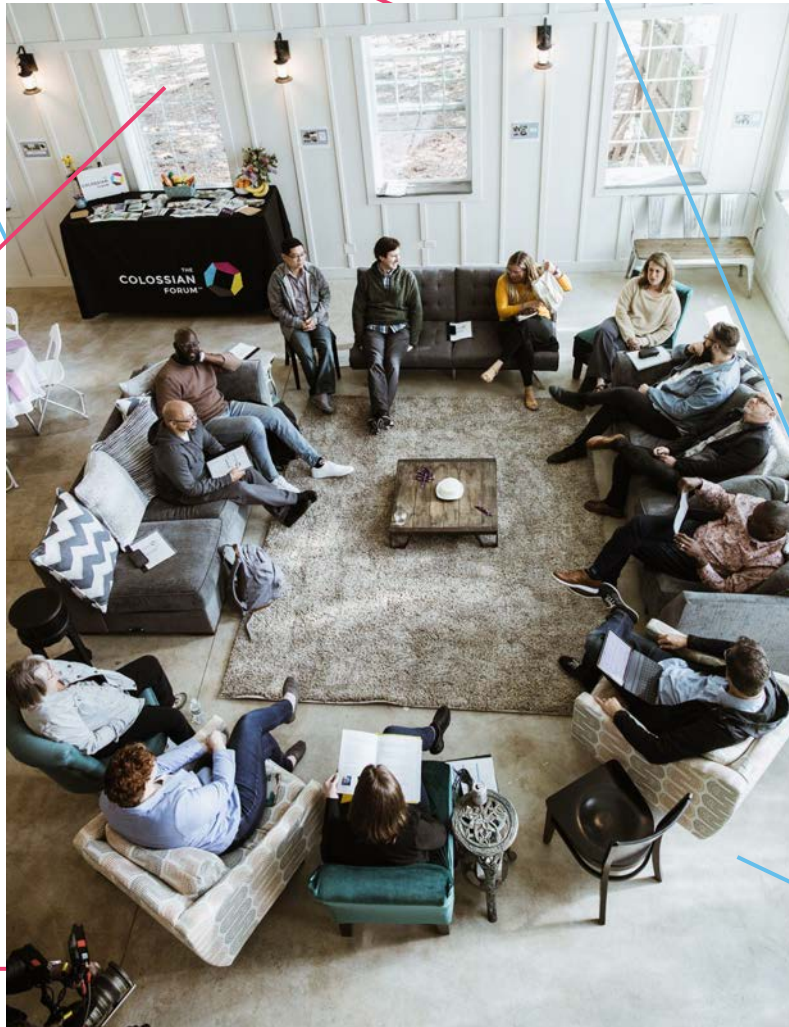


Take the Leap Guide

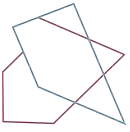


LEAP OF FAITH

THE
**COLOSSIAN
FORUM™**



colossianforum.org



Ready to Take the Leap?

The world seems to be getting meaner. People are concerned. Scared. Tired of it. Hopeless.

When people see an example of genuine love — like the story in Leap of Faith — they want to know *how*. I've been working on answering that question for more than a decade, and I can tell you this: it's a hard and long process, but it's worth it.

This guide is for ordinary people like you.

Each day when you pick up this guide, you'll be retracing some of the same steps that the pastors took in the retreats in the film. You'll pray the same prayers, ask the same questions, and even learn some behind-the-scenes stories.

Like the pastors, you'll follow the movements in the the theology of reconciliation: **hope, lament, listening, and action.** This is a deeply spiritual and transformative process and offers a pathway not only for personal healing but also for communal restoration.

We pray that this guide will be one piece that can help us make our way through, together. From rupture to repair. From against to with. From alone to together.



Michael Gulker
President of
The Colossian
Forum



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How to use this guide

For personal reflection

Go through the prompts on your own. Jot down your thoughts in a journal or notebook.

Expect to spend 20–30 minutes for each day.

For group discussion

Set the context by reading intros and passages aloud to the group.

Answer reflection questions individually and discussion questions as a group.

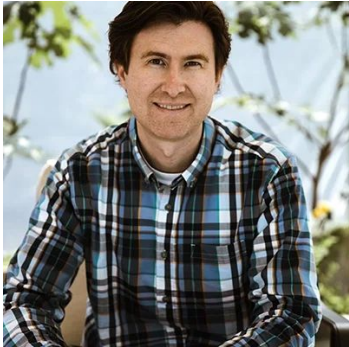
Plan for 35–45 minutes for each discussion.

Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Mark 12:30-31

Meet the Pastors

Meet the Grand Rapids area pastors who are featured in the film Leap of Faith.



Andrew Vanover
Lead Pastor, Thornapple
Covenant Church



Artie Lindsay
Pastor of Spiritual Formation,
Tabernacle Community Church



Ashlee Eiland
Co-Lead Pastor, Mars Hill
Bible Church



Ben Kampmeier
At filming, Campus Pastor,
City Harbor Church



Chase Stancle
Lead Pastor, Unison
Christian Church



Cornelius Ting
Pastor, Grand Rapids
Chinese Christian Church



Dr. James Stokes
Senior Pastor, New Life
Tabernacle Church of God



Joan VanDessel
Associate Pastor and Director
of Community Outreach and
Mission, Grand Rapids First
United Methodist Church



Kim DeLong
At filming, Pastor, Wyoming
Park United Methodist Church



Molly Bosscher
Rector, St. Andrew's
Episcopal Church



Tierra Marshall
Pastor of Formation and
Strategic Leadership,
Fellowship Reformed Church



Troy Hatfield
Co-Lead Pastor, Mars Hill
Bible Church

Take the leap in your **home.**

Some of the most daunting leaps of faith that we are called to take are within our own homes. Leap of Faith can open conversations in your home about vulnerability, expectations, and truth. This guide is flexible — you can use it as a launching place for discussions with your family, friends, or even as a reflective personal practice.



