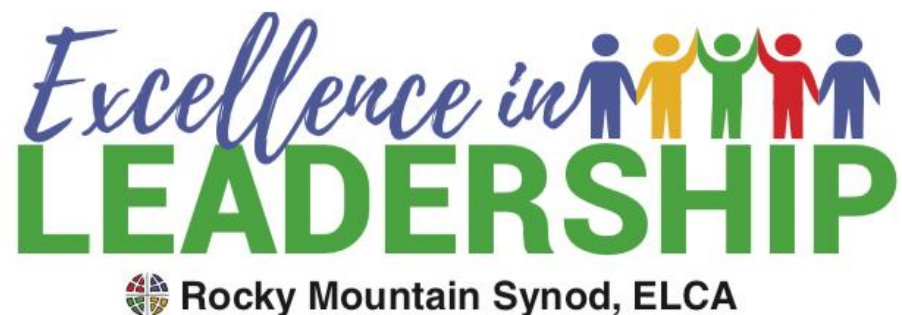


Fostering Authentic Leadership

Session Ten

Online 2020-21



Courageous, resilient, and faithful leaders for the sake of the world

Fostering Authentic Leadership

Session Ten Participant Outcomes:

1. Describe a situation in which you have a leadership role. Outline the components of the Adaptive Leadership model and describe the gaps that exist that may prevent realizing the end goal.
2. Name the two core values of who you are and how those values play out in your leadership.
3. Journal about the voices of judgment, cynicism, and fear you face as you engage in leading change in your family, workplace, or faith community.

Preparation for this Session:

- Read this section of the manual and bring it with you.
- Discern two core values from pages 6 & 7 and fill out the “Defining Value Behaviors” worksheet on page 14.
- Do some self-reflection using the “Self-Evaluation on Adaptive Capacity” and “Empathy and Self-Compassion Reflection Questions” worksheets on pages 15 & 16.
- Read *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger.
- Optional: Read *Dare to Lead* by Brené Brown.

Found in this Session:

Realities of Adaptive Leadership	page 2
Authenticity: Who You Are and How You Lead	page 6
Authenticity: My Self and My Work/Vocation	page 9
Fostering Authenticity	page 12
Worksheet: Defining Value Behaviors	page 14
Worksheet: Self-Evaluation on Adaptive Capacity	page 15
Worksheet: Empathy and Self-Compassion Reflection Questions	page 16



Realities of Adaptive Leadership

Being a Leader in Uncharted Territory

Leading a community of faith in today's rapidly changing world means that we are constantly in uncharted territory. In fact, with COVID 19, we are forced into uncharted territory that can feel like an 'adapt or die' moment as the church. Some are describing our current reality as a "VUCA world: *volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.*" in his book *Canoeing the Mountains*, Tod Bolsinger says: "The world in front of you is nothing like the world behind you."¹ How do we live in this uncharted territory? We must adapt. Adaptive processes require "leadership that creates structures that hold people together through the very conflictive, passionate, and sometimes awful process of addressing questions for which there aren't easy answers."² Adaptive leadership requires learning, results in loss, and necessitates navigating competing values.

Requires Learning

The challenges we face are complicated. Prior to COVID 19, the challenges we faced in the church were things like: people coming to church less often, declining membership, people no longer pledging and making it difficult to make ends meet especially in aging buildings, ineffective Sunday School, difficulty in getting a youth group going, etc. All these challenges require us to let go of the answers that worked in past decades so that we might find new ways of being and doing church. Now, we also have new health challenges with rules, regulations, and recommendations around gathering. We all need to learn new behaviors, new ways of communicating, new ways of offering the Gospel, so that we might **fulfill our purpose for being.**

Re-framing the challenges and the questions surrounding these significant cultural shifts require us to step up the learning process and use different lenses, models, or tools to help us see things differently. We need to keep an open mind to receive new data. As leaders, we need to address our own learning anxiety. We need to reflect honestly about the ways we have been approaching these challenges. We need to pay attention to ourselves as leaders and stay differentiated. We must be constantly willing to let go of unhelpful assumptions and learn adaptive skills even as we encourage others to do the same. Bolsinger puts it bluntly: "if you are not learning anything new, it's not adaptive work."³ Being open to learning means that leaders have to admit that they are not fully equipped. Egos can often get in the way of admitting this to ourselves and our communities. For people newer to leadership positions, the amount of learning may seem overwhelming. Keep breathing and know that God is with us in this time.

