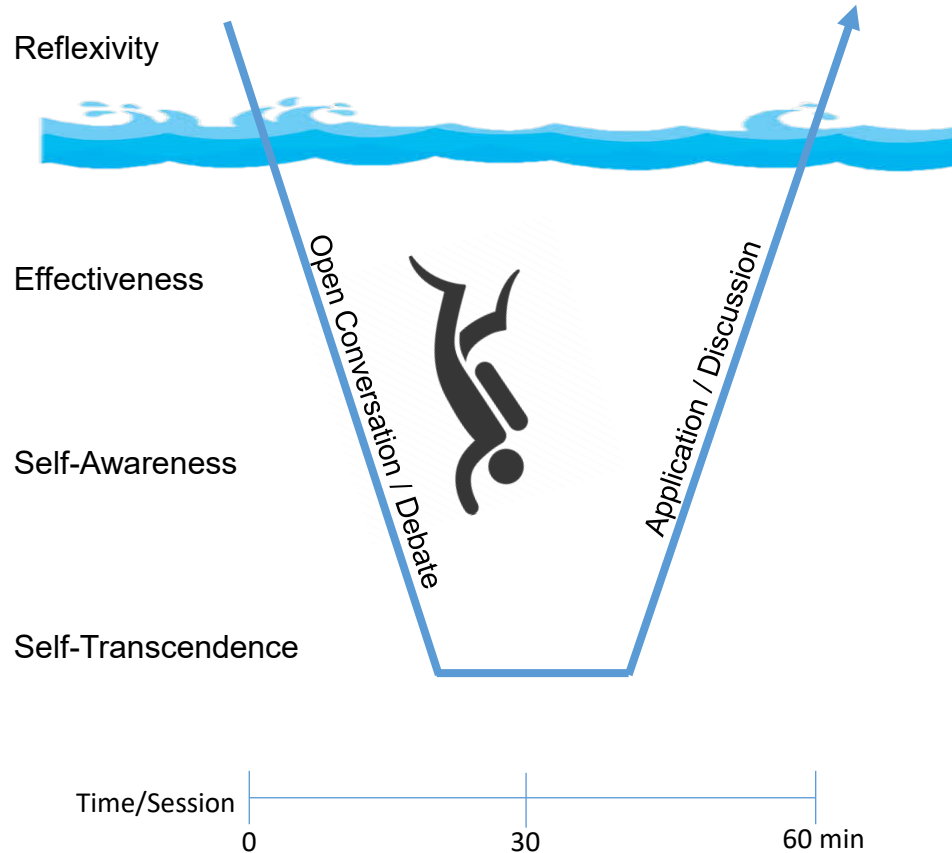


Life Worth Living-Small Group (LWL-SG) Facilitation Guide

10 Commandments of LWL-SG Facilitation

1. **DO** tie everything back to the session's topic question
2. **DO** summarize longer answers for clarity
3. **DO** ask for other opinions (from group, from individuals, from the texts)
4. **DO** create "Bounce" by leaving space for participant responses
5. **DO** challenge superficiality or abstractness



10 Commandments of LWL-SG Facilitation

6. **DO** follow up on shared life experiences and applications
7. **DO NOT** interrupt or fill silent space
8. **DO NOT** define terms or summarize readings
9. **DO NOT** offer your opinion about text
10. **DO NOT** allow participants to dominate or hide

What Do I Do?

Why Do I Do What I Do?

What Do I Really Want?

What's Worth Wanting?

FACILITATOR TRAITS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Desired Trait	Guiding Principles
Neutrality	Ensuring all viewpoints are considered and discussed; bracket and suspend personal bias; avoid asking leading questions
Patience	Don't be afraid of a tactical pause; silence can be a positive, and a place of personal reflection; allow the group to own the discussion in time
Calm	Directing challenge to ideas and not people; maintaining healthy emotional balance; sensitive to the feelings of the individual and the group
Validating Presence	Providing positive and encouraging feedback; give permission for people to assume a position different from one's own
Timing	Knowing how long to wait and when to reiterate/clarify a question; knowing when to probe deeper and when to push them forward
Interpersonal Tact	Draw people out who aren't participating; restraining people who are overwhelmingly passionate; foster healthy disagreement by teasing out differing viewpoints; fostering group unity while celebrating diversity
Guide	Don't summarize the readings or offer your opinion on what the readings say; allow for group discovery

OPTIMAL GROUP SIZE AND COMPOSITION

Group size: 6-8 Soldiers

Inorganic vs Organic

FACILITATOR PROMPTS AND DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK (LIFE PRESERVERS)

***First part of session is creating baseline of understanding of text**

What does this text mean?

What do you find hard to understand about this? What questions do you have about this text?

What do you find significant about this text/question?