Love and Vulnerability

In the film, Michael shares his longing for the Church to be a place where his family, and all people, are truly loved.

Love that is vulnerable is not easy — it can feel exposing and even dangerous — but Michael reminds us that it's worth it. His daily practices of prayer, connection, and trust-building reflect how loving God shapes not only his faith but also his relationships.

Today, let's consider where we long for deeper connection and how vulnerability might help us nurture love and hope in our lives.

Approach this time with HOPE

What are you waiting for?

What will you do while you wait?

You may feel:

Expectant
Trusting
Goodness
Uncertainty
Eagerness

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with hope
Exhale God, bring hope to our world

Connect with the Film

Michael is the leader of The Colossian Forum and the host of the pastor retreats. But during the film, we discover that Michael has his own hopes for the church, rooted in his longings for his family.

“I want there to be a pastor that gets down on their hands and knees and puts their arms around my son and says ‘I love you, and Jesus loves you,’ and for it to be true. And that’s who a lot of these twelve pastors are. The world needs more of those people, and I want to support them because my kids need people to put their arms around them and tell them they’re loved. I need people to put their arms around me and tell me I’m loved.” — Michael



Behind the scenes: Michael shares how he stays vulnerable with God and those he loves.

Vulnerability can make me feel too open, like it's just too much – dangerous, even. But it's worth it. I invest time in routines that bring me into intimacy with God, with my wife, with friends, and with a trusted professional.

- *Every morning I pray. This is intimacy with God and with my own soul.*
- *Every morning I walk with my wife Jodie and our dog Leo. I share what's happening in my soul, and I listen to hers.*
- *Along with the pastors, the project leadership team “retold our stories in the light of love” at a retreat. We’ve continued to gather regularly, seeking God together and sharing our pains and joys.*
- *I talk with a therapist who I trust.*

*This is a prayer of intention that I'd like to share:
I am not in control.
I am not in a hurry.
I walk in faith, hope, and love.
I greet everyone with peace.
I bring back only what God gives me.
Amen.*

Reflect

How do you respond to seeing a Christian leader reveal his hopes for his family with such tender emotion?

Can you remember a time when someone put their arms around you and let you know you were loved? What difference did it make in your life?

Who really knows you, and what your home life is all about?

What might you want others to know about your life at home?
What might be difficult for other people to know?

What would feel too vulnerable for others to know about your home?

Discuss

What does Michael want for his family? What might he fear?
How do his hopes for his children make him vulnerable?

Michael has devoted his life to the church and yet he doesn't feel he can trust it not to hurt his own children. Does this connect with your story? What makes a community trustworthy?

What is your household like? Who lives there? What are your hopes for your home?

Is your home life connected with a faith community? What do you hope for in that connection? If not, what would you hope for?

Action

Who do you feel drawn to putting your arms around (literally or metaphorically) and telling them they are loved? What difference do you hope this makes in their life? What difference would it make in your life?

Who are the people that you love, with the kind of tender love that Michael has for his children? How can you share that love with them today?

Who really knows you, and what your home life is like? What step can you take to deepen community, or to initiate friendships where you can be known in this way?

Is there a topic at home that you haven't been willing to be vulnerable about? Where might you look for an opening where you could take a step toward a conversation?



Blessing

To close, pray this prayer by Thomas Merton. This prayer was one of the core prayers that the pastors prayed together during the filming of Leap of Faith.

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end,
nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Longing for Connection

A deep ache comes when connections with loved ones feel strained or distant.

Consider your own longings for connection, moments where communication may have missed the mark, and how those experiences shape your relationships.

This session offers a space for lament, but also for hope, as you examine the ways in which love, even when unnoticed, can leave a lasting impact.

Approach this time with LAMENT

What has gone wrong?

Who is hurting?

You may feel:

Anguish
Anger
Loneliness
Pain
Sadness
Isolation

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, hear my longing
Exhale God, hear all the longing in the world

Connect with the Film

Consider the scene with Michael and his son Sam.

Michael begins, "You do have a choice,"

"I don't have a choice," Sam responds.

"You'd give up your privilege," Michael reminds him.

"You give ultimatums, and that is not what God would want," Sam says.

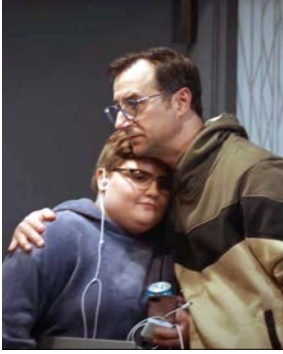
"God gave the ten commandments? The ten 'suggestions'?" Michael says.

Sam responds, "They literally are."

Later, Sam asks Michael, "What should, what is there for others to know about you?"

Michael responds, "Most people don't meet me with my family. They meet me apart from my family. I want them to know I do my work for and inspired by my family. Did you know that?"

"Not really," says Sam



Behind the scenes: More from Michael on what it was like to share so much emotion, and so much of his family on film.

Michael: “It was, quite frankly, terrifying. It was a source of endless stress and conversation between me, my wife Jodie, and the kids. Should we be doing this? Will this hurt the kids? How much of our story should we share and why? What will Nicholas (film director) do with the footage? Is this really worth it?

We just didn’t know.

At the end of the day, our kids were the ones who convinced us. They said, if sharing our stories will help other kids know they are loved, then we should do it, even if it means we will get teased.”

Tell us more about the scene where you are talking with Sam at the restaurant. It tugs at a parent’s heart to see vulnerability and love poured out for a child who doesn’t fully get it. What was it like to offer your gift and have it fall flat?

Michael: “Honestly, normal. We don’t make those offers with the expectation of (immediate) return, but in hopes that somehow the love we share will get lodged in the soul or psyche of our loved one so that it is available in their time of need.