¹ Bolsinger, Tod, *Canoeing the Mountains*, IVP Books, 2015, p. 27.

² Heifetz, Ronald, "Leadership, Adaptability, Thriving," *Faith & Leadership*, November 18, 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSZldV1Yxc.

³ Bolsinger, p. 97.

Results in Loss

Change means letting go of some things that we might hold dear. Grief is not an easy emotion to process. We might misinterpret grief, reading it as anger – anger at those people moving too fast or anger at those people not moving fast enough. We need to pay attention to the grief inside ourselves and the grief of the community around us. Adapting to uncharted territory means letting go of things, and ways of doing things, we may value and/or be attached to, but which no longer serve us well. The more attached we are, the more profound the loss. Attending to our grief work and to the grief work of those we lead is part of this dicey process. We might intellectually understand why the change is necessary, but our hearts may still be broken. Leaders cannot ignore the loss that comes with letting go. In order to be authentic as we live and move into the unknown, we must do this internal work of letting go. Taking time to name the losses and perhaps even ritualize the transition is important. Attending to the loss as honestly as possible gives us the best chance to embrace the new opportunities that lie ahead of us.

Necessitates Navigating Competing Values

Our experience in the pandemic gives us a noteworthy example of competing values and the tension, stress, and even conflict that can arise in a community struggling to navigate competing values. Leaders need to balance the health and safety of the community with the longing to return to ‘normal.’ Another example of competing needs is the tension caused between those who value a balanced budget and those who value budgets driven by ministry. Neither value is wrong, yet many faith communities have found themselves caught in between these competing values. Moving into uncharted territory we will need to “mind the gap” between the goals we aspire to achieve and the reality we face. We will face competing values within the group and find it difficult to move forward as we choose one value over another. A common example is wanting to care for long term members and at the same time start a new ministry for a new group in the neighborhood. How do we allocate limited resources to accomplish these two important ministries? Navigating these competing values means disappointing some people and facing resistance and even sabotage from others. Leaders will need to care for themselves, read the political landscape, practice self-differentiation, utilize conflict skills, and be courageous in order to keep going when navigating adaptive challenges.

Adaptive Capacity

The capacity we have as leaders to be adaptive has to do with our resilience in the midst of the pressures and the disequilibrium of navigating these uncharted territories. In uncharted territory, leaders must exercise courage, self-management, and self-differentiation to be a less anxious presence as they lead people “off the map” into a new mission field, often in the same building and neighborhood. Adaptive capacity is the ability to:

- see systemic issues,
- calmly confront the unknown,
- lead a learning process,



- ask transformational questions – questions which will address voices of judgment, cynicism, and fear,
- refuse quick fixes,
- seek new perspectives,
- deal with conflict, resistance, and sabotage,
- explore deeper issues in the system,
- act politically and stay connected relationally,
- engage and lead others in change without sacrificing personal and organizational fidelity,
- make hard or painful decisions when necessary.

Building this capacity takes practice and attentiveness to our own growth as leaders. Noticing our strengths and weaknesses can help us utilize our strengths to lead the group and grow in areas where we are not as strong. Having companions who can help us see ourselves and offer support in our growth areas is essential for this work.⁴

Mobilizing People for an Adaptive Challenge

When you are faced with an adaptive challenge, Ron Heifetz suggests the following practical steps:

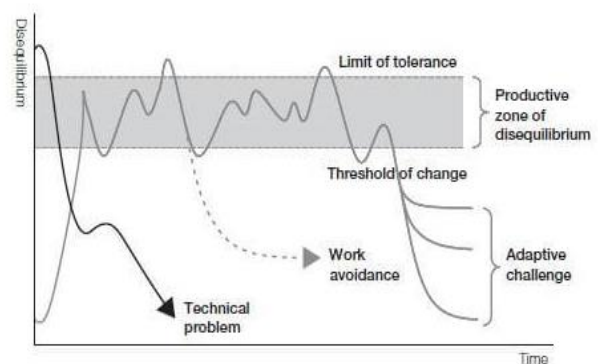
1. Get on the Balcony

- Get grounded, take a moment, breathe.
- From a higher perspective, observe what is going on, watch for patterns and reality test your interpretations.
- Debrief with partners and team members to assess responses to actions you have taken.

