’ve discussed before, leadership does not happen in isolation. Leaders lead by example in the *communities* where God has placed them. Jesus himself had 12 disciples, as well as crowds of 4,000 and 5,000 men and women who were part of his ministry on earth.

Leadership development does not happen in isolation either. It requires cooperation, connection, and commitment. Leaders are developed in **community**. As leaders, this

means embarking on a journey with other leaders where you help equip and encourage one another along the way.

Review the above scripture from Hebrews. One at a time, share with the group what you believe this passage is suggesting about community. What are the elements that make up a healthy and loving community?

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. popularized the idea of the **Beloved Community** in the early 1960s. King envisioned the Beloved Community as a society based on justice, equal opportunity, and love of one's fellow human beings.

But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. The type of love that I stress here is not eros, a sort of esthetic or romantic love; not philia, a sort of reciprocal love between personal friends; but it is agape which is understanding goodwill for all men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. It is the love of God working in the lives of men. This is the love that may well be the salvation of our civilization.

Martin Luther King, Jr. The Role of the Church in Facing the Nation's Chief Moral Dilemma

Based on King's words, what else can you add to your definition of a healthy and loving community?

How does your community live into the descriptions of community in Hebrews 10 by Dr. King? Where does it fall short?

3. THE JOYS AND CHALLENGES OF BELOVED COMMUNITY

In his book, Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry, Catholic priest and theologian Henri Nouwen shares the following about community:

By community, I don't mean formal communities. I mean families, friends, parishes, twelve step programs, prayer groups. Community is not an organization; community is a way of living: you gather around you people with whom you want to proclaim the truth that we are the beloved sons and daughters of God.

Community is not easy. Somebody once said, "Community is the place where the person you least want to live with always lives." In Jesus' community of twelve apostles, the last name was that of someone who was going to betray him. That person is always in your community somewhere; in the eyes of others, you might be that person....

If we do not know we are the beloved sons and daughters of God, we're going to expect someone in the community to make us feel that way. They cannot. We'll expect someone to give us that perfect, unconditional love. But community is not loneliness grabbing onto loneliness: "I'm so lonely, and you're so lonely." It's solitude grabbing onto solitude: "I am the beloved; you are the beloved; together we can build a home."

Sometimes you are close, and that's wonderful. Sometimes you don't feel much love, and that's hard. But we can be faithful. We can build a home together and create space for God and for the children of God.

One at a time, describe your beloved community. What are the blessings and challenges in your beloved community?

What is the difference between loneliness and solitude? How do you see these manifest themselves in your community?

As a leader, how can you use your identity in Christ to support a more faithful community in the midst of both joys and challenges?

4. YOUR LEADERSHIP ROLE IN COMMUNITY

Professor Chuck DeGroat from Western Theological Seminary emphasizes the importance of self-honesty when exploring your role as leader of a community. He says the following in his blog post *The Honesty Necessary for Community* on his website The New Exodus:

I can write about community because I have failed doing it, over and over again. Henri Nouwen envisions the pastor as a "wounded healer," but too often I've been the "healed wounder." Healed wounders believe they are sinners, but believe that their sin doesn't stink as bad as the next guy's sin. Healed wounders walk around shaking their head, wondering why people don't think as clearly as they do. Healed wounders lead small groups that complain about the church. Healed wounders begin sentences with, "You know, I'm not trying to be critical but..."

I know, because I've been there, and too often remain there. But community begins as we really begin to get the fact that we are the problem. One commentator on the Exodus journey writes that the Israelites really began their journey when they realized that Pharaoh was not the problem. Instead, they were their biggest obstacle to Canaan's promised land. A wilderness community that stops blaming Pharaoh is a wilderness community that begins to make progress on the way. But we'd rather point the finger.

When have you been a "healed wounder" in your community?

How can you become less a “healed wounder” and more whole, complete, and loving as a leader in beloved community? How can you lead your community through this transformation, too?

5. BELONGING IN COMMUNITY

In her new book, Dr. Brené Brown argues that we are experiencing a spiritual crisis of disconnection. Despite our longing and restlessness for stability, we struggle with finding our place in community because we are divided between being independent and truly belonging.

Brown says, True belonging requires us to believe in and belong to ourselves so fully that we can find sacredness both in both being a part of something, and in standing alone when necessary. But in a culture that's rife with perfectionism and pleasing, and with the erosion of civility, it's easy to stay quiet, hide in our ideological bunkers, or fit in rather than show up as our true selves and brave the wilderness of uncertainty and criticism. But true belonging is not something we negotiate or accomplish with others; it's a daily practice that demands integrity and authenticity. It's a personal commitment that we carry in our hearts.

Brown offers four practices to true belonging, that can help bridge this divide and challenge how we think about ourselves, show up with one another and find our way back to courage and connection:

1. **People are Hard to Hate Close Up. Move In.** Be intentional about learning people’s stories; stay in the conversation; release judgment; agree to disagree; embrace all of humanity.
2. **Speak Truth to BS. Be Civil.** Be curious; don’t pretend to know what you don’t; eliminate black and white thinking; say what you mean; be generous and respectful when disagreeing.
3. **Hold Hands. With Strangers.** Don’t isolate; embrace your vulnerability and stay connected; sense the sacredness in something bigger; be present.
4. **Strong Back. Soft Front. Wild Heart.** Maintain boundaries; be responsible; keep confidences; be open; stay awake to the world; dream big; choose love.

What experience do you have in using these practices in your beloved community?

Which of these four practices challenges you the most as you work to create true belonging for yourself and others in your community?

How do you think these practices can help you live into the calling God has for you as a leader in beloved community?

6. LEADING IN COMMUNITY: BIBLICAL SNAPSHOTS

Mother Teresa

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."

Anna - Luke 2

"There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." (Luke 2:36-38, NRSV)

Shiphrah and Puah – Exodus 1

"So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?' 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.' So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.'" (Exodus 1:18-22, NRSV)*

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna – Luke 8

"Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources." (Luke 8:1-3, NRSV)

Lois and Eunice – 2 Timothy 1

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you." (2 Timothy 1:5, NRSV)

- How was each biblical woman a leader in beloved community? How did their examples create ripples that transformed others?

- How does each biblical woman inspire you to grow as a leader in beloved community?

7. NEXT STEPS

Monthly coaching pairs/triads:

Each month, you will receive an outline that will help you explore important leadership topics by yourself and then in your peer coaching triads. The next month's topic is:

- Month 9 **Embracing Change:** Where is God inspiring change?

Next Video Conference date:

Clarifying Questions:

Below you will find four questions that we encourage you explore throughout your 12-month leadership journey. Consider them each month, to see how they may be changing for you:

- What kind of leader do I want to be one year from now?
- What kind of leader do I want to be 5 years from now?
- What phrases describe me and my leadership style?
- What do I hope is my leadership legacy?