I think of it like this scene in *The Lord of the Rings* where Frodo receives a gift of light from a friend. He doesn’t know what to do with it at the time, but in his darkest moment, he pulls it out and it helps to rescue him from an evil giant spider.

What evil will my kids face? I don’t know, but I want them to know they are loved when they face it.”

Reflect

When did you miss the meaning of something important a loved one was trying to tell you?

When did you long for a connection with a family member? Why was it so hard to have the connection you desired?

How did you experience the scene with Michael and Sam? Did you see Michael's interactions with Sam as encouraging, disappointing, sad, typical, or something else? What does this tell you about your hopes for your own relationships?

Discuss

What are one or two words that describe this interaction between Michael and Sam?

What might this interaction say about Sam? What might it say about Michael?

Sam didn't know how important he was in his father's work and life. Is there anything you just didn't know about your parents, or your family, that you wish you had known sooner?

What differences do you see between Michael and Sam? When has difference produced something good, even if unexpected?



Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

What is a hope you have for one of your loved ones?
How can you practice hope in that relationship in some small way today?

What is a difference you'd like to see in an important relationship?
What might you do to help make it happen?

Name a lament about a situation in your home. What do you want to do with it?
You could release it, share it, offer it in prayer, or something else.

Blessing

From a prayer written by Molly

God,
Look with compassion on the whole human family;
take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts;
break down the walls that separate us;
unite us in bonds of love.
Amen.



Resource

Read the Theory of Change from The Colossian Forum to learn about the theological truths behind Christian Conflict Transformation.

Paying Attention at Home

Listening plays a powerful role in the formation of a family.

By exploring Michael and Jodie’s journey with their child Pax, you’ll reflect on the importance of embracing the uniqueness of loved ones and the challenges that arise when life doesn’t fit neatly into expected boxes.

Through guided reflection and discussion, you’ll learn how listening with intention can deepen your relationships at home, foster greater understanding, and invite you into a journey of growth and connection in your family life.

Approach this time with LISTENING

Who are you listening to?

Who have you ignored or simply not noticed?

You may feel:

Focused
Reflective
Nostalgic
Empathetic
Curious

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale Lord, help me listen

Exhale Lord, bring a listening friend to every person in the world

Connect with the Film

Michael and his wife Jodie are on a journey of understanding with Pax, who doesn’t fit boxes.

“She was struggling in her school system. Pax is a unique kid, she doesn’t really fit any categories very neatly, and gender’s no different. And so it’s been a journey of exploration and growth and understanding of what it means to be nonbinary, not only for Pax but for me and Jodie, too.” — Michael



Photo by Pax

Behind the scenes: Getting to know Pax

After much discussion with the Gulker family, Pax agreed to be part of the Leap of Faith film and even contributed photography and fun facts for this guide.

Fun Facts about Pax:

- My favorite color is black.
- I love Takis.
- I love almost anything art related.
- I like wandering around in the woods near my house and finding cool or odd things.
- I'm 16 and a junior in high school but I take college classes and go to a tech school to learn about cybersecurity.

Additional reflection from Michael about parenting and uncertainty:

Some of the most daunting leaps of faith that we are called to take are within our own homes. In the film, I am uncertain both at work and also at home.

Here is part of my morning prayer that I pray each day to help anchor me in what I do know to be certain.

O God, I want to begin this day you have given to me in worship and dependence on you.

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord."

— Zechariah 2:14

Holy Spirit

I yield to You my hurried schedule
my distracted heart
and my quiet worries.

I pray for an unhurried intimacy with the Father
through Jesus Christ, the Son, today.

Amen.

Reflect

How do people in your family respond when life presents an unexpected journey?

Did you ever tell someone who you are, and they just wouldn't listen?

Did someone ever tell you who they were, and you couldn't listen?

What boxes are you expected to fit into, and you just don't? How has this impacted you?

In your home, who really listens to you?

Discuss

Michael and Jodie pay close attention to Pax's life as it unfolds.

In your family, who are you listening to in a special way? Why?

If you could talk with Pax or Michael,, what questions would you ask?

What stories would you want to hear?

As you listen to Michael tell his story, what longings does Michael seem to have?

How does this connect with your own longings?

What journey of exploration and growth are you on, in your family?



Photo by Pax

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

As you watch Michael interact with his family, what do you notice that you'd like to incorporate into your own family life?

How can you "listen" to the organizations that structure the daily lives of our loved ones? (Consider schools, work, government, church, athletics, elder care, community groups, and more.) What is one thing you can do to strengthen the connections between organizations and families?

Blessing

Lord,

Our wounds and worries often undermine our courage.

Give us the courage to listen,
Open us to connection and understanding,
To lean in, and learn,
to ask, to consider,
to sit awhile with discomfort.

Give us the courage to speak up,
Form us to demonstrate both conviction and compassion.
To lean in, and learn,
to speak, to consider,
to sit awhile with discomfort.

We are in search of You,
and yearn for your Kingdom.
May your Presence fill us,
And your Spirit lead us,
to know and be known by one another.

Amen.

Taking a Stand

It takes courage to act on your convictions. That can be scary, but courage can lead to freedom.

As you reflect on Michael's leap of faith and the spaces created by The Colossian Forum to move from fear to hope, you'll explore how stepping up in moments of challenge can lead to personal and communal transformation.

Approach this time with ACTION

What is yours to do?

How might your courage inspire change?