What does this say about life? About God? About the world? About people? About you? Etc.

***The second part is eliciting personal responses to the question:**

If this is true, how does it change how we see God/life/suffering/people, etc?

If this is true, how should it change the way you live?

If this is true, what will you do differently this week?

FACILITATION TECHNIQUES TO ACHIEVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES/TRAITS

Neutrality:

Presenting two opposing viewpoints and asking each person (around the horn) which one they agree with, and what does that mean how you live?

Interpersonal Tact:

Have a validating conversation with a dominator before the next session begins (in private) and ask them to allow time to draw out other speakers/contributors.

Don't be afraid to call on a specific individual and ask them to answer the question. Validate them afterwards.

Create the group norm that everyone WILL be called on at some point.

Guide:

Don't explain the meaning yourself when you ask for the meaning. When we "go around the horn" and everyone answers, the facilitator doesn't answer (must stay neutral).

Allow others to summarize readings based on their own understanding, but don't summarize yourself in an attempt to "teach" them

Validating Presence:

Validate each person in their viewpoint.

Balance of invitation and challenge: invite people by being authentic and validating when they contribute, but don't be afraid challenge the viewpoint itself.

Timing

When there is a prolonged lull in conversation, reiterate or clarify the question.

Use prompts to get different responses or guide discussion.

Calm

What to do if someone gets wounded? Identify the wound, acknowledge their feelings, clarify the existence of differing viewpoints, invite further discussion.

Normalize differing opinions, but point back to challenging ideas and not attacking the person holding them.

Patience

How long do you wait? Try 30 seconds to gauge group dynamic and response, before offering another prompt.

Identify the difference between “floundering” and “introspection.” Do they need clarification, or do they need time to continue thinking?

If they are floundering, begin to guide more intentionally.

TRANSITIONAL PROMPT WHEN STARTING/ENDING SESSIONS:

If we are building a life worth living, then we must ask ourselves the question:

1. To whom do I answer?
2. How does a good life feel?
3. How should I live?
4. What role does suffering play in life?
5. What should I do when I fail?
6. What should I hope for from the world?

(Ask in sequence that they have been covered, stopping with the one being presented)

In building a life worth living, we’ve explored the question, “To whom do I answer?” and “How does a good life feel?” ..., and in our next session, let’s discuss the question, “How should I live?”

TRAINING CONCEPT FOR 40 HOURS/5 DAYS (T4T)

Day 0: Prior to Arrival (Reading Phase)

Full source documents read before arrival.

Day 1 and 2: Participant Phase

Everyone comes into the training as a participant in a group led by a trained facilitator. The first day covers questions 1-4/discussion of chart. The morning of day 2 covers questions 5 and 6.

The afternoon of Day 2 is the AAR of the sessions, facilitator training techniques, and curated readings handed out.

Day 3: Humanities 101

Deep dive religious and philosophical texts (introduction to philosophy and “a life worth living”). Deep dive the chart as part of the training.

Give facilitation assignments and texts to each trainer (2 questions, 15 minutes each, minimum). Each day, each trainee given one session to facilitate.

Day 4: Facilitation Phase

First 3 sessions covered. Each trainee given a chance to facilitate part of the discussion. AARs after each session.

Day 5: Facilitation Phase Part 2

Second 3 sessions covered. Each trainee given a chance to facilitate part of the discussion. AARs after each session.

AAR for the course and parting thoughts/comments.

Life Worth Living: Small Group DRAFT SCRIPT

Pre-Assessment, Welcome, and Reading Distribution

Pre-Assessment (10 min)

- Distribute pre-assessment, participants take assessments, collect assessments

Welcome and Reading Distribution (30 min)

- Welcome (10 min)
 - Why we're here – "To build a Life Worth Living"
 - Ice Breaker (First, Last Name; Where are you from? What is one thing you like to do?)
 - **Example Script:**

"Before we go further into the training, I want to go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves. Tell us your first and last name, where you're from, and what your favorite thing is?"

- Overview of LWL Curriculum (5 min)
 - Yale Center for Faith and Culture seminar for incoming freshmen
 - Adapted readings to you; we are going to discuss what is actually worth living for... we're going to talk about relationships, career, money, faith, morality, mortality, drugs, happiness, suffering
 - Seminar Structure: set of readings from various viewpoints, return for group discussion/comparison of readings, personal application of concepts
 - *3 Things LWL-SG are NOT*
 - *Deciding whether Life is or is not worth living. It is.*

- *A Good life smorgasbord. Differing readings for juxtaposition.*
- *Not a chance for me to persuade you about my answer. You discuss your answers to the questions and how your answers apply to your lives.*
- **Example Script:**

“Thank you so much for being here and for your willingness to train. We are here to implement a pilot program for the Chief of Chaplains in support of the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army’s new “Life Worth Living” program.