2. Determine the ripeness of the issue/challenge in the system

- Check out the anxiety level of the system. Is it high enough that people see the need to change? Is it too high, past the limit of tolerance and people are beginning to react in dysfunctional ways? Are most people in the “productive zone” and ready for change?
- Are people resilient and ready to address this challenge?
- Has the urgency to address this challenge reached a critical number of people across the system?
- Is the prevailing momentum enough to tackle the challenge?

The productive zone of disequilibrium



Source: Adapted from Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie, "Mobilizing Adaptive Work: Beyond Visionary Leadership," in *The Leader's Change Handbook*, eds. Jay A. Conger, Gretchen M. Spreitzer, and Edward E. Lawler III (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

⁴ Bolsinger, pp. 90-91.

3. Who am I in the picture?

- a. What role do I play for different groups within the community? How will my role affect the way I address this challenge in these different groups? How do these groups see my authority? Do these groups expect strong leadership from me? Will the status quo be challenged by my voice?
- b. How might I change my usual approach to authority and leadership in order to achieve a different response from other leaders?

4. Think hard about your framing

- a. Thoughtful framing means communicating next steps in ways people can understand. The framing starts where other people are, not where you are.
- b. In thinking about the framing, help group members understand the steps in front of them, why they are important, and how they will benefit the group.
- c. Help group members to know what they will need to learn and do in order to tackle the challenge in front of them.
- d. Start your framing using language that engages the espoused values yet does not threaten the community's identity. Accept people where they are and move them to where their values and God's mission are calling them to be.

5. Hold Steady

- a. Once you've initiated an action, let it go and see what happens. Do not get attached to the outcome.
- b. Give time and space for the idea to work through the system.
- c. Keep a poised and listening silence. Being fully present without defending or protecting your idea, allows other people to incorporate the idea in their own way. Respectful attention is key here.

6. Analyze factions that begin to emerge

- a. Pay attention to who is engaged and using your language in their own way. Notice who is resisting your idea.
- b. Map the various groups' responses to your idea. You might consider using tools such as the Shape of the Parish, Triangles, or Force Field Analysis presented in Excellence in Leadership to gather data about how people are processing your idea.

7. Keep the work at the center of people's attention

- a. At times people will avoid adaptive work by choosing to tackle easier, more technical issues. Avoidance is common and should be expected.
- b. It falls to the leaders and allies to keep the work at the center of their attention. Be prepared for anxiety to rise, fear to take hold, and projections to distract.



Authenticity: Who You Are and How You Lead

“There is a twilight zone in our hearts that we ourselves cannot see. Other people, especially those who love us, can often see our twilight zones better than we ourselves can. The way we are seen and understood by others is different from the way we see and understand ourselves.”⁵

Henri Nouwen in *Bread for the Journey*

Core Values

Getting in touch with who we really are and what we value most is key to authentic leadership. What we value most is what motivates us to lead in places that matter to us and can help us when the going gets challenging. We can be easily swayed by other voices both external and internal, even unhealthy voices, if we are not clear about our core values.

Brené Brown defines a value as “a way of being or believing that we hold most important.” She goes on to say: “Living into our values means that we do more than profess our values, we practice them. We walk our talk – we are clear about what we believe and hold important, and we take care that our intentions, words, thoughts, and behaviors align with those beliefs.”⁶

To be clear about our values, we must name them. We must move them from the twilight zone, the vague thoughts of our hearts, to the forefront of our minds, behaviors, and intentions. Our **core values** are not situational. They do not shift from one situation to the next or show up differently from one person to the next. Our core values guide us and are most sacred to us. Consider the following list of values from Brené Brown’s website and distill your core values down to **two**.⁷

Accountability	Ethics	Kindness	Self-expression
Achievement	Excellence	Knowledge	Self-respect
Adaptability	Fairness	Leadership	Serenity
Adventure	Faith	Learning	Service
Altruism	Family	Legacy	Simplicity
Ambition	Financial stability	Leisure	Spirituality

⁵ Nouwen’s reference to “twilight zone” is similar to Joseph Luft’s and Harry Ingham’s use of blindspot” in the Johari Window (see Session 1 manual). It is that part of ourselves that we do not know, but others can see and experience in us. Deepening authenticity would be to perceive this with those who love us.