You may feel:

Significant
Inspired
Changed
Transformed
Connected

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with courage
Exhale God, bring courage to the world

Connect with the Film

Michael shares his personal beliefs about gay marriage in the film. He anticipated a negative response from some partners, and then he says this:

“I did state my position on gay marriage and they did pull out. And that was awful. But when the worst happened, the people who know and love me, including the pastors on the project, hardly batted an eye. And I felt free.” — Michael

SESSION 4 | ACTING IN YOUR HOME



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBK-A25WD7A>

Behind the scenes: The beginning chapter of The Colossian Forum

When Michael takes his own leap of faith, he is practicing what he preaches, seeking reconciliation for his own divided heart. The Colossian Forum has grown and changed over the years as Michael has tried to follow the Holy Spirit's leading. Check out this video of Michael from 2012 when The Colossian Forum was just beginning its work and hear how Michael articulates the importance of action.

Reflect

Recall a time when you took a stand. What was the consequence?

Michael says he felt free. Did you?

Is there something you need to say in order to be free? Who would you say it to? How would you say it so that they can hear it and stay connected?

Discuss

Michael talked about how important it is to be known and loved by friends, including the pastors in this project. Have you ever been a friend to someone taking a leap of faith? Have you ever needed friends when you took risks of your own?

What are the costs to the church when leaders, including pastors, feel pressure to sacrifice their own sense of integrity for the sake of holding an institution together?

Share about a time when you took a stand or spoke up. How did you know it was time? What made it easy or hard to do?

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

Is there someone in your life who is taking a risk to say something important?
How can you support them?

Do you sense an invitation to step up, speak up, take a risk, or take a stand?
What do you need to move forward?

Blessing

During a time of worship, the pastors sang this together.

Gather Us In

Here in this place new light is streaming
Now is the darkness vanished away
See in this space our fears and our dreamings
Brought here to you in the light of this day
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken
Gather us in, the blind and the lame
Call to us now and we shall awaken
We shall arise at the sound of our name
We are the young, our lives are a mystery
We are the old who yearn for your face
We have been sung throughout all of history
Called to be light to the whole human race
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty
Gather us in, the proud and the strong
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly
Give us the courage to enter the song
Here we will take the wine and the water

Here we will take the bread of new birth
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters
Call us anew to be salt for the earth
Give us to drink the wine of compassion
Give us to eat the bread that is you
Nourish us well and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true
Not in the dark of buildings confining
Not in some heaven light years away
But here in this place the new light is shining
Now is the kingdom, now is the day
Gather us in and hold us forever
Gather us in and make us your own
Gather us in, all peoples together
Fire of love in our flesh and our bones
Fire of love in our flesh and our bones

Marty Haugen



Resource

Learn more about the mission and history of The Colossian Forum

Take the leap in your **neighborhood.**

We often move through the world with blinders on, only seeing what we want to see. In order to experience love more fully we need to truly see the people around us. These next pages will guide you through questions, meditations, and insights to love your neighbors and your city.

Conviction and Relationship

Shared deeply held beliefs can strengthen our relationships with the people we know in our neighborhoods. But when we hold different beliefs, our relationships can be challenged to the point of rupture. Hope is one of the first steps in repairing what has been broken. Hope asks us to hold the possibility of healing and growth even when convictions clash.

By reflecting on the film, real-life situations, and engaging with guided questions, you can develop a deeper understanding of how to cultivate hope and navigate difficult conversations with empathy and openness.

You will also learn spiritual practices to help sustain hope and foster reconciliation amidst division in your neighborhood.

Approach this time with HOPE

What are you waiting for?

What will you do while you wait?

You may feel

Expectant
Trusting
Goodness
Energized

Opening Our Hearts

To get started, try this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with awareness
Exhale God, bring awareness to our world

Connect with the Film

Read this quote from the film from James. It's after the "line" exercise. He's processing that his beliefs are hurtful to Joan.

"The person I was standing right next to, Joan, went to yes. We broke into groups of three and she said, 'it's kind of hurting to know that there are people in this room who say "no" to what I believe and what I am involved in.' That kind of stung me for a moment to know that my biblical conviction, what I believe the Word of God to be true and what I've been taught now hurts someone's feelings. It's not intentional, but they're deeply hurt by what I stand on. That's kind of hard to swallow for me." — James



Behind the scenes: How did the “line” exercise come to be?

It took time for the pastors to start sharing their views. They had become friends, and knew that if they shared even more, deep differences would become more evident.



No one becomes a pastor because they want to hurt people, but beliefs about women in ministry, LGBTQ inclusion, politics, abortion, and more, do cause hurt.

During a conversation about politics that wasn't in the film, Ben insisted that he couldn't pick one side or the other, and other pastors said the same. Someone said, "It's not as simple as just red and blue. If we start taking sides on all the issues, we'd be dancing back and forth!"

So we decided to lean into the “dance” theme with glitter and streamers.

With questions about a wide range of topics, pastors were invited to step forward for “yes” and backward for “no,” with the middle reserved as a neutral space. They saw one another's views in a hurry! Even with everything out on the table, the pastors had hope that they could move forward in community together.

Reflect

What beliefs do you hold that are important to you, yet you know they are hurtful to others?

Do you have any convictions that you are not open to modifying? What are they? Where did they come from?

Recall a close relationship in which a deeply held belief caused hurt to one or both of you. What makes continuing the relationship possible?

Remember a solid relationship in which you experienced rupture and repair. What hope and guidance does this give you for differences that come up in other relationships?

Discuss

What does James stand to gain by this confession? What does he stand to lose?

If you could ask a question of Joan, what would it be? Do you have any advice for her?

Share about a time when your convictions or positions bumped up against real-life people who you love.

What are some things to remember to do, and not do, when sharing a belief that might be divisive or controversial?

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

How can we practice hope when people seem so entrenched in their positions? Consider ways we can search for and build on common ground.

In which relationships in your life do you need to take a leap of faith? What gives you hope that it will be worth it?

