

The Nourishing Vocation Project

Near and Now Conversation Guide

Relating Courage and Virtuousness

By Iqra Mohamed

Warm-up Question

What are some small things we can practice when we feel powerless in our actions, yet still want to live and practice virtue through courage—believing we can make a difference regardless of how small our actions may seem?



["Ongoing war in Gaza will set children and young people's education back by up to five years, report suggests"](#) By UNRWA

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in the picture?
2. What do you feel looking at this picture?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

Reading

Aristotle connects courage and virtuousness

Excerpt from 4D Formation: Exploring Vocation in Community, page 135, Chapter 8

“Aristotle taught that every person is made for fulfillment, and to achieve this fulfillment, we must become virtuous people. For Aristotle, the key to becoming virtuous, and therefore finding fulfillment, was to continually put the virtues - things like justice, courage, humility, honesty, become courage, humility, honesty, wit – into practice. In his view, we can’t just decide to become courageous. We must act with courage, and over time, we will become courageous people. To become who we are meant to be, Aristotle thought, we must practice those things most essential to human flourishing and from them as habits until they become second nature to us.”

Reflections

The act of doing good for the sake of the common good is considered sacred in many religious traditions. It gives a person a sense of purpose and alignment with the values they claim to follow. It brings life to the soul and helps build a society rooted in compassion and mutual care.

When most people commit to doing good for one another, we create an environment where everyone—regardless of their background, beliefs, ethnicity, or lifestyle—can feel seen, respected, and safe. It becomes possible to live in peace and prosperity, even in the presence of our differences.

However, this kind of goodness isn’t always easy to practice. It demands moral strength in many forms. Sometimes, it means standing up when someone misrepresents your faith or promotes harmful views about people whose beliefs or identities differ from your own. It means choosing to be honest when you witness someone being blamed or punished unfairly—and you hold the truth that could set things right.

It means defending the vulnerable, even when those causing harm hold more power than you do. It means recognizing that our differences are not threats, but part of what makes us human and part of the same earth. And it means never letting your efforts to live righteously become a source of pride or superiority.

True goodness reminds us that judgment belongs to God alone. Even when we strive to do what is right, our actions should come from a place of humility, not arrogance—from understanding, not self-righteousness.

In times when life feels heavy, uncertain, or full of loss, continuing to believe in God and choosing to show kindness to others requires deep inner resilience. Offering patience, warmth, and help to those around you—especially when you yourself feel unheard or powerless—is no small task.

So is giving to someone in need when you yourself are not sure if you'll have enough tomorrow. Doing good without expecting anything in return, simply for the sake of God, is one of the clearest signs of faith and sincerity.

Thanks to this calling that Allah placed in my heart, I've been inspired to learn more about my neighbor and deepen my understanding of my own faith. I invite you to share what your faith teaches about respecting your neighbor, because creating a more peaceful world begins with recognizing that we are all human—different in many ways, yet deserving of understanding and compassion.

Part of building that peace means standing for justice, even when it involves someone close to us. We should not support our brother simply because of loyalty if they are doing wrong. In fact, that doesn't help them—it harms them. True courage is shown when you support your brother both when he is wronged and when he is doing wrong, by guiding him back to what is right.

As the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said:

"Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one."

The people asked, *"O Allah's Messenger! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?"*

The Prophet (ﷺ) replied: **"By preventing him from oppressing others."** (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

The first action that I—and all of us—need to take is understanding that we should always show respect, kindness, and compassion to our neighbors. My faith invites me to live by this principle, and I'm happy to embrace it. I've learned this from many Islamic sources, which are easy to find, [but this one is the one I want to cite](#).

This inspires me to always pursue doing good, to be courageous, and to practice virtue through justice, humility, and honesty. [One more source on Islam's embracement on difference in society](#)

Discussion Questions

1. How do we encourage the creation of an environment where people feel safe to express their authentic thoughts and feelings, with the mindfulness that we are made to be different?

2. How courageous is it to listen to thoughts you disagree with and try to understand them from the other person's perspective?
3. How can we differentiate the practice (the religion's text, instructions etc) from the practitioner (the person who follows that faith)?
4. What are the things that we can individually do to support such an environment that encourages courage, honesty and justice?
5. What do you think that these (honesty, justice, courage) has to do with being mindful about your calls as a person?
6. What are the times you feel unseen or unheard? What are the barriers you think are there that are stopping you? What courage do you need to have those times?
7. What does it take to develop courage in such times and generally?

Activity Suggestions

- Community Tea Time - Creating an open space where we acknowledge the injustice going on around the world. Pray for each other, show gratitude to the blessings we have, arrange small groups for discussion with facilitators (maybe trained students, to avoid any kind of conflict), or maybe create cards with questions to make them more organized.
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VOCARE

Invite closing thoughts about VOCARE as it relates to this topic.

What **VALUES** did this discussion highlight for you?

What are you invited to be **OPEN** to as you think about this topic?

What voices (literal or metaphorical) have **CALLED** to you through this conversation?

Where has captured your **ATTENTION** during this discussion

What **REGRETS** have come to mind for you by considering this topic?

What is one personal **EXPERIENCE** that this discussion has brought to mind for you?

What is **JUST ONE THING** that you will take away from or carry with you from this experience together?