⁶ Brown, Brené, *Dare to Lead*, Vermillion, London, 2018.

⁷ <https://daretolead.brenebrown.com/>

Authenticity	Forgiveness	Love	Sportsmanship
Balance	Freedom	Loyalty	Stewardship
Beauty	Friendship	Making a difference	Success
Being the best	Fun	Meaningfulness	Teamwork
Belonging	Future generations	Nature	Thrift
Career	Generosity	Openness	Time
Caring	Giving back	Optimism	Tradition
Collaboration	Grace	Order	Travel
Commitment	Gratitude	Parenting	Trust
Community	Growth	Patience	Truth
Compassion	Harmony	Patriotism	Understanding
Competence	Health	Peace	Uniqueness
Confidence	Home	Perseverance	Usefulness
Connection	Honesty	Personal fulfillment	Vision
Contentment	Hope	Power	Vulnerability
Contribution	Humility	Pride	Wealth
Cooperation	Humor	Recognition	Well-being
Courage	Inclusion	Reliability	Wholeheartedness
Creativity	Independence	Resourcefulness	Wisdom
Curiosity	Initiative	Respect	<i>Write your own:</i>
Dignity	Integrity	Responsibility	_____
Diversity	Intuition	Risk-taking	_____
Efficiency	Job security	Safety	_____
Environment	Joy	Security	_____
Equality	Justice	Self-discipline	_____

When thinking about your two core values, think about those values which define who you are in all situations in your lives and fuel your behavior and choices whether it be at home, church, work, or your civic life. Questions to consider as you narrow your values down to two are: Does this define me at the essence of who I am? Is this who I am at my best? Is this a filter that I can use to make hard decisions?⁸

Values Behavior

Living into our values takes intentionality. How many of us have gone through community core value exercises in our congregations and, after several meetings of deliberation, agree on three or four only to have them printed in our bulletins, posted on our web sites, made into a vision statement, and not actually lived into them much at all? For example, we may all agree that hospitality is a core value in our congregations, but what does that actually look like? When it's hard to welcome a needy or difficult person into our midst, what do we actually do? As leaders, we need to individually ask ourselves the same challenging questions so that our values are actually lived, especially in tough moments. If we as leaders can live authentically into our values, there is hope that those we lead can also live into their values individually and corporately.

"The most gracious and courageous gift we can offer the world is our authenticity, our uniqueness, the expression of our true selves."

Sue Monk Kidd

Taking our values from lofty ideals to lived practice requires some honest reflection and observation of our behavior in daily life. If we say reliability is one of our core values and people know they can count on us, what happens when we are too tired to show up?

How do we rationalize when we can no longer carry the load? What does reliability really look like in all our relationships? These are the kind of questions we need to wrestle with as we attempt to live into our values.

It's also helpful to put your value into a behavior statement which can be remembered in the midst of daily interactions. Some examples might be: 'Show up for people who count on you and depend on what you offer.' 'Choose courage over comfort.' 'Give voice to your truth instead of being silent.' 'Look for God in every situation and person.'

Brené Brown offers three questions which may help move your values into concrete behaviors:⁹

1. What are three behaviors that support your value?
2. What are three slippery behaviors that are outside your value?
3. What's an example of a time when you were fully living into this value?

⁸ Brown, Brené, *Dare to Lead*, p. 190.

⁹ Brown, p. 193.



Empathy and Self-Compassion

Being authentic is challenging because we are constantly confronted by the voices of shame, never enough, comparison, doubts, and fears. Other people's expectations, assumptions, and armored behavior like blaming, sabotage, or stereotyping also add to the challenges of living into our values and being authentic as leaders. As Ed Friedman reminds us, in a chronically anxious culture such as ours, people really don't want authentic leadership and to be challenged to take responsibility for their own behavior and lives. So, when we show up differentiated and living authentically into our values, the voices internally and externally will attempt to shout us down.