Blessing

To end your time, pray this prayer written by Ashlee:

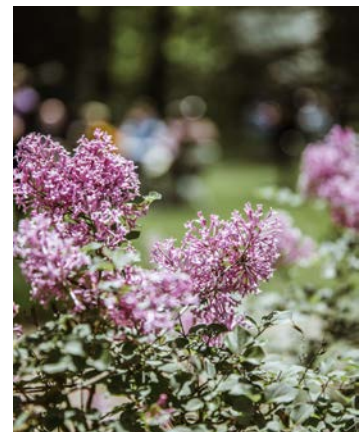
O God,
for another day,
for another morning,
for another hour,
for another minute,
for another chance to live and serve You,
I am truly grateful.
Amen.

5 Small Ways to Practice Courage



Resource

The Colossian Forum shares content almost daily on Instagram @colossianforum. You'll find tips that help you on this journey of hope.



Reflecting through Longing

Lament and longing guide us toward hope and healing. Lament allows us to acknowledge pain and scarcity, while pushing us to seek and create goodness in the world.

Through reflection, discussion, and spiritual practices, you'll explore how lament can reveal what you most yearn for, and how those longings can inspire actions that foster connection, abundance, and goodness in relationships and communities.

Approach this time with LAMENT

What has gone wrong?

Who is hurting?

You may feel

Suffering
Injustice
Loneliness
Pain
Sadness
Scarcity
Isolation

Opening Our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with awareness

Exhale God, bring goodness to our world

Connect with the Film

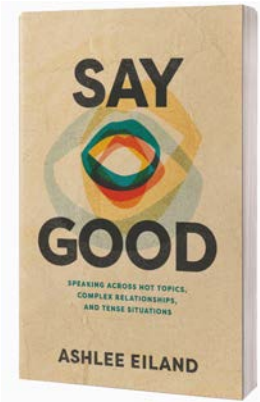
The pastors in the film do an excellent job of modeling lament and longing. Read these quotes from Joan and Ashlee.

“What does the world look like if we all walk away from each other? What does it look like for resources? To me it looks like scarcity and isolation.” — Joan

“I think a lot of people out there would say the world out there is getting worse. We are literally being taught to hate each other. If there's something that we can point to to say yea, but there's humanity, yea there's worth, there's goodness that's bigger than what I've been taught to despise about you. We have to want that. We have to want the potential of what's possible. We can see goodness, if we can want it, if we can want the potential of what's possible.” — Ashlee



Behind the scenes: Ashlee is working on a book



During the filming of Leap of Faith, Ashlee finished writing a book called *Say Good: Speaking Across Hot Topics, Complex Relationships and Tense Situations*.

Here's an excerpt from the introduction that is an example of lament: "In a world where the headlines seem to make bad news sound tame and trivial, to say good words may seem like too high a bar. But the bar is set just so because the stakes are high — as is the potential for personal humiliation, sabotage, or relational damage."

Reflect

In a world that seems to be more anxious what do you long for?
What goodness do you hope to see?

What have you been taught that you now lament?
What damage did it do?

Discuss

Think of a time when people did walk away from each other, like Joan says. What did it look like? What were the effects?

What effects do our political culture and media environment have on loving our neighbors?

When you look at America today, what most stands out to you as lamentable? What goodness do you see? What possibilities do you see?

What do you want for your community? What do your longings reveal about what you value?

Action

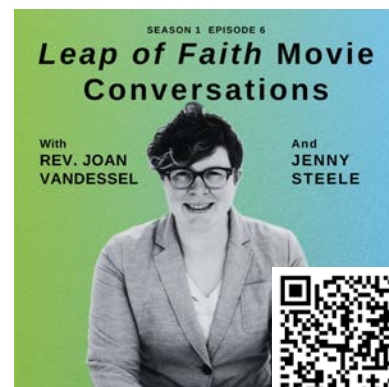
Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

Consider journaling about these questions: What would happen if we all walked away from the people we disagreed with? What would it look like if we committed to keep walking with those we disagreed with?

Ashlee encourages us to see goodness and to want it. What goodness and possibility do you want in the world? Make a list.

Look at your list of possibilities for goodness. Write one action step next to each item that you could take to move toward it.

Joan warns about scarcity and isolation. What resources – time, money, energy, networks – can you offer that impacts one of the problems you lament?



Resource

Joan (and all of the pastors) recorded podcasts for you. Hear Joan's episode by scanning the QR code, or search for The Practicing Hope podcast.

Blessing



The poem "Wild Geese" by Mary Oliver became important to the pastors. Search for the poem online, or use the QR code below to watch a video of Mary reading the poem.



Photo by Tanner Smith of The Colossian Forum at one of the pastor retreats

What's Your Neighborhood Saying?

Imagine what could happen if you listened more deeply to your neighborhood, recognized overlooked voices, and discovered new ways to engage with and contribute to the community around you.

By exploring neighborhoods that are different from each other and reflecting on your own, you'll uncover the stories, struggles, and strengths of the places you inhabit.

Approach this time with LISTENING

Who are you listening to?

Who have you ignored or simply not noticed?

You may feel:

Attentive
Awareness
Nostalgic
Curious
Openness
Receptivity

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with vision
Exhale God, bring vision to our world

Connect with the Film

The film features several short scenes of people in Grand Rapids going about life in the city. Artie and Troy drive through different sections of Grand Rapids.

Recall the observations that the pastors make about their city, and the scenes that you remember.



Behind the scenes: Artie has positive things to say about Grand Rapids. Like all places, it's complex with positives and negatives.

"I have lived in Grand Rapids since August 1995 (almost 30 years now!) One of my favorite things about Grand Rapids is its size. Grand Rapids is a perfect blend of a hometown atmosphere with the amenities of a larger city. It's small enough to foster a close-knit community, yet large enough to offer the cultural, dining, and entertainment experiences you'd expect in a bigger city." — Artie

Reflect

How would you describe the place where you live? What are some important features of your community?

With respect to the place where you live, what are you proud of? What do you wish were different?

How do you move around your local context? Do you drive, walk, bike, take the bus, or something else? How does that impact what you see and hear?

