

Pathway to Blessing

UNSUNG ANCESTORS

**Stories of the overlooked,
whose quiet obedience changed everything.**

Rev. Dr. N. Alexander Ruth
Director of Disciples Men

Unsung Ancestors walks men through eight lesser-known figures from across Scripture, men whose faithfulness rarely made the headlines, but without whom the story could not have unfolded as it did. Each lesson explores whole-hearted trust, radical encouragement, Spirit-filled craftsmanship, cross-cultural humility, truth-telling, hospitality to the outsider, quiet courage, and decisive justice. Participants engage Scripture, honest discussion, and action prompts that move faith beyond the meeting room. By tracing these unsung ancestors, men discover that faithfulness, not fame, is what God has always used to change the world.



ABOUT *PATHWAY TO BLESSING*

Pathway to Blessing: Unsung Ancestors is the third installment in the **Pathway to Blessing** series of studies. These eight lessons were written by Rev. Dr. Alex Ruth and follow in the same format as the *Foundational Ancestors* studies. The series was intentionally designed for both in-person and online groups.

Modeled loosely on the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina* (“divine reading”), the lessons affirm that each participant brings a unique perspective and experience of God, and that every voice matters. They can be led with minimal preparation and materials. Participants are encouraged to use a small journal—readily available at most retailers for just a few dollars—for recording insights. Everyone will also need access to a Bible; however, printed scripture passages can be provided as an alternative. Facilitators will need a simple way to track time.

The studies follow the same flow whether in-person or online. For virtual gatherings, having a co-facilitator (or a facilitator and a tech support person) is helpful. Aim to keep groups to six or fewer participants. Online breakout groups can be pre-assigned, though it is often easiest to set them each session based on attendance.

Scheduling is flexible. Lessons can be offered as an eight-session program either weekly or monthly, in two four-week segments, or adapted to fit local needs. Expect each lesson to take 60–90 minutes, depending on group discussion.

For more information about Disciples Men, or to contribute to this ministry, please scan the appropriate QR code below. Or, you can visit discipleshomemissions.org.



Find out what Disciples Men and
Disciples Home Missions are doing.



Support the work of Disciples Men through
a gift to the Men's Endowment Fund.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
About Pathway to Blessing	i
Table of Contents	ii
Leader's Guide	1
Lesson One - Caleb: Whole-Hearted Trust	4
Lesson Two - Barnabas: Radical Encouragement	6
Lesson Three - Bezalel: Spirit-Empowered Craftsmanship	8
Lesson Four - Cornelius: Cross-Cultural Humility	10
Lesson Five - Micaiah, Son of Imlah: Truth to Power	12
Lesson Six - Ethiopian Eunuch: Outsider to Insider	14
Lesson Seven - Joseph of Arimathea: Quiet Courage	16
Lesson Eight - Benaiah, Son of Jehoiada: Courageous Action for Justice	18

LEADER'S GUIDE

Welcome and Overview

Thank you for stepping forward to facilitate this men's study series! Whether you are a seasoned leader or brand-new to group ministry, this guide will give you the tools, confidence, and structure you need to walk your group through eight engaging sessions focused on biblical faith ancestors, healthy masculinity, and community impact.

Goals of the Series

By the end of these sessions, participants will:

- Deepen their understanding of God's story through key faith ancestors.
- Reflect on their own identity, relationships, and purpose.
- Practice spiritual disciplines that nurture authentic faith.
- Take concrete "outside the walls" actions that bless the wider community.

Anatomy of a Session

Each lesson follows a simple rhythm, but feel free to adapt the timing to your context:

Session Component	Approximate Time
Welcome and Prayer	2 - 3 minutes
Gathering Reflection	8 - 10 minutes
Scripture Reading	5 minutes
Discussion Prompts	25 - 30 minutes
Faith Practice and Responses	15 minutes
Closing Prayer	5 minutes

LEADER'S GUIDE

Preparing to Lead

- Read the upcoming lesson at least twice—once devotionally, once analytically.
- Pray for your group members by name.
- Select at least three (3) discussion prompts you believe will resonate.
- Gather supplies: Bibles, pens, journals, handouts, and any materials for the action prompt.
- Set the environment: arrange chairs in a circle, provide refreshments, if possible.

