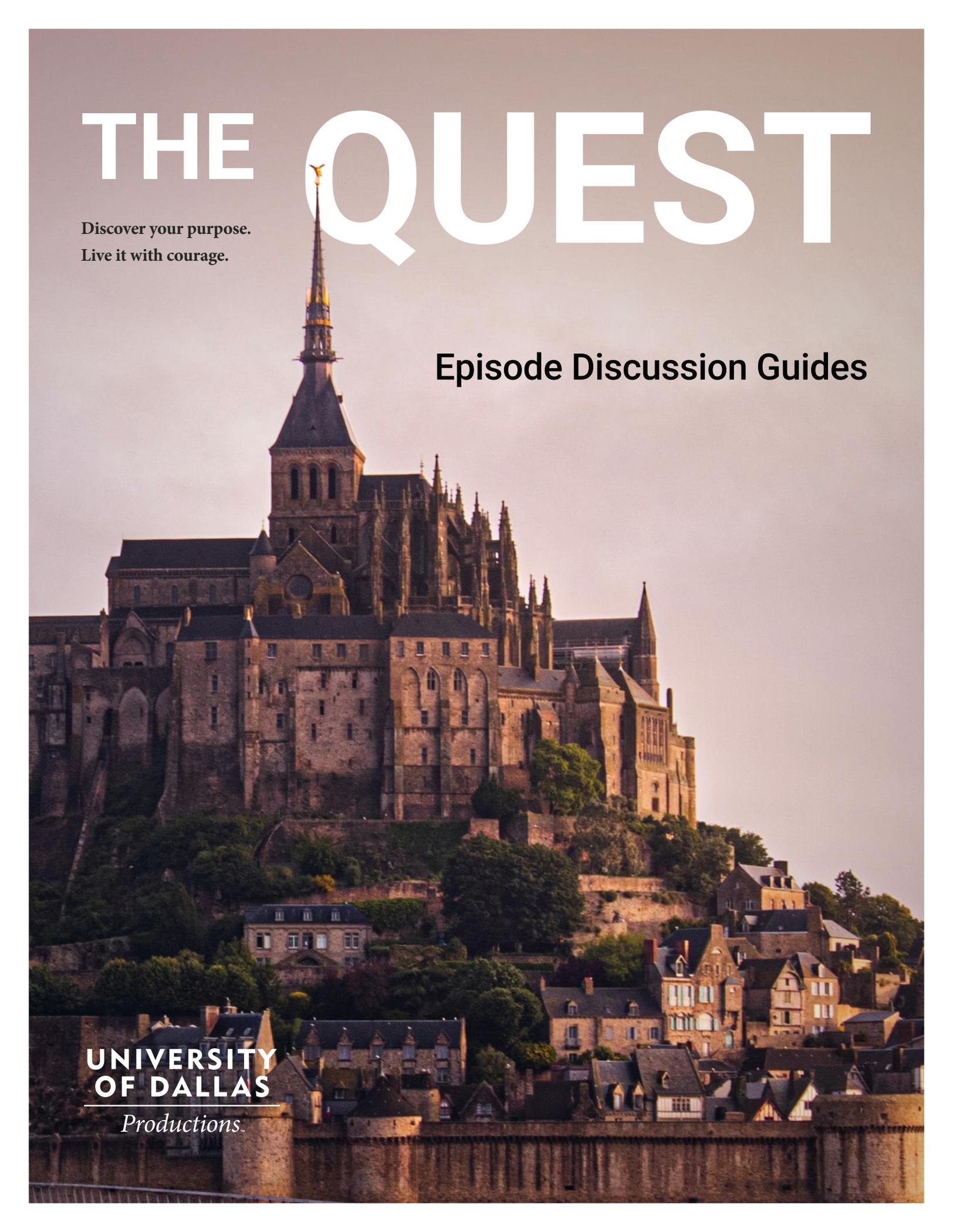


THE QUEST



Discover your purpose.
Live it with courage.

Episode Discussion Guides

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EPISODE 1:

The Voice of God Within

“What am I supposed to do with my life? What would you, God, have me do with this moment, right here, right now?”

We ask ourselves these questions as we recognize that God has placed us here for a purpose and called us to live it with courage.

The story of **Etty Hillesum**, a young woman who died in Auschwitz during World War II, shows us that a life of courage in the face of great darkness is the choice to live with love and joy, to cling to beauty when it would be so easy to hate, and to be generous when it would be easier to withdraw.

We are made for happiness and freedom, and these ultimately consist of desiring what God desires for our lives. Making decisions with knowledge and wisdom and staying within the guardrails of the natural law helps us to find the happiness we are made for.

Our conscience is that deepest center within us, the inner sanctuary, where we encounter the voice of God. As we listen to God’s call, we use the virtue of prudence to guide our decisions. Prudence helps us to know what our choices are and how to respond in the complexity of the moment.