Discuss

Artie and Troy portray Grand Rapids in stark terms. We can sometimes see our own towns and cities in this way. What is complex or nuanced about your city?

What prevents us from knowing more about our local contexts? How might we be missing opportunities to love our neighbors? Why does it matter?

What are the issues most commonly discussed in your neighborhood? What does that say about the people who live there? What are you hearing, and what might you be missing? How could you find out what else is going on?

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

What people, groups, or issues in your neighborhood haven't been heard?

What is one step you and your neighbors can take to begin to listen?

What are your "go-to" ways of learning about your city, state, and country?

What is something you can do to expand or improve the way you listen to what's going on?

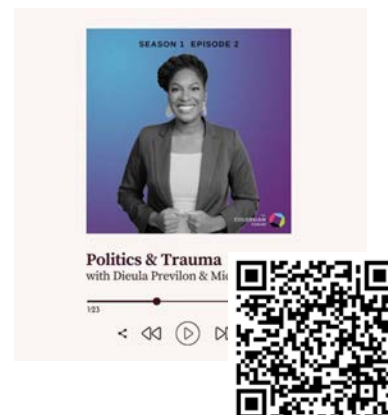
Blessing

Come and Find the Quiet Center

Come and find the quiet center
in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter,
find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter,
be at peace, and simply be.

Silence is a friend who claims us,
cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us,
knows our being, touches base,
making space within our thinking,
lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking,
finding scope for faith begun.

In the Spirit let us travel,
open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel,
celebrate the space we gain:
there's a place for deepest dreaming,
there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming
there is always room to spare!



Resource

The Practicing Hope podcast is a place for honest conversations. We listen to others and learn and grow.

Neighborhood Love in Action

So far, we've been doing a lot of thinking and reflecting. Now we'll move to translate reflection and conversation into meaningful action within your community.

As the pastors reflect on the many important topics they didn't fully address, you'll be invited to consider the issues that matter most in your own neighborhood and how you can take practical steps to address them.

You'll explore the power of engaging with challenging topics and discover ways to embody love and service in your local context, to make a difference in the lives of those around you.

Approach this session with ACTION

What is yours to do?

How might your courage inspire change?

You may experience:

Growth

Healing

Energized

Transformation

Connection

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with life

Exhale God, bring life to our world

Connect with the Film

The pastors list the many topics they didn't dig into.

"There was a whole plethora of issues and topics that needed to be addressed: Immigration, race, gender, class, gun control, abortion, racism, poverty, policing in minority communities, women in ministry, violence." — James

"I don't know why it kept coming back to sexuality, and it did." — Andrew



Behind the scenes: Kim's Retirement



At our first gathering, Pastor Kim said she would be retiring soon, and she hoped this year together could be part of her “last hurrah.” Kim retired around the end of the year that the pastors spent together. Contemplating retirement can include rich reflection on what got talked about, what got done, and what didn’t, throughout a pastor’s time of service.

“From the time I began the process toward formal ministry, I have believed that one of the greatest gifts the Church should be able to model and teach is how to communicate through disagreements, with kindness and humility. Historically, the Church has been a terrible witness in resolving conflict. Receiving the invitation from The Colossian Forum to do exactly that was an opportunity to not only practice conflict resolution in the local church, but on a larger scale before I retired.” — Kim

Reflect

How did you feel about the issue of LGBTQ inclusion being so central to the film?

Does it bother you that some topics get talked about so much more than others? Why does it bother you?

Have you ever devoted yourself to an issue, and later regretted the stance or the actions you took? What changed?

Discuss

Andrew pointed out something important about the pastors’ dialogues: “It kept coming back to LGBTQ and sexuality.” What do you make of this issue being such an important theme in the film?

Was there something valuable about how LGBTQ people were treated in the film that we could apply when taking up other issues?

James said, “There was a whole plethora of issues and topics that needed to be addressed.” Which issue stands out to you as most urgent in your neighborhood? Do others tend to see it the same way? Why or why not?

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

There are so many issues and so many ways to get involved.
What is yours to do? What next faithful step can you take right now?

What is an action you took in the past, to benefit your neighborhood?
Is there a way to build on that to do something new today?

Blessing

Franciscan Benediction

May God bless you with a restless discomfort
About easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,
So that you may seek truth boldly and
Love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with enough
foolishness to believe that
you really can make a difference in this
world, so that you are able,
with God's grace, to do what others
claim cannot be done.

Amen.



Resource

One Anothering is a small group discussion guide from The Colossian Forum. Groups have access to videos featuring Ashlee and Tanner.

Take the leap in your **faith community.**

Faith communities can be places of deep healing, restoration, and transformation. But it doesn't always work out that way, does it? The pastors in Leap of Faith express deep longings in for their churches, and you may have those same longings too.

A Better Way Forward

If you are in a faith community, you might desire “more.” The pastors in Leap of Faith certainly want more. Ben expresses longing and hope, and Andrew reflects on whether pastors themselves might be contributing to the struggles within their congregations.

Andrew’s honest introspection reveals the heavy burden of leadership and the systems that often prevent real flourishing in churches.

As you read these reflections and questions, we hope you start to see some possibilities that you might not have seen before.

Approach this time with HOPE

What are you waiting for?

What will you do while you wait?

You may feel:
Expectant
Inspired
Trusting
Goodness
Possibility

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with courage
Exhale God, bring courage to the world

Connect with the Film

Ben longs for more in his role as pastor. And Andrew wonders if pastors are part of the problem. Here are some quotes from the film:

“I want more. It’s like a million things.” — Ben

“This is crazy, but what if we’re the impediment to making change in our communities.” — Andrew



Behind the scenes: A deeper look into Andrew's introspection



In the months after the filming, Andrew kept pondering these conversations. He generously agreed to share this excerpt from his personal writing

January 2023 — Pastors are the Problem

In the past six months I've been part of a cohort of pastors in Grand Rapids. We are working together on something. What I'm concluding is that WE PASTORS are the biggest bottleneck (impediment) to our congregations flourishing like we want them to. It's our schedules. We are over committed. Our priorities aren't clear. We don't feel free to say "that's a poor use of my time" or "we need to stop that." Our institutions/organizations are also on the hook here. It's a system issue. But we have the responsibility to call the question.