Guiding Discussion Prompts

Use open-ended questions. Allow silence; it often precedes deeper sharing. Affirm contributions and gently redirect if the conversation drifts.

Introducing Faith Practices

Demonstrate the practice briefly, then invite participants to try it during the week. Follow up at the next session to celebrate progress and troubleshoot obstacles.

Facilitating the Response Section

Explain both parts: personal reflection (journaling) and the “outside the walls” action. Encourage each man to set a specific, realistic plan (who, what, when).

Leading the Closing Prayer

Invite participants to voice a single word or phrase of gratitude during the prayer pause. Model brevity and sincerity. End decisively so the group knows the prayer is complete.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Handling Common Challenges

- **Dominating Voices:** Thank them for passion; ask others directly for input.
- **Silence:** Wait at least 6–8 seconds; rephrase the question if needed.
- **Sensitive Topics:** Reaffirm the covenant of confidentiality. Redirect to scripture and shared values.
- **Time Management:** Use a timer or an appointed timekeeper to stay on track.

Creating an Inclusive, Safe Space

Establish a simple group covenant in your first session. Suggested ideas are: confidentiality, respectful listening, no unsolicited fixing, and equal opportunities to speak.

Adapting for Online or Hybrid Groups

- Use breakout rooms for small-group discussion.
- Share scriptures and prompts via screen-share or chat.
- Invite quick “thumbs up” or chat responses to keep engagement high.

Encouraging Accountability and Growth

Create a group chat, a private group on social media, a Discord group, or other method to allow participants to check in between sessions about their Faith Practice and Action Prompt.

Leader's Quick Checklist (print or screenshot)

- Review lesson & pray for the group
- Select discussion prompts
- Prepare space/materials
- Identify time-keeper
- Ready opening & closing prayers
- Record attendance & key insights

LESSON ONE - CALEB

Whole-Hearted Trust

THEME: Caleb stood alone with Joshua among the twelve spies, refusing to let fear override God's promise. Even when it cost him forty-five years of waiting, his story shows what it looks like to follow God fully in a culture of doubt.



Gathering Reflection

Recall a time you felt outvoted or alone for trusting God's direction. What did you do, and what did it cost you? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



Scripture Reading

Numbers 13:26–33; Joshua 14:6–14

The spies' report on Canaan, contrasted with Caleb and Joshua's minority faith; Caleb, at eighty-five, claims the promise he was given forty-five years earlier.



Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What distinguishes Caleb's perspective from the other ten spies?
- Recall a time you felt outvoted for following God's lead. What did you do?
- What "giants" (obstacles, fears, or opposition) make courage difficult for you right now?
- Caleb waited forty-five years to inherit Hebron. How do you nurture faith for the long haul?
- Where is God inviting you to "take the hill" in this season of your life?



Faith Practice

Each morning this week, pray: "God, give me a different spirit, like Caleb's." Note one courageous step you take each day, however small.

LESSON ONE - CALEB

Whole-Hearted Trust

THEME: Caleb stood alone with Joshua among the twelve spies, refusing to let fear override God's promise. Even when it cost him forty-five years of waiting, his story shows what it looks like to follow God fully in a culture of doubt.



Personal Reflection

Each evening, record one moment when you chose faith over fear or fear over faith. What tipped the scale?



Action Prompt

Scout the Promised Land

- Identify a “promised land” opportunity in your life — a new ministry, a justice effort, a hard conversation you’ve been avoiding.
- Spend one hour this week scouting it in person: visit, research, or make the first contact.
- Share what you found with a friend, and name one next step.