As Christians, we know we cannot do it alone. We are not wired for individualism; we are wired to be in community. We need to be connected and supported. We need to pray and be connected to God and we also need that love incarnated for us in a few people who can support us living into who we truly are. We need people who can empathize with us. Brené Brown says that "support looks like love, encouragement, straight talk, boundary setting, and the occasional 'No – I don't support this, and here's why.'"¹⁰

We also need to love ourselves in self-compassion. Self-compassion involves having compassion for yourself when you are having a difficult time, fail, or notice something you don't like about yourself. Instead of ignoring the pain, ask: "How can I comfort or care for myself in this moment?" Instead of mercilessly judging and criticizing yourself, have compassion and understanding for yourself. Most of all, accept the fact that you are human – which is more than okay. Jesus CHOSE to be human!! So, what does self-compassion look like for you? What are the warning signs that let us know we need some compassion and care?

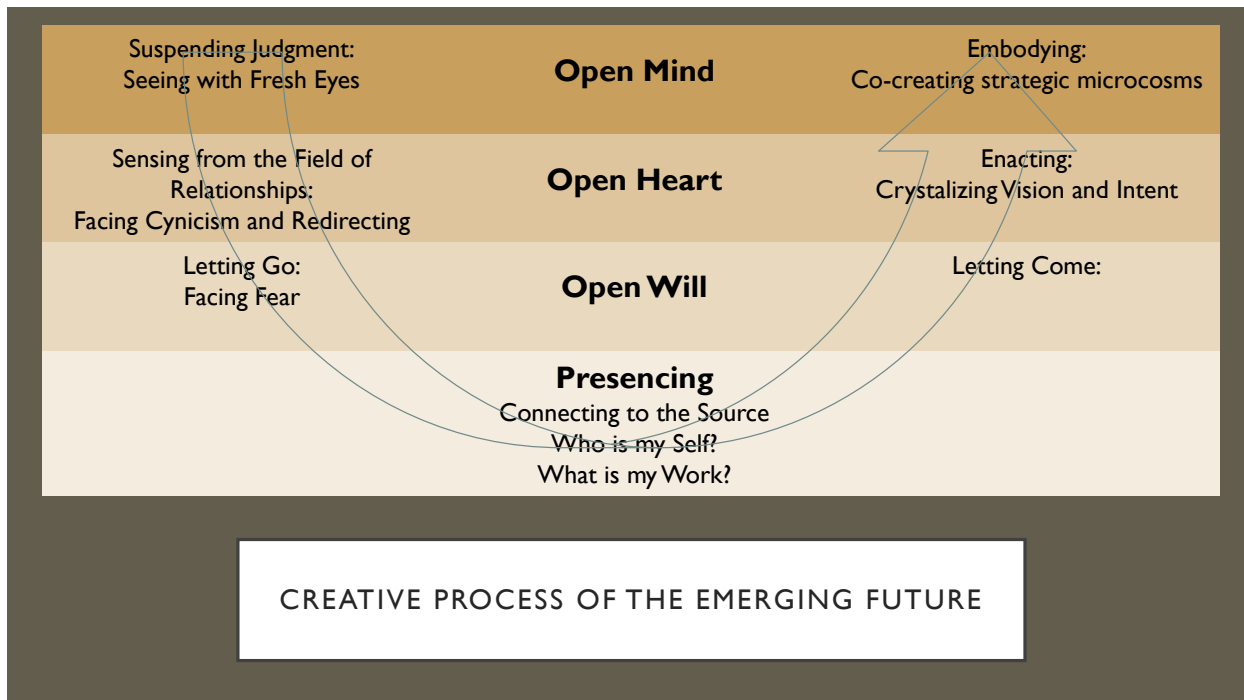
Authenticity: My Self and My Work/Vocation

We have just spent time reflecting on our core values, those pieces of ourselves which make me – me and you – you, our True Selves. Opening our minds to see ourselves and our communities as honestly as possible is a critical first step to be the person of faith we long to be. Downloading 'the way we have always done it' is not enough if our goal is to thrive into the future. We open our minds to see who we really are, who our community really is. We observe our behavior to discover the gaps between what we value and where we put our time and energy. We open our hearts so that we might let go of unhelpful, even destructive biases about the people around us. We need to let go of cynicism about those people and be open to hearing their perspectives, their stories, and their ideas. The final step is letting go of the fear that keeps us stuck in death-dealing patterns, unaware and afraid of finding the path to becoming who God is creating us to be.