For the next two days, we will be conducting Ethics and Moral Leadership Training. You will be introduced to a diverse set of readings from religious texts and philosophy and engaged in focused discussion with each other, all in an effort to dive deep into a process of self-discovery, attempting to answer what is “a life worth living.” Your engagement and discussion with this material is key to the development and refinement of this curriculum.

Let me discuss briefly what Life Worth Living Small Groups are not. This is not a space for deciding whether Life is, or is not, worth living. It is. Second this is not a good life smorgasbord. The diverse readings we will be interacting with are intentionally selected to provide differing answers to each of our guiding questions. Please do not spend your time trying to make them all say the same thing. They do not, and most attempts to make them to do so will be fruitless. Finally, Life Worth Living Small groups are not a chance for ME to persuade YOU about my answer to these questions. You will find me largely silent. This group is an opportunity for YOU to discuss YOUR answers to life’s most crucial questions and determine how these great works inspire you to apply your answers to your daily lives.”

- Expectations and Distribution of Readings (5 min)
 - Read on your own, take notes, don't discuss prior to group, come prepared to talk
 - Explain timeline and highlight focus question for next session: "To Whom Do I Answer?"
 - **Example Script:**

"I'm now handing you several texts to read for this section. At the top of the page will be a question. This question will be a lens through which you interpret the texts and generally serve as the theme for our discussion. Read each text carefully, and take as much time as you need to think about it. Read it, put it down, think about it, go do something else, come back to it and read it again. You can read aloud in groups, but please save your discussions until you return.

*These copies belong to you. Take notes, write down questions, highlight, underline, and mark up the text as much as you need to. You're thoughts and impressions of the text will fuel our discussions and the directions they take. Think about your story: how do your personal experiences shape how you would answer this question and what you think of these diverse texts? We want to talk about life, happiness, family, relationships, sex, career, morality, death, God, decision making, or anything else that is important to you and your answer to this question. Keep the guiding question "**To whom do I answer?**" in the forefront of your mind as you read this selections. We're excited to see what you come up with. We'll see you in a few hours."*

SESSION 1 ("To Whom Do I Answer?")

Welcome Back and Ground Rules (10 min)

- **Example Script:**

“Before we begin with our question, let’s talk about our Three Ground Rules:

*1. **Everyone participates, no one dominates.** The expectation is that we all contribute to the discussion. We want to hear your story, and your impressions of the text. At the same time, no one person, to include myself, will dominate the discussion.*

*2. **Challenge ideas, not people.** You may disagree with a text or someone’s viewpoint, and that is expected. When you do disagree, focus on the idea itself. Challenge the idea, where it comes from, or where it leads. However, don’t attack the person.*

*3. **Respect the group. Things spoken here, stay here.** Authentic conversation can only happen if we respect the things that are shared here. If someone shares over the course of our discussion, keep that in the group. Don’t share it with people outside of the group.”*

- Group Discussion of Readings (50 min)
 - **Example Script:**

“To whom do I answer?”

-GROUP DISCUSSION- (SEE LWL-SG FACILITATION GUIDE)

- Conclusion and Distribution of Readings (5 min)
 - **Example Script:**

“We build the life worth living when we answer the question, “To Whom do I Answer?”

I’m now handing you several texts to read in this next section. At the top of the page will be a question. This will be the lens through which you interpret the text. Read each text carefully, and take as much time as you need to think about it. Read it, put it down, think about it, go do

something else, come back to it and read it again. You can read aloud in groups, but please save your discussions until you return.

*Take notes, write down questions, highlight, underline, and mark up the text as much as you need to. You're thoughts and impressions of the text will fuel our discussions and the directions they take. Think about your story: how do your personal experiences shape how you understand this question or text? We want talk about life, happiness, family, relationships, sex, career, morality, death, God, decision making, or anything else that is important to you. Keep the question **"How does the good life feel?"** in the forefront of your mind as your read these selections. We're excited to see what you come up with. We'll see you in a few hours."*

SESSION 2 ("...?")

SESSION 3 ("...?")

...

Post-Assessment and AAR (15 min)

- Distribute Post-Assessment (have participant write age and rank on assessment)
- Participant Reflective Writing
 - **Example Prompt:**

"What is the 'good life'? As a result of these questions we've considered, what is one thing you will change to live a life worth living?"

What does it mean to belong?