Reflect afterward: What did the scouting reveal about the size of the giant, and the size of God?



Closing Prayer

God of the minority report, You honored Caleb's whole-hearted trust even when ten voices drowned out his one. We pause now to lift a word or phrase of gratitude for the promises You have kept...

Where fear has convinced us the giants are too big, give us Caleb's different spirit. Teach us to wait well, to trust long, and to still be ready to take the hill decades later. In the name of Jesus, who never wavered from God's promise. Amen.

LESSON TWO - BARNABAS

Radical Encouragement

THEME: Barnabas (whose very name means “son of encouragement”) repeatedly staked his own credibility on people others had written off. His story asks what it might cost, and what it might unlock, when we choose to believe in someone before they’ve proven themselves.



Gathering Reflection

Who first believed in you before you’d proven yourself? How did that shape the path you took? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



Scripture Reading

Acts 4:36–37; 9:26–30; 11:22–26

Barnabas sells his field for the community; vouches for Saul when the disciples feared him; brings Saul to Antioch to co-lead a growing church.



Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What risks did Barnabas take by vouching for Saul before the other apostles trusted him?
- Who first believed in you, and how did that shape your path?
- How can generosity, like Barnabas selling his field in Acts 4, become a form of encouragement today?
- Where do you see untapped potential in someone in your community?
- What might it cost you to advocate publicly for an overlooked person?



Faith Practice

Write one handwritten note, text, or email of specific affirmation every day this week, to a different person each time.

LESSON TWO - BARNABAS

Radical Encouragement

THEME: Barnabas (whose very name means “son of encouragement”) repeatedly staked his own credibility on people others had written off. His story asks what it might cost, and what it might unlock, when we choose to believe in someone before they’ve proven themselves.



Personal Reflection

Log how each act of encouragement affected both you and the person who received it. What did you notice?



Action Prompt

Make the Introduction

- Identify two people in your life who could bless or strengthen each other’s calling.
- Make the introduction (a call, an email, or a shared meal) and tell each one specifically why you thought of them.

Reflect afterward: What did it cost you to spend your own credibility on someone else’s behalf?



Closing Prayer

God whose Son gave us Barnabas, the son of encouragement, You use ordinary generosity to open doors no one else will open. We pause now to name a word or phrase of gratitude for those who believed in us...

Make us people who spend our credibility on behalf of the overlooked. Give us eyes to see potential others have missed, and courage to vouch for it publicly. In the name of Jesus, our truest advocate. Amen.

LESSON THREE - BEZALEL

Spirit-Empowered Craftsmanship

THEME: Bezalel is the first person in Scripture explicitly described as filled with the Spirit of God, not for prophecy or leadership, but for skilled craftsmanship. His story redefines what counts as spiritual work and invites every man to consider his own skills as an offering.



Gathering Reflection

What craft, skill, or “everyday” competence do you carry that you’ve rarely thought of as ministry? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



Scripture Reading

Exodus 31:1–11; 35:30–36:2

God fills Bezalel with the Spirit for wisdom, understanding, and skill in every kind of craft to build the tabernacle.



Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- How does Bezalel’s calling redefine what counts as “spiritual” work?
- What craftsmanship, trade, or artistry do you bring to the body of Christ?
- Where have you underestimated an everyday skill as a form of ministry?
- How can pursuing excellence in your craft inspire worship without feeding ego?
- Who are the modern “*Oholiabs*” (collaborators) you could invite to create alongside you?



Faith Practice

Set aside one block of at least thirty minutes this week to create something that points to God — woodwork, music, design, cooking, writing, or another craft.

LESSON THREE - BEZALEL

Spirit-Empowered Craftsmanship

THEME: Bezalel is the first person in Scripture explicitly described as filled with the Spirit of God, not for prophecy or leadership, but for skilled craftsmanship. His story redefines what counts as spiritual work and invites every man to consider his own skills as an offering.