Otto Scharmer calls this journey *Theory U*.

¹⁰ Brown, p. 196.





Three Gestures

Scharmer's image of the U, starting on the left side, going deep to the bottom of the U and coming up on the right side, transformed and ready to imagine new ways of engaging the world around us, is the basis of his work entitled, *Theory U*. The ever-deepening journey down the left side of the U is defined by three gestures: **suspension**, **redirection**, and **letting go**. For those of you who are somewhat versed in contemplative prayer, these gestures are part of this spiritual practice.

- **Suspension** has to do with suspending habitual patterns – ways of thinking, prejudices, past responses, jumping to conclusions – so that we can look at the data before us with fresh eyes. It's opening ourselves in mind, heart, and will to God's way of being, seeing, understanding, interpreting. God's ways are not our ways, and we need to suspend our ways in order to truly see and receive God's ways.
- **Redirection** or expanded awareness is about turning our attention from my viewpoint to the viewpoint of others, including God. Sensing the connectedness of all people and all parts of the community redirects our interpretation of what is really going on. It involves becoming vulnerable and avoiding emotional distancing. Mindfulness is one tool we can use to get a broader perspective. Hovering above the situation to see what we cannot see when we remain locked in our current location. Climbing up in the balcony widens our view and may show us the lonely folks sitting alone in that very back pew. Centering prayer and *lectio divina* are spiritual practices that allow our minds and hearts to expand beyond our perspective. Redirection allows us to see how we have contributed to the system we have created, or the problem we

are trying to address. This gesture invites us to consider the part we play in maintaining the status quo.

- **Letting go** has to do with letting go of old identities and intentions and allowing something new to emerge. We let go of our fear so that we can lean into trusting God. Letting go is “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Letting go is entering that deep place of stillness where God’s new life begins to emerge.

Three Capacities

Scharmer points to three capacities needed for this journey:

- **Open mind** – able to look objectively at facts and data with fresh eyes, suspending our habitual judgement. Adaptive leadership talks about the importance of the cycle of observe, interpret, act. Our capacity to observe the reality in front of us, not assuming what we think is in front of us, will determine our ability to make thoughtful decisions.
- **Open heart** – able to connect, be vulnerable, empathize, and tune into different perspectives, contexts, and cultures. God is the creator of all that is, and yet the human perspective keeps us focused on our own family, our own people. In order for all of creation to thrive, we need to open our hearts wider than me and mine.
- **Open will** or spiritual awareness – able to access our authentic Self and the person God is creating us to be. With an open will we let go of not just our own perspective, but of the hoped-for outcome as well. With an open will we want to be open to the future as it emerges. We want to remain open to the communities surrounding us and to how God is calling us as agents of change in the world.

Mastering the Voices

Being an authentic leader requires diligent interior work in facing and “mastering” three enemies: The Voice of Judgment, The Voice of Cynicism, and the Voice of Fear.

- **The Voice of Judgment** shuts down the open mind. We jump to conclusions too quickly. We disregard the data and facts which do not fit our preconceived ideas, world view, or perspectives. We resort to blaming, excuses, rationalizations, tried and true practices, and past experience instead of facing the truth before us. We are trapped in epistemic closure – not believing data which is pointing in a different or new direction. Practicing the gesture of suspension helps us quiet the voice of judgement.
- **The Voice of Cynicism** shuts down the open heart. It includes all types of emotional acts of distancing: withdrawal, cut off, scarcity, blaming, comparison, shame, empathy misses, and silent dismissal. Practicing the gesture of redirecting ourselves to connect to ourselves, to others, and to God is the antidote to this voice of cynicism.

- **The Voice of Fear** shuts down the open will. Fear prevents us from letting go of control, expectations, success, old patterns, identities, intentions, and ways of being. In order for something new to emerge, the old has to pass away. In order for us to live authentically into our True Self, the false self must die. Letting go is painful. Our fear of pain and loss, not knowing what is on the other side, is our journey of faith. It is the Pascal Mystery of death and resurrection. We are called to participate in this baptismal journey of death and resurrection in, with, and through Jesus.

The work for us as leaders is the hard, internal work of reflecting on what these voices sound like in our daily lives and work. Take some time to reflect and ponder these questions: How has my voice of judgment blocked opportunities? How have I been stuck in cynicism and not been open to perspectives of the people surrounding me? When has my voice of fear kept me from living into my True Self?