I think we pastors get a lot of identity and value from being important, needed, respected, etc. That needs to be surfaced and surrendered. I know leadership in any capacity gets harder every year. Industries have clear measurables of success (profit, market share, growth, etc.) that churches do not. Churches end up tracking attendance, giving, and the comments box which become proxies for church health. A busy pastor looks like they have a healthy church.

Reflect

Ben said, "I want more." What "more" do you want?

How does it feel to see Andrew entertain the notion that pastors could be contributing to the very problems they hope to solve?

What doubts have you had about your faith community or tradition?

Discuss

What drew you to your faith community? Why do you stay? What do you see there that gives you hope? What discourages you?

Could it be true that leaders might be an integral part of the very problems they are trying to solve?

In your faith community, what activities consume people's time and energy? Does this help or hinder what the community is really seeking?

What "more" do you want for your faith community?

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

Ben wants "a million things!" What is one thing that you want from your faith community?

What is a way that you can "be the change" in your faith community, the very change you want to see on a broader level?

Blessing

A prayer written by Cornelius

Keep me grounded in You today, Lord.
Remind me that I am loved and forgiven
and thus I can freely serve You.
Amen.



Resource

WayFinder is a methodology that that The Colossian Forum uses. Wayfinder helps Christians reflect Christ's example, especially in times of conflict. Learn more about this approach.

Loneliness in Leadership

Throughout the film, we're invited into the space where faith leaders — often seen as strong and unshakeable — reveal their struggles with doubt.

We are often afraid to express our doubts and struggles, even with our closest communities. Let's consider the examples portrayed in Leap of Faith where vulnerability creates opportunities for deeper connection and healing.

Approach this time with LAMENT

What has gone wrong?

Who is hurting?

You may feel:

Suffering
Injustice
Loneliness
Sadness
Isolation

Opening our Hearts

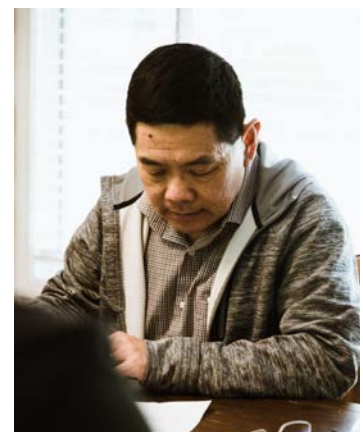
To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with humility
Exhale God, bring humility to the world

Connect with the Film

Cornelius expresses his sense of inadequacy as a pastor.

“But deep inside us we know we are so inadequate to meet people’s needs.” — Cornelius



Behind the scenes: Caring deeply for one another

The pastors did an exercise called Retelling Your Story in the Light of Love. In groups of three, the pastors told important stories from their past, stories often laced with shame or wondering, and allowed others to ask questions, pray, and offer insights.



It took genuine friendship to trust one another with vulnerable stories. It took courage to receive prayer and loving feedback that raised the possibility of replacing shame with love, judgment with mercy, and sadness with hope.

At the end of this exercise, the pastors re-introduced one another by retelling parts of their stories through a lens of love, often pulling out threads that had been previously overlooked but revealed beautiful parts of the other's character. Often, the person was unable to see these things themselves.

Cornelius re-introduced James, who had shared a devastating story about a person who had been murdered in the parking lot of his church. James questioned his ability to care for those under his shepherding. In his retelling, Cornelius brought to light James' desire to protect and shelter every person who comes near his church and amplified James' vision of his church as a haven from violence. Where James felt he had failed, Cornelius was able to convey to everyone how blessed James' congregation was to have someone who cares so deeply as a spiritual leader.

Reflect

Whether you're a pastor or not, can you relate to the feeling of inadequacy?

How do you respond to a faith leader expressing weakness in public?

When do you feel inadequate? How do you express it?

What keeps us from expressing our vulnerabilities?

Share about a time when you came fact to face with your vulnerability and were honest about it? What happened?

What makes it safe to be vulnerable? Where do you experience that safety?

How do you offer it to others?

Discuss

What unique challenges are spiritual leaders facing in this cultural moment?

How do you see Cornelius' public admission: a weakness, or a strength? Why?

If you could encourage Cornelius, what would you say?

When did you see someone leading from vulnerability instead of from a façade of invulnerability? What difference did it make?

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

How might welcoming your vulnerability give you courage to act? What freedom does it provide?

How does vulnerability make room for community? If your faith community honored one another's weaknesses, how you could you work together in new ways?

Is there a place in your life where you'd like others to know you more genuinely? What can you do to move toward that?

Blessing

A prayer written by Chase

I am hurting, Lord.
Injustice, grief and death taunt me.
I seek your comfort as I mourn.
May I see you more clearly today.
May I feel you more closely.
May I hear you more intently.
In Jesus' name, Amen.



What is the Spirit up to?

Joan challenges us to rethink how we approach division and disagreement in our faith communities. Instead of focusing on the surface issues, she invites us to ask deeper questions—particularly, "What is the Spirit up to?"

Let's move toward listening for God's voice in new and surprising ways. It's going to take going beyond the place of discomfort.

Asking new questions might transform the way you navigate division, and staying open to God's leading can bring fresh insight into your life.

Approach this time with LISTENING

Who are you listening to?

Who have you ignored or simply not noticed?

You may feel:

Curious

Attentive

Humbled

Moved

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale Lord, help me ask a new question

Exhale Lord, bring new answers to our world

Connect with the Film

Joan wonders if we've been asking the wrong question.