Personal Reflection

Journal how the Spirit met you in the process of creating. What did you notice about focus, joy, or resistance?



Action Prompt

Offer Your Craft

- Identify a skill or craft you have that could bless someone else this week.
- Offer it concretely: a repair, a piece of art, a meal for someone in need, a skill lesson for a younger man.

Reflect afterward: What did it feel like to treat your craft as an offering rather than a transaction?



Closing Prayer

God who fills hands as well as hearts, You called Bezalel by name and filled him with Your Spirit for the work of his hands. We pause now to lift a word or phrase of gratitude for the skills You have given us...

Teach us to see our everyday craft as worship, not merely as labor. Fill our hands with Your Spirit, and use what we build, cook, write, and mend to point others toward You. In the name of Jesus, the carpenter's son. Amen.

LESSON FOUR – CORNELIUS

Cross-Cultural Humility

THEME: Cornelius, a Roman centurion and outsider to Israel's covenant, sought God earnestly before he ever met Peter. Their meeting broke open a boundary neither man could have crossed alone, teaching us that the Spirit is often already at work on the other side of the lines we've drawn.



Gathering Reflection

Where do prejudice, comfort, or unfamiliarity currently limit who you welcome or listen to? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



Scripture Reading

Acts 10:1-48

Cornelius's vision and God-fearing life; Peter's vision, preparing him to cross a cultural and religious boundary; the Spirit falls on Cornelius's household.



Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What steps of openness did Cornelius take before Peter ever arrived?
- How did Peter's vision prepare him to cross a line he never would have crossed on his own?
- Where do prejudices or comfort zones currently limit your hospitality?
- What would it look like to approach a relationship with the mindset that "both of us are being converted"?
- Who might be your modern Cornelius, and what's the first bridge you could build toward them?



Faith Practice

Pray daily this week: "God, reveal one bias I need You to heal." Simply notice what surfaces, without rushing to fix it.

LESSON FOUR – CORNELIUS

Cross-Cultural Humility

THEME: Cornelius, a Roman centurion and outsider to Israel's covenant, sought God earnestly before he ever met Peter. Their meeting broke open a boundary neither man could have crossed alone, teaching us that the Spirit is often already at work on the other side of the lines we've drawn.



Personal Reflection

Record a moment this week when you felt surprise or discomfort while crossing a cultural, social, or relational boundary.



Action Prompt

Share the Table

- Identify someone of a different culture, background, or life experience than your own.
- Share a meal with them, and focus the conversation on listening to their story rather than sharing your opinions.

Reflect afterward: What did I learn that I couldn't have learned any other way?



Closing Prayer

God, who shows no favoritism, You met a Roman centurion's earnest prayers and sent a reluctant apostle to cross a line he didn't know he needed to cross. We pause now to offer a word or phrase of gratitude for the boundaries You have broken open in us...

Reveal the biases we can't yet see in ourselves. Give us the humility to be surprised by where Your Spirit is already at work. Teach us that welcoming the outsider often means being converted ourselves. In the name of Jesus, who welcomes all nations home. Amen.

LESSON FIVE - MICAIAH

SON OF IMLAH

Truth to Power

THEME: Micaiah stood alone against four hundred prophets willing to tell a king exactly what he wanted to hear. His story is a sober study in the cost, and the necessity, of speaking truth when the crowd around you prefers comfortable lies.



Gathering Reflection

Describe a time you spoke an unpopular truth, or a time you stayed quiet when you wish you hadn't. What shaped that choice? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



Scripture Reading

1 Kings 22:1-28

Four hundred prophets tell King Ahab what he wants to hear; Micaiah alone speaks the truth, at great personal cost.



Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- Why might four hundred prophets have chosen flattery over truth?
- Describe a time you spoke an unpopular truth. What helped you do it?
- What does Micaiah teach us about counting the cost before we speak?
- How do you discern the difference between prophetic courage and simple stubbornness or pride?
- Where might God be calling you to a minority voice for the sake of righteousness?