Self and Work/Vocation

The word vocation comes from the Latin word *vocacio*, a call or calling. Having begun to grasp our True Selves in the core value work, the next question is whether or not these values align with who God is creating us to be. As a Christian, the question of our calling or purpose or vocation must be grounded in love; deep love for the people around you and for the neighbor across town and around the world. Parker Palmer recommends doing what you love, and love what you do. Yet this ideal is not possible for everyone. Not everyone has the privilege of finding employment that feeds the soul. We all do, however, have the responsibility to live into the truth of who we are. Being a part of community of faith might be the place where we find meaning beyond our work life. Being true to who we are in work environments that may not be fulfilling may be the best we can do. If our job is street cleaning or telemarketing, we can make sure that we are offering our best and truest selves to these professions. Are we showing up in loving and life-giving ways? Can we find ways to be creative? Can I find ways to approach my work that makes me a better person? Does it make the world a better place? Does it align with what I believe God is calling me to be and do?

Fostering Authenticity

Franciscan priest Richard Rohr has said: “How you do anything is how you do everything.” If we want to understand what we value, the identity from which our actions emerge, all we have to do is look at one slice of our lives. As leaders, observing ourselves will help us understand the twilight zone of our hearts. The good news is that if we can change one area, it will flow into other areas of our lives as well. How you do anything is how you do everything.

In today’s church, we find ourselves in uncharted territory looking to God’s emerging future. Realizing that we have a lot to learn, we need to let go of ways of being that have worked in the past, and we have to navigate competing values. In order to accomplish our true purpose, proclaiming and

embodying the unconditional love of God, we probably need to adapt. Mobilizing people for this work takes courage and authenticity on the part of the leader.

As we lead congregations, observing how the community does anything – deciding how we gather during a pandemic, attending to the lonely during difficult times, our style of worship, the facilitation of council meetings – is how we do everything. Current core values are revealed in all parts of the ministry. Changing how one thing is done begins to change culture and values in all other areas.

For a congregation to become more authentic in its mission and purpose, it will need to journey down the U to discover its true identity and purpose. Taking congregations down the left side of the U means opening minds to the fact that how we do anything is how we do everything. It means facing the voices of judgment, cynicism, and fear. It means cultivating the gestures of suspension, redirection, and letting go in order for a new way of being to emerge – God’s way of being.

References

Brown, Brené, *Dare to Lead*, Random House, 2018.

Heifetz, Ronald, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Harvard Business Press, 2009.

Palmer, Parker, *Let Your Life Speak – Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Scharmer, Otto, *Theory U*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009.



Worksheet: Defining Value Behaviors

From *Dare to Lead* by Brené Brown (p. 193)

Core Value # 1 _____

1. What are three behaviors that support your value?
2. What are three slippery behaviors that are outside your value?
3. What's an example of a time when you were fully living into this value?

Core Value # 2 _____

1. What are three values that support your value?
2. What are three slippery behaviors that are outside your value?
3. What's an example of a time when you were fully living into this value?



Worksheet: Self-Evaluation on Adaptive Capacity

Reflect on the following list of adaptive components:

When was the last time I demonstrated this capacity?

What do I need to learn to increase this capacity?

- Calmly face the unknown
- Refuse quick fixes
- Engage others in the learning and transformation necessary to take on the challenge that is before them
- Seek new perspectives
- Ask questions that reveal competing values and gaps in values and actions
- Raise up the deeper issues at work in a community
- Explore and confront resistance and sabotage
- Learn and change without sacrificing personal and organizational fidelity
- Help the community of faith make hard, often painful decisions
- Act politically and stay connected relationally
- Effectively fulfill their mission in a changing context

Worksheet: Empathy and Self-Compassion Reflection Questions

From *Dare to Lead* by Brené Brown (pp. 195-196)

1. Who is someone who knows your values and supports your efforts to live into them?
2. What does support from this person look like?
3. What can you do as an act of self-compassion to support yourself in the hard work of living into your values?
4. What are the early warning indicators or signs that you're living outside your values?
5. What does it feel like when you're living into your values?
6. How does living into your two key values shape the way you give and receive feedback?