Rob Riemen, *Nobility of Spirit*, 95

"I never coveted fame or power. I have no money—look at my clothes and meager possessions. Divine wisdom is not mine, nor do I preach a particular faith. Is that why hatred, slander, and envy were my lot long before this trial? What is the culpability of an existence consecrated to the pursuit of human wisdom? "This is what I know. It is wiser to know what you don't know than to feign knowledge of something you turn out not to have. Posing the right questions provides greater insight into human existence than uncritically repeating answers that others give us. Words are what convey our existence. When words lose their meaning, our life, too, becomes meaningless and withers like a tree whose roots have died. Teaching is for other people, but I would have failed miserably if I had not stimulated you to reflect upon the meaning of wisdom, bravery, piety, justice, and the like. Was it not together that we came to the conclusion that wisdom is nothing but the union between life and thought, that our actions alone can demonstrate whether we are truly wise and understand something about life? A thoughtless life is not only foolish but evil, and the knowledge that teaches us *how* to live is by far the most important knowledge. We examined the meaning of the word 'brave' and learned that the essence of true bravery does not lie in heroic conduct toward others but in the courage to dare to be wise oneself, in the practice of justice and other virtues, and in unconditional loyalty to the quest for truth."

Robin Kimmerer, *The Council of Pecans*, 21

Now, two generations later, after removal, after allotment, after the boarding schools, after diaspora, my family returns to Oklahoma, to what is left of my grandfather's allotment. From the hilltop you can still see pecan groves along the river. At night we dance on the old powwow grounds. The ancient ceremonies greet the sunrise. The smell of corn soup and the sound of drums fill the air as the nine bands of Potawatomi, scattered across the country by this history of removal, come together again for a few days each year in a search for belonging. The Potawatomi Gathering of Nations reunites the people, an antidote to the divide-and-conquer strategy that was used to separate our people from each other and from our homelands. The synchrony of our Gathering is determined by our leaders, but more importantly, there is something like a mycorrhizal network that unites us, an unseen connection of history and family and responsibility to both our ancestors and our children. As a nation, we are beginning to follow the guidance of our elders the pecans by standing together for the benefit of all. We are remembering what they said, that all flourishing is mutual.

The Apostle Paul, *First Corinthians*, 12:14-26

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear, would say, "Because I am not, an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot

What does it mean to belong?

say to the hand, "I have no need of you," Nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor, to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may, have the same care, for one another, If one member suffers, all suffer together with it, if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Dalai Lama, *Viewing Yourself As Like an Illusion*, 176, 177

For whom it is insubstantial, like a mirage. A face in a mirror appears to be a face, but this image is not a real face in any way; it is from all viewpoints empty of being a face. Likewise, a magician can conjure up illusions that seem to be certain things, like a person in a box being skewered by a sword, but they are not at all established as those things. Similarly, phenomena such as bodies appear to be established from the objects' own side but are empty of being established that way and always have been...

Meditative Reflection

1. Remember a time when you mistook a reflection of a person in a mirror for an actual person.
2. It appeared to be a person but was not.
3. Similarly, all persons and things seem to exist from their own side without depending on causes and conditions, on their parts, and on thought, but they do not.
4. In this way, persons and things are like illusions.

Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness*, 144, 146-147

The goal manifested in every colonial site was to move people slowly but clearly from any kind of group thinking about their wants and needs to thinking like an individual who could enter into exchange over goods and services guided by a rationality freed from communal obligation except at the level of volition. Such people would form connection through capital and perform a relationality woven first and foremost in utility and aiming at profit. Exchange networks need not be personal, need not be communal, need not be storied, need not suggest long-term obligation or relationship, need not even require names or identities. They only require items and money, that is, commodities.

...

I asked Ben and Leonia what the worship and chapel services of their schools meant to them. What was the significance of singing and worship with students, holding hands and praying with them, sharing the eucharistic meal with them, sitting with them for hours in their offices, connecting with them online and through emails, listening and counseling them, eating meals with them, writing recommendations for them, encouraging them to stick with the course, or the program, or the education itself? Ben answered quickly with one word, "Work." Leonia pondered these questions and then said to me, "I see what you are getting at. But this is not friendship." "No," I said. "It is something so much more."

What does it mean to belong?

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To Whom Do I Answer?

Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save*, 3, 12; "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," 232

On your way to work, you pass a small pond. On hot days, children sometimes play in the pond, which is only about knee-deep. The weather's cool today, though, and the hour is early, so you are surprised to see a child splashing about in the pond. As you get closer, you see that it is a very young child, just a toddler, who is flailing about, unable to stay upright or walk out of the pond. You look for the parents or babysitter, but there is no one else around. The child is unable to keep his head above the water for more than a few seconds at a time. If you don't wade in and pull him out, he seems likely to drown. Wading in is easy and safe, but you will ruin the new shoes you bought only a few days ago, and get your suit wet and muddy. By the time you hand the child over to someone responsible for him, and change your clothes, you'll be late for work. What should you do?

...