Prudence is the virtue that allows us to participate in God’s Providence and rule our own lives well.

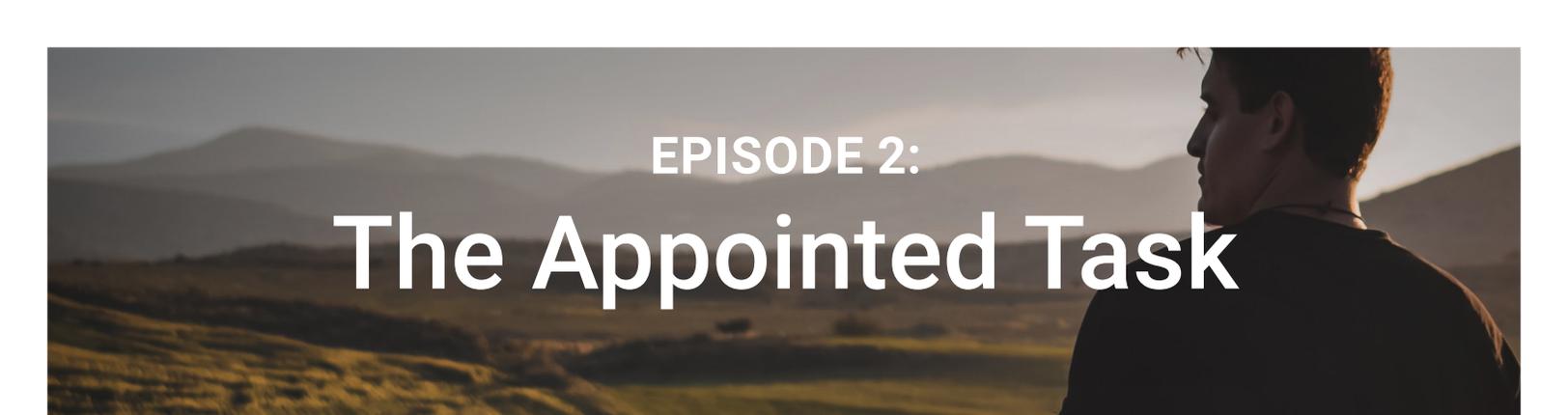
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What are some seemingly small choices that you face that require great courage? What makes them courageous? How does this help you understand the “little way” of holiness?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- *Etty Hillesum: Essential Writings*
- *Etty Hillesum: An Interrupted Life and Letters from Westerbork*
- *Gospel of St. John*, Chapter 1
- Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*

Notes:



EPISODE 2:

The Appointed Task

Our God is a God of abundance, but He doesn't make extras. In this episode, we explore what it means that God has providentially placed each of us in this world for a purpose, and how we can live that purpose with courage and confidence.

In Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, the Hobbit Frodo Baggins is given an "appointed task" – a task that is meant for him, and not for another. In a similar way, we each have a purpose in this life. To take up this task is a question of truthfulness, because doing so means being true to who you are. In a fundamental way, the moral life isn't just about being good; it's about being our truest selves. Both history and Sacred Scripture inspire us with the courage to take up our appointed tasks, no matter how difficult our circumstances. Scripture in particular is instructive, because the meaning of Scripture is personal: It is your story. Whether it's David, Judith, Mary or the rich young man: All of their stories are about us.

"Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them."

– St. Therese of Lisieux

Moral action isn't usually about great battles or high drama. As we can see in the novels of Jane

Austen or the wisdom of St. Therese, we make most of our moral decisions in the quiet moments, when nobody is watching. But these little moments are significant, and we should always look for opportunities to do good.

"I wonder what sort of tale we have fallen into?"

– Sam, in *Lord of the Rings*

As the Hobbit Sam suggests, the order of one's life is a narrative order. We really are on a quest to become our best and truest selves, and to take up our appointed tasks with courage.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

When you think of your life as a kind of story, what kind of story comes to mind? What does your answer tell you about how you understand yourself and your own appointed task? Where have the most important moral decisions occurred in your life? From the outside, would they have appeared large or small?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- "Pied Beauty," by Gerard Manley Hopkins
- *The Lord of the Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *Exodus*, Chapters 1-13 (Moses and the Flight from Egypt)
- *My Sister, St. Thérèse*, by Celine Martin

Notes:



EPISODE 3: Witness

“There is no fear in love.” (1 John 4:18)

What does the word “love” tell us about our work in this life? And what does it truly mean to say “yes” to God’s call? Through stories from Scripture, history and encounters in everyday life, we explore how God invites us to be witnesses to His love through acts of personal courage. At the heart of Christianity is Jesus calling us his friends. That’s why the moral life is not primarily about following rules, or even about guarding the health of one’s soul. Instead, the moral life is an invitation to encounter the God of the universe, Who calls us to a vocation of love.

“Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.” (1 John 3:18)

As we seek to live our faith with courage, we should realize how much our example is a light shining in the darkness. Personal witness is so much more compelling than mere arguments. Whether our call leads us to witness at great personal cost – as in the examples of people like the Austrian martyr Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, the Brazilian reformer and politician Joaquim Nabuco, or the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas – or whether our life of courage seems almost invisible, our example of steadfast love is a beacon.

Notes:

“Merely to shine is futile, merely to burn is not enough: to burn and to shine is perfect.”

– St. Bernard of Clairvaux

When we love, we are willing to sacrifice for it. The word “sacrifice” literally means “to make sacred,” so our sacrifices, great and small, sanctify our lives and bring us closer to our final end: happiness with God. What ultimately matters most is not how many people see us living our daily lives with courage, or that we perform some great action on the world stage. What matters most, says Mother Teresa of Calcutta, is that we do “ordinary things with extraordinary love.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What are some of the obstacles that seem to block your way to living fully with courage? Who are some “witnesses” in your own life – people who show the way by what they do, not what they say?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, by Bartolome Las Casas
- *Franz Jägerstätter: Letters and Writings from Prison*
- *A Hidden Life: The Life of Bl. Franz Jaegerstatter*
- “Sonnet 116,” by William Shakespeare
- *The Epistle of St. John*



EPISODE 4:

The Dark Night of the Soul

“If only you knew what darkness I am plunged into!”

– St. Therese of Lisieux

On the journey of our lives, we will encounter obstacles and hardships. We explore the commitment to courage and love required to live the Christian life during times of great darkness. The Dark Night of the Soul is such a fundamental part of the human experience. The virtue of courage we must practice during these times is a kind of perseverance, as we see Christ persevere during His Passion.

Even as we cling to the hope of the Resurrection, we must still face the long dark of Holy Saturday. But even in these moments where we might feel completely alone, we must remember that God is still with us.

“Even when all goes wrong, and I feel as if I was a ship without a compass, I must give myself completely to Him.” – St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

As we walk through these dark places, we need to let go of our desire to see the whole path ahead. All we need is enough light to see the next right step. God will not abandon us: He has given us proof in Scripture and all around us in the natural world that He cares for us.

Even as we walk through these dark places, we should look for opportunities to love one another. Sometimes holding out a hand to help someone else gives us enough light to see our own way forward. And even if we recognize that we are in this place because we have taken a wrong turn, God has given us the sacraments to invite us back into communion with Him. Christ is the Light of the World, and He has promised that whoever follows Him “walks not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” If we put our trust in Him, He will see us through.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

If you have experienced a “dark night of the soul” in your own life, how do you think God used this to help you grow closer to Him or reach a realization about your life? How is courage related to perseverance? What are some simple ways you might remind yourself of God’s presence when obstacles or challenges feel impossible or life feels overwhelming?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- “Lead, Kindly Light” by St. John Henry Newman
- *The Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross
- *I Loved Jesus in the Night: St. Teresa of Calcutta* by Paul Murray
- *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens

Notes:



EPISODE 5: The Way of Hope

Our lives are a journey toward the True Light, Who is Christ. The virtue of hope gives us the confidence to live out our appointed task no matter the outcome here on earth.

“I am definitely loved, and whatever happens to me, I am awaited by this Love.” – St. Josephine Bakhita

Friendship is so important in our journey toward Christ. We set our course by the examples of those who have persevered in love, because, as **St. John** says, “whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” We are fundamentally creatures of relationship. And we learn in the Scriptures that we are like our Creator both in our capacity to reason and in our capacity for love. Love gives us hope, and it also connects us in the great community of the Church: the Communion of Saints. This friendship gave **Blessed Franz Jaegerstatter** the courage to stand firm with his conscience. We’re not on this journey alone.

“We have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present.”

– **Pope Benedict XVI**

Even if we know we might battle evil here and fail, we are sustained by our hope in God. God hasn’t called us to be successful, but to be faithful.

The work of the Christian life requires patience, both with ourselves and with others. We don’t know the journey someone else’s heart must make to reach God. Love is a choice, and it’s one we must all be free to make. We must focus on the work we’ve been given, and leave what we cannot control to God. Ultimately, we set our eyes on the hope of Heaven, and we trust that God will one day gather up all the broken pieces of this world and make them whole once more. This is our fairy tale, after all, and in this story, love really does conquer all.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Rabbi Jonathan Sachs says that God created man and woman because He loves stories. Why do you think stories are so important to us? **Etty Hillesum** clings to beauty in the world around her as she is faced with the horror of the Holocaust. How does beauty help us hold onto hope, even when the world seems overwhelmingly dark? How is love connected to hope?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- *Spe Salvi* by Pope Benedict XVI
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *Paradiso. The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri
- *Bakhita: From Slave to Saint* by Roberto Italo Zanini

Notes:
