Synopsis
In *The Road to Character* (2015) by David Brooks, a columnist for the New York Times and a commentator on PBS, the author explores the meaning of character and the shift in our culture that encourages people to change from "Little Me" to "Big Me." To develop his thesis he explores the lives of such notables as labor activist Francis Perkins, Civil Right leader Bayard Rustin and military commander Dwight Eisenhower. Through examples from their lives and references from both classic literature and Bible verses he asks questions such as "How are goodness and character built?" Brooks uses examples to explore the importance of self-conquest, struggle, self-mastery, dignity, love, and self-examination in lives of the people he describes. The lives he explores cover many time periods from Augustine in 354 to Johnny Unitas and his experiences with the NFL. You may be especially interested in Brooks' frequent references to the Bible and Adam I and Adam II.

Reflection Questions
1. Reflecting on the contrast of Adam I and Adam II, read Genesis 1-3. The creation account in Gen. 1:1-2:4a tells of a distant God who gives humans dominion over all other things. The second account in Genesis 2:4b-3:24, paints a much more complex picture of Adam as a man who has successes and failures and struggles to find the meaning and purpose in his life, while maintaining a direct relationship with God. What do you notice in the Biblical stories of Adam I and Adam II? How does this contrast help you in understanding the people that Brooks highlights in his book?

2. In the conclusion to The Road to Character, Brooks presents 15 propositions that he believes should form a humility code, a moral code that is "a coherent image of what to live for and how to live (pp. 261-267). As you read this book you might consider: What is your moral code? What should be the moral code for the church?

3. You might so consider what has caused the change in values identified by college students between 1966 and 1990. In 1966, 80 percent of students wanted to develop a meaningful philosophy for life. By 1990, becoming wealthy was the most important goal. What do you understand in this statistic?

4. Brooks presents a number of challenging questions that are important for readers who are interested in the process of building character. For example, "Toward what should I orient my life? How do I mold my nature to make it gradually better day by day? What virtues are the most important to cultivate and what weaknesses should I fear the most? How can I raise my children with a true sense of who they are and a practical set of ideas about how to travel the long road to character?" (p. 261) What are your reflections on these “big” questions?