Most of us are absolutely certain that we wouldn't hesitate to save a drowning child, and that we would do it at considerable cost to ourselves. Yet while thousands of children die each day, we spend money on things we take for granted and would hardly notice if they were not there. Is that wrong? If so, how far does our obligation to the poor go?

Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 28-29

Herder put forward the idea that each of us has an original way of being human. Each person has his or her own "measure" is his way of putting it. This idea has entered very deep into modern consciousness. It is also new. Before the late eighteenth century no one thought that the differences between human beings had this kind of moral significance. There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's. But this gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*.

Asad Tarsin, *Being Muslim: A Practical Guide*, 4

To start at the beginning: At a time before time, every human soul ever created was gathered before God. During that existence, which is detailed in the Quran, God asked us all, "Am I not your Lord?" To which every last one of us responded, "Oh yes! We bear witness." In the Islamic understanding, each of us has this knowledge on some subconscious level.

Through this Grand Covenant, each of us sealed our moral responsibility to acknowledge the Lordship of God. Throughout our lives here on Earth, we have the challenge of living according to this acknowledgement. In fact, this is one of the implications of the Two Testimonies of faith. The first part, "There is nothing worthy of worship except God," is a reaffirmation of our hearing witness to God's Lordship over us at a time before our time here. The second testimony, "Muhammad is the messenger of God," is a statement that God's lordship over us necessitates that we live in line with His will. It is as if to say, "We remember the covenant we made before life here, and we still honor it, and we will live our lives according to it."

...

After testifying to God's Lordship over us, we as a species were charged with the weighty responsibility of being His delegates in the world. We are responsible for setting its affairs right, ensuring justice and security, and acting so as to make the conditions of society conducive to knowing and worshipping God.

The Gospel of Luke, 10:25-38

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

To Whom Do I Answer?

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

The Analects of Confucius, 1.2, 13.18

1.2. Master You said: "A man who respects his parents and his elders would hardly be inclined to defy his superiors. A man who is not inclined to defy his superiors will never foment a rebellion. A gentleman works at the root. Once the root is secured, the Way unfolds. To respect parents and elders is the root of humanity."
13.18. The Governor of She declared to Confucius: "Among my people, there is a man of unbending integrity: when his father stole a sheep, he denounced him." Confucius said: "Among my people, men of integrity do things differently: a father covers up for his son, a son covers up for his father—and there is integrity in what they do."

Alice Walker, Everything Is A Human Being, 141-142

Well, said the trees, before I actually finished this list, we find you without grace, without dignity, without serenity, and there is no generosity in you either—just ask any tree. You butcher us, you burn us, you grow us only to destroy us. Even when we grow ourselves, you kill us, or cut off our limbs. That we are alive and have feelings means nothing to you. But I, as an individual, am innocent, I said. Though it did occur to me that I live in a wood house, I eat on a wood table, I sleep on a wood bed. My uses of wood are modest, I said, and always tailored to my needs. I do not slash through whole forests, destroying hundreds of trees in the process of "harvesting" a few. But finally, after much discourse, I understood what the trees were telling me: Being an individual doesn't matter. Just as human beings perceive all trees as one (didn't a U.S. official say recently that "when you've seen one tree, you've seen 'em all"?), all human beings, to the trees, are one. We are judged by our worst collective behavior, since it is so vast; not by our singular best. The Earth holds us responsible for our crimes against it, not as individuals, but as a species--this was the message of the trees. I found it to be a terrifying thought. For I had assumed that the Earth, the spirit of the Earth, noticed exceptions--those who wantonly damage it and those who do not. But the Earth is wise. It has given itself into the keeping of all, and all are therefore accountable. And how hard it will be to change our worst behavior!

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How Does a Good Life Feel?

Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 389-390

We must, that is, not only cut out the external manifestation but also tear out the roots of the passion that go deep into the soul. Since they are beliefs, and not organic parts of our innate constitution, they can be so extirpated. Indeed, nature herself demands their removal, saying, "What is all this? I brought you into the world without longing, without fear, without religious anxiety, without treachery and these other plagues; leave the way you came in" (Seneca).

So the Stoic does not hesitate to describe the wise person as totally free from passion (*apatheia*). Free, that is, from fear, distress, pity, hope, anger, jealousy, passionate love, intense joy, and all of the many relatives and subspecies of these. Free, as Seneca etymologizes, from all vulnerability and passivity toward the world. The wise person is totally self-sufficient. "Distress never befalls [her]: [her] soul is serene, and nothing can happen that would cloud it." External happenings merely graze the surface of her mind. Indeed, her spirit is "like the country on the other side of the moon: it is always calm there."

Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination*, 171

The struggle for joy must thus begin with whatever inner resources remain with the depressed or despairing self - be this the will to transform the sorrow through acts of joy or the courage to rebuild oneself from the residues of self-affirmation. At its nadir, all that may remain is a sense of one's facticity as a creature of God. And this too may be enough, as Rabbi Nahman once taught in a tale that speaks indirectly of his own struggles. According to the brief summary preserved by a disciple, the narrative described a Tzaddick whose perfect service of God was destroyed by a fall into depressive impotence, in which he wallowed until he was able to arouse himself through the simple sense of gratitude to God for creating him a Jew.

...

Joy is now seen as the most basic recognition of embodied difference, and of thankfulness for the fact of being. In this teaching, "no sadness!" is the great commandment-reverberating beyond Sinai, and before it.

Ghazi bin Muhammad, "*Postscript Happiness*," 155, 159

This still leaves us with two great questions: 'What is happiness?', and 'Can we ever experience it here, in this world?'. The answer to both questions also lies in this passage. First we need to note that the happiness here is associated with uninterrupted giving. The word for giving (*'ata*), together with its derivatives, only occurs 14 times in the Qur'an, and nowhere else in the Qur'an is uninterrupted giving mentioned. So we can conclude that happiness comes from uninterrupted giving. But whose uninterrupted giving is the cause of happiness? The context clearly suggests God's, but it does not exclude its being that of human beings as well.

...

Mothers, caregivers, aid workers and teachers know this well. They are often among the happiest people because they exhaust themselves in giving. Lovers sense this as well. Love affords them glimpses of happiness. People employed in a job in which they feel productive appreciate this as well: they give themselves in their work, and this leads to 'job satisfaction', which is also a glimmer of happiness. In fact, anyone who gives of themselves or their time in an unselfish way will experience some happiness. For them, being able to define happiness can only help to reinforce what they already know and do. And surely there is no more beautiful moral teaching than this: that happiness, like love, is giving, not taking.

Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*, 106-107

I remember talking once on this subject to one of the most beautiful personalities I have ever known: a woman, whose sympathy and noble kindness to me, both before and since the tragedy of my imprisonment, have been beyond peer and description; one who has really assisted me, though she does not know it, to bear the burden of my troubles more than anyone else in the whole world has, and all through the mere fact of her existence, through her being what she is – partly an idea and partly an influence a suggestion of what one

How Does a Good Life Feel?

might become as well as a real help towards becoming it, a soul that renders the common air sweet, and makes what is spiritual seem as simple and natural as sunlight or the sea: one for whom beauty and sorrow walk hand in hand, and have the same message. On the occasion of which I am thinking I recall distinctly how I said to her that there was enough suffering in one narrow London lane to show that God did not love man, and that wherever there was any sorrow, though but that of a child in some little garden weeping over a fault that it had or had not committed, the whole face of creation was completely marred. I was entirely wrong. She told me so, but I could not believe her. I was not in the sphere in which such belief was to be attained to. Now it seems to me that love of some kind is the only possible explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering that there is in the world. I cannot conceive of any other explanation. I am convinced that there is no other, and that if the world was indeed as I have said, been built of sorrow, it has been built by the hands of love, because in no other way could the soul of man, for whom the world was made, reach the full stature of its perfection. Pleasure for the beautiful body, but pain for the beautiful soul.

Javon Johnson, *Black Joy in the Time of Ferguson*

On the night it was announced that there would be no murder trial for Darren Wilson, I decided not to protest. Instead, I fell asleep listening to Stevie Wonder, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, Donny Hathaway, and others because I wanted to be happy and black. In the weeks following the decision not to indict the officer who killed Eric Garner, I attended a few protests in Los Angeles. I marched and chanted through some of the busiest streets in Los Angeles, not because I believe these demonstrations necessarily work, as the very fact that the streets were blocked off for us by and in coordination with the LAPD means we were operating within the same structures that murders black people without any accountability. I remember seeing waves and waves of black (and other) people brought together by a “bottom line blackness,” animated by an unwavering “freedom drive,” and made somewhat whole again through black joy—that is, the black love, laughter, hugs, and smiles that for a moment offer us glimpses of radical democracy, freedom, and utopia. And, I want a theory about that, one that is powerful enough to “imagine damn near anything,” as Hayes put it, one about what to do with all of this black joy just bursting at the seams.

Willie James Jennings, *My Anger, God’s Righteous Indignation*

I felt that helplessness again, as I watched the life drain out of George Floyd. And I sensed even more deeply, once again, the struggle against that hopelessness, which today I have to say feels like it's winning. I repeated many times the lesson that my parents and my people taught me about hope. Hope is a discipline; it is not a sentiment. But what I have also learned is that living the discipline of hope in this racial world, in this white supremacist-infested country called the United States of America, requires anger. I am angry. As long as I can remember, I have sensed this anger in me like a constant low humming sound, sounding from my very being. In truth, there is something quite noble in being the proverbial angry black person. Of course, it is not a proverb. This anger is the result of a history that will not relent. A history that constantly seeks to bind black people to death itself. But I've also come to realize that this anger, my anger, is connected to the righteous indignation of God.