"[Sexuality] is a huge point of division. It is the litmus test in so many factions of the church. I think it's important that we do talk about it. I think we're asking the wrong question. I want to know, I want to have conversations like, why, why is the Spirit saying this to Artie and this to me. It's the same Spirit, so what is the Spirit up to? What is the question? What's happening?" — Joan



Behind the scenes: A reflection on the Spirit from Tanner Smith of The Colossian Forum



Throughout the process, we kept searching for the question underneath all the other questions.

There were presenting “issues” but the real conundrum was summed up like this, “How can faithful believers hear different messages from the same God?”

This is a question as old as Christianity itself. The very first Christians worshiped the same God but heard the Spirit speaking to them in different ways about a number of important issues, like how to incorporate gentiles into the community of faith.

Today’s moment in which Christians disagree about LGBTQ is not new, in the sense that Christians have always disagreed about important matters, while listening and seeking and worshiping the same God.

Wrestling with how to love one another and love God is the beating heart of Christianity.

Reflect

How do you listen to the Spirit? Are there practices that you use to help you listen for God’s voice? Remember a time when the Spirit surprised you.

What is it like for you when you have a difference with someone? What do you do to get away from difficult feelings? What does it take to stay in a place of discomfort?

When has discomfort led to something new and life-giving?

Discuss

Joan asked, “What is the Spirit up to?” How might this question reshape many of the worn-out conversations we have about our differences and divisions?

In your experience, what happens when two people hear God saying two different things?

Where do you see the wrong questions being asked? What is a better question?

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

What are the questions being asked in your faith community? Are there different questions you’d like to ask? Where is the time and place for you to do so?

Name a situation in your faith community where the Spirit seems to be telling different people different things. What can you do to help people listen more deeply for what the Spirit is up to?

What are some different voices you might invite into your community to help listen for what God might be up to?



Resource

The Colossian Forum has an email newsletter that includes a simple practice to cultivate hope. Sign up today.

Blessing

The pastors sang this together.

Holy Spirit, come to us,
kindle in us the fire of your love.
Holy Spirit, come to us,
Holy Spirit, come to us.



To Love and Be Loved

Authentic love has transformative power. Pastor Chase offers a glimpse into how deeply love can shape our lives, giving us the freedom to be who we truly are.

Today, we'll examine the places in the film where we see this kind of love. We'll also explore what it might look like to extend that same love to others, especially those we might have overlooked.

Being both loved and known brings the courage to act, serve, and love more authentically in our own lives and faith communities.

Approach this time with ACTION

What is yours to do?

How might your courage inspire change?

You may feel:
Closeness
Transformation
Beloved
Acceptance
Vulnerable

Opening our Hearts

To get started, practice this anchor prayer. Take a breath and open your heart to curiosity and insight. Speak the words out loud or silently as you inhale and exhale five times.

Inhale God, fill me with authentic love
Exhale God, bring authentic love to the world

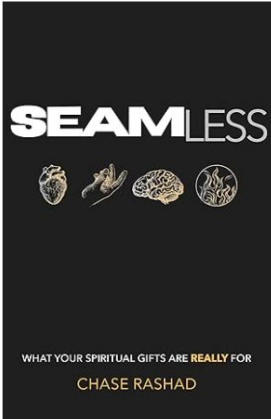
Connect with the Film

Chase reflects on the power of authentic love.

“Whether you want to be Christian or not, being loved is the salve for my fears. What authentic love does is it settles that. So that I can be and you can be all that you are and know that you are still embraced.” — Chase



Behind the scenes: How the Spirit moves through authentic love



Chase's Instagram account (@chaserashadstancle) demonstrates how he gives and receives authentic love in his pastoral ministry. It includes reels of his singing, and shares his book, *Seamless: What Your Spiritual Gifts Are Really For*.

Reflect

Remember a time when you felt loved. Who was loving you? How did you know it was authentic love? What did they do to help you feel loved?

How does their love soothe your fear? How does their love free you to be your real self?

Discuss

Share about a person whose love for you was authentic. What did they do to help you feel their love?

How are love and vulnerability related?

How does being known and loved bring us courage? Who can we be, and what can we do? How can we more freely offer ourselves and our gifts to the world?

Consider your faith community. Who are the people we haven't yet loved? Are there people we haven't taken the time to know? How could we begin to love them?

Action

Consider these questions to inspire possibilities for action.

How does being known and loved change the way we live in our communities?

Chase says authentic love is powerful, “whether you want to be Christian or not.” Who are the neighbors your faith community is called to love? What is a practical expression of that love?

When you are being your fullest, freest, most loved self, what do you do?

What person or group of people are you called to love in an authentic way (maybe a person or group you despise, avoid, or judge)? What is the first step you can take?

Blessing

During a time of worship, the pastors sang this together.

Gather Us In

Here in this place new light is streaming
Now is the darkness vanished away
See in this space our fears and our dreamings
Brought here to you in the light of this day
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken
Gather us in, the blind and the lame
Call to us now and we shall awaken
We shall arise at the sound of our name
We are the young, our lives are a mystery
We are the old who yearn for your face
We have been sung throughout all of history
Called to be light to the whole human race
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty
Gather us in, the proud and the strong
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly
Give us the courage to enter the song
Here we will take the wine and the water

Here we will take the bread of new birth
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters
Call us anew to be salt for the earth
Give us to drink the wine of compassion
Give us to eat the bread that is you
Nourish us well and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true
Not in the dark of buildings confining
Not in some heaven light years away
But here in this place the new light is shining
Now is the kingdom, now is the day
Gather us in and hold us forever
Gather us in and make us your own
Gather us in, all peoples together
Fire of love in our flesh and our bones
Fire of love in our flesh and our bones

Marty Haugen



Resource
Join our mailing list