Faith Practice

Memorize and pray Psalm 15 this week, paying particular attention to the call to speak truth "even when it hurts."

LESSON FIVE - MICAIAH

SON OF IMLAH

Truth to Power

THEME: Micaiah stood alone against four hundred prophets willing to tell a king exactly what he wanted to hear. His story is a sober study in the cost, and the necessity, of speaking truth when the crowd around you prefers comfortable lies.



Personal Reflection

Note each instance this week when you softened the truth for the sake of convenience, and each time you spoke it boldly instead.



Action Prompt

Honest Letter

- Identify a leader, organization, or situation where honest feedback is needed but hard to give.
- Write a respectful, specific letter or message naming the issue clearly and constructively.

Reflect afterward: What did it cost to send it, and what might it protect?



Closing Prayer

God of the lone true word among many flattering ones, You did not spare Micaiah from prison for speaking honestly, yet You vindicated his word in the end. We pause now to lift a word or phrase of gratitude for the truth You have spoken into our lives...

Give us the courage to be a minority voice when the crowd prefers comfortable lies. Protect us from both cowardice and pride, and steady us to speak the truth, even when it costs us something. In the name of Jesus, who is Himself the Truth. Amen.

LESSON SIX – ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Outsider to Insider

THEME: An outsider by nationality, religion, and body, the Ethiopian eunuch traveled far in search of God and found immediate welcome the moment he asked. His story confronts every instinct we have to gatekeep who belongs.



Gathering Reflection

When have you felt like an outsider, in a church, a group, or a community you wanted to belong to? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



Scripture Reading

Acts 8:26-39

Philip meets the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah on the road, explains the good news, and baptizes him immediately.



Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What longing do you imagine drove the eunuch to travel to Jerusalem and to read Isaiah?
- Philip starts with a question, not a lecture. What does that model for how we approach others?
- How does the eunuch's immediate baptism challenge our instincts to gatekeep who belongs?
- Where have you felt like an outsider in a church or faith community?
- How might you help make the gospel more accessible to someone on the margins?



Faith Practice

Spend ten minutes each day this week listening to Scripture read aloud or via audio, the way the eunuch was listening to Isaiah on the road.

LESSON SIX – ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Outsider to Insider

THEME: An outsider by nationality, religion, and body, the Ethiopian eunuch traveled far in search of God and found immediate welcome the moment he asked. His story confronts every instinct we have to gatekeep who belongs.



Personal Reflection

Capture one moment this week when your “heart burned,” a flash of insight or conviction, as you listened.



Action Prompt

Ask, Then Listen

- Identify a space where marginalized or overlooked voices gather — a shelter, a support group, a community meeting.
- Visit or volunteer there, and ask, “What keeps you from feeling included?” Then simply listen.

Reflect afterward: What did you learn about your own blind spots around belonging?



Closing Prayer

God who sends Your messengers to the desert road, You met a foreign, marginalized man in the middle of his private search and welcomed him immediately, with no waiting period. We pause now to offer a word or phrase of gratitude for the ways You have welcomed us...

Break down our instinct to gatekeep who belongs at Your table. Give us Philip’s readiness to run toward the searching, and the eunuch’s readiness to say yes the moment truth is offered. In the name of Jesus, who welcomes every nation and every body. Amen.

LESSON SEVEN – JOSEPH OF ARAMATHEA

Quiet Courage

THEME: A secret disciple for most of the Gospels, Joseph of Arimathea steps into public risk at the exact moment it costs him the most — burying Jesus when the other disciples had scattered. His story honors the quiet men who eventually find their courage.



Gathering Reflection

Where in your life has private conviction not yet become public action? What's holding it back? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



Scripture Reading

Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42

Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple and member of the council, asks Pilate for Jesus' body and provides his own tomb.



Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- Why might Joseph have remained a secret disciple until this moment?
- What personal resources (status, money, a tomb) did he leverage for Jesus?
- Where is God asking you to move from private admiration to public action?
- How can quieter, more cautious men cultivate courage for visible witness?
- What relationship or cause is waiting for your “public yes,” despite the risk?



Faith Practice

Fast one meal this week. During that time, pray specifically about a secret conviction that needs public expression.

LESSON SEVEN – JOSEPH OF ARAMATHEA

Quiet Courage

THEME: A secret disciple for most of the Gospels, Joseph of Arimathea steps into public risk at the exact moment it costs him the most — burying Jesus when the other disciples had scattered. His story honors the quiet men who eventually find their courage.



Personal Reflection

Journal the fears that surface, along with any next steps God highlights, as you pray and fast.



Action Prompt

Public Yes

- Identify one conviction you've held privately but haven't acted on publicly.
- Take a concrete, visible step this week (a conversation, a public post, a donation, an act of association) that aligns your faith and your action.

Reflect afterward: What did it cost, and what might it have opened?



Closing Prayer

God who sees the secret disciple as clearly as the bold one, You welcomed Joseph's quiet courage when it finally became public, and gave Your Son a resting place because of it. We pause now to lift a word or phrase of gratitude for the courage growing in us...

Where we have stayed hidden out of fear, give us Joseph's moment of resolve. Use even our cautious, private faith for the public good when the time comes. In the name of Jesus, who was laid in the tomb Joseph gave. Amen.

LESSON EIGHT - BENAIAH

SON OF JEHOIADA

Courageous Action for Justice

THEME: Benaiah's exploits, striking down a lion in a pit on a snowy day among them, read like legend, but his life points to something simple: small, unseen acts of faithful courage prepare us for the larger battles still to come. This closing lesson asks what legacy of courage we hope to leave.



Gathering Reflection

Think of a “small” act of courage in your past that you now realize prepared you for something bigger. What was it? Take some time to jot notes, then share in small groups.



Scripture Reading

2 Samuel 23:20–23; 1 Kings 2:35

2 Samuel 23:20–23; 1 Kings 2:35

Benaiah's remarkable exploits among David's mighty men, and his eventual appointment over the army.



Discussion Prompts (Choose the most helpful prompts for your group)

- What impresses you most about Benaiah's exploits?
- How do you discern the difference between reckless risk and courage that honors God?
- Where do small, unseen acts of faithfulness prepare us for larger callings?
- What “lion in a pit on a snowy day” challenge are you currently facing?
- What legacy of courage do you hope to leave behind?



Faith Practice

Each morning this week, pray Joshua 1:9 aloud, and take a moment to visualize stepping into that day's particular “battle” with courage.

LESSON EIGHT - BENAIAH

SON OF JEHOIADA

Courageous Action for Justice

THEME: Benaiah's exploits, striking down a lion in a pit on a snowy day among them, read like legend, but his life points to something simple: small, unseen acts of faithful courage prepare us for the larger battles still to come. This closing lesson asks what legacy of courage we hope to leave.



Personal Reflection

Record one step of bold obedience you took each day, and what came of it.



Action Prompt

Stand With

- Identify someone in your life or community currently facing injustice or a difficult fight.
- Stand with them concretely — attend a hearing, write testimony on their behalf, or simply accompany them for support.

Reflect afterward: What did it cost to show up, and what did your presence provide?



Closing Prayer

God of the lion's den and the snowy pit, You use ordinary, courageous men to secure what is right, even when no one else is watching. We pause now to lift a word or phrase of gratitude for the courage You have grown in us across this series...

Prepare us in small, hidden battles for the larger ones still ahead. Make us men whose legacy is marked by decisive, righteous courage. Send us out from these Pathway to Blessing studies to walk boldly, in the name of Jesus, our captain and our peace. Amen.