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What Does it Mean for Life to Go Well?

Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 362

But I think it is clear that what we must absolutely avoid doing, if we are faithful to the spirit of the Stoic conception, is to attach to the indifferents, to external goods, the sort of value that most ordinary people are seen to attach to them and that Aristotle explicitly accords them. That is, We must neither ascribe to them any intrinsic worth as constituent parts of the agent's eudaimonia nor view them as absolutely indispensable necessary conditions for the eudaimon life. But most ordinary people, and Aristotle with them, do ascribe intrinsic worth to love and friendship, which are in their nature relations with unstable and uncontrolled external items. Most people, again, see themselves as social beings, for whom the loss of a country or of political privileges is the loss of an intrinsic value. Most people believe that the good human life cannot be pursued and realized without a certain amount of food, shelter, and bodily health-making these items necessary for eudaimonia, though not constituents of it. The Stoic is committed to denying all of this.

Jonathan Sacks, *Letters To The Next Generation 2: Letter 5*, 389-390

Was this his reward? To die so young? Abraham once asked, "Shall the judge of all the earth not do justice?" There are moments that can shake your faith to its foundations. Yet, as I stood at his funeral, this was not the feeling that swept over me. Instead I felt a strange, quite unexpected access of faith. For around me, gathered at short notice, were more than a thousand mourners, many of them his age or younger. Through their tears I saw the difference he had made to their lives. He wasn't rich or famous. He had lived all too briefly. Yet each of them had a story to tell of how he had helped them, inspired them, befriended them when they were lonely, lifted them when they were suffering some personal crisis. Each of those blessings had given rise to others in turn, in a series of ever-widening ripples of good.

Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, 88

We shall, of course, not take the trouble to enlighten our wise philosophers by explaining to them that the "liberation" of man is not advanced a single step by reducing philosophy, theology, substance and all the trash to "self-consciousness" and by liberating man from the domination of these phrases, which have never held him in thrall. Nor will we explain to them that it is only possible to achieve real liberation in the real world and by employing real means, that slavery cannot be abolished without the steam-engine and the mule and spinning-jenny, serfdom cannot be abolished without improved agriculture, and that, in general, people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity. "Liberation" is an historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the development of industry, commerce, agriculture, the conditions of intercourse. . . .

Genesis 17:6-7 (NRSV)

⁶ I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you; and kings shall come forth from you. ⁷ I will maintain My covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and to your off-spring to come. I assign the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God."

Harmut Rosa, *Two Versions*, 7

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By consequence, the ethical imperative that guides modern subjects is not a particular or substantive definition of the good life, but the aspiration to acquire the resources necessary or helpful for leading one. Acquiring resources thus is the dominant strategy to gain security, for it is fueled by the idea that once we will have accumulated sufficient resources, no contingency or accident will be able to harm us. In a way, we moderns resemble a painter who is forever concerned about improving his materials – the colours and brushes, the air condition and lighting, the canvas and easel etc. – but never really starts to paint.

Confucius, *The Analects*, 4.9, 4.14

4.9. The Master said: "A scholar sets his heart on the Way; if he is ashamed of his shabby clothes and coarse food, he is not worth listening to."

4.14. The Master said: "Do not worry if you are without a position; worry lest you do not deserve a position. Do not worry if you are not famous; worry lest you do not deserve to be famous."

Tony Morrison, *God's Language*, 250

Plenty, in a world of excess and attending greed that tilts resources to the haves and forces the have-nots to locate bounty within what has already been acquired by the haves, is an almost obscene feature of paradise. In this world of tilted resources, of outrageous, shameless wealth squatting, hulking, preening itself before the dispossessed, the very idea of plenty, of sufficiency, as utopian ought to make us tremble. Plenty should not be regulated to a paradisiacal state, but to normal, everyday, humane life.

Mary Grey, *Survive or Thrive*, 401

Here we have it all true peace, food in plenty, celebration, bodily integrity within a situation of renewed and restored relation. Something definitely to be celebrated as a this-worldly reality not endlessly deferred to eternal bliss. Nor should this be dismissed as the dream only for women and men who are confident of worldly prosperity, and as giving up on the whole dimension of eternity. (For many people this is a crucial issue, especially when experiencing no flourishing in this life: I suggest that the transcendence and eternity of God, Sacred Being and Divine Presence, will take care of eternity, with oceans of mercy and justice: for us, care and responsibility for this earth the only one we have and cherish and all earth dwellers, is the burning issue)

Revelation 21:1-8 (NRSV)

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them, ⁴he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." ⁵And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

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How Should I Act?

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, 137

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure.

Immanuel Kant, *The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative*, 106

...I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law. Here mere conformity to law as such, without having as its basis some law determined for certain actions, is what serves the will as its principle, and must so serve it, if duty is not to be everywhere an empty delusion and a chimerical concept.

Deuteronomy 6:1-8 (NRSV)

¹ Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, ² so that you and your children and your children’s children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. ³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶ Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.

Pirkei Avot, 1.1-3

1. Moses received the Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it on to the Men of the Great Assembly. They (the Men of the Great Assembly) said three things: Be careful in judgment; raise up many disciples; and make a fence for the Torah...

3. Antigonos of Sokho received [the Torah tradition] from Shimon HaTzaddik. He used to say:

Do not be like servants who serve their master on condition of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve their master not on condition of receiving a reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you.

Robin Kimmerer, *Skywoman Falling*, 10

In the Western tradition there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with, of course, the human being on top—the pinnacle of evolution, the darling of Creation— and the plants at the bottom. But in Native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as “the younger brothers of Creation.” ... They’ve been on the earth far longer than we have been, and have had time to figure things out. They live both above and below ground, joining Skyworld to the earth. Plants know how to make food and medicine from light and water, and then they give it away. I like to imagine that when Skywoman scattered her handful of seeds across Turtle Island, she was sowing sustenance for the body and also for the mind, emotion, and spirit: she was leaving us teachers. The plants can tell us her story; we need to learn to listen.

Howard Thurman, *Jesus And The Disinherited*, 34-35

The Negro has felt, with some justification, that the peace officer of the community provides no defense against the offending or offensive white man; and for an entirely different set of reasons the peace officer gives no protection against the offending Negro. Thus the Negro feels that he must be prepared, at a moment’s notice, to protect his own life and take the consequence therefor. Such a predicament has made it natural for some of them to use weapons as a defense and to have recourse to pre-meditated or precipitate violence.

How Should I Act?

Living in a climate of deep insecurity, Jesus, faced with so narrow a margin of civil guarantees, had to find some other basis upon which to establish a sense of well-being. He knew that the goals of religion as he understood them could never be worked out within the then-established order. Deep from within that order he projected a dream, the logic of which would give to all the needful security. There would be room for all, and no man would be a threat to his brother. "The kingdom of God is within." "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor."

Carrie Mae Weems, *Untitled*

Slave labor continues to build this country.
Some people don't care.
It's the game/the play/the luck of the draw/the gallop of unfettered capital

But for those who do care
For those with empathy.
Perhaps its time to consider:
Consider your privilege, along with its impact
Consider who does what and why
Consider making less and gaining more

Consider the men, women and children who make your lives easier,
And theirs harder:
The farmer and the worker,
The butcher and the barber,
The baker and the builder,
The nanny and the nurse!

Consider the importance of change and why it matters
Then insist upon change across all the platforms of life
Consider what you want, what you need and
Achieving it without exploiting others

Consider the role of industrialized nations
Consider why empires collapse
As colonies rise
And know that mounting resistance to the imbalance
Is the order of the day

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Tony Morrison, *God's Language*, 319

Well, under those historical pressures, the desire for choice in partners, the desire for romantic love, operate as a place, a space, away, for individual reclamation of the self. That is a part, maybe the largest part, certainly an important part, of the reconstruction of identity. Part of the "me" so tentatively articulated in *Beloved*. That's what she needs to discover. It will account for the satisfaction in the blues lyric and the blues phrase whether or not, and mostly not, the relationship flourishes. They're usually, you know, somebody's gone and not coming back or some terrible thing has happened and you'll never see this person again. Whether or not the affection is returned, whether or not the loved one reciprocated the ardor, the lover, the singer, has achieved something, accomplished something in the act of being in love. It's impossible to hear that sort of blues cry without acknowledging in it the defiance, the grandeur, the agency that frequently belies the wail of disappointed love.

What Role Does Suffering Play in Life?

The Wheel of Law (*Buddha*)

This, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of ill: birth is ill, decay is ill, disease is ill, death is ill, association with the unloved is ill, separation from the loved is ill, not to get what one wants is ill, in short the five aggregates of grasping are ill.

This, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the source of ill: the craving which causes rebirth is accompanied by passionate pleasure, and takes delight in this and that object, namely sensuous craving, craving for existence and craving for annihilation.

This, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of ill: the complete cessation, giving up, abandonment of that craving, complete release from that craving and complete detachment from it.

This, bhikkhus is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of ill; only this noble eightfold path namely, right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Life of the Buddha, 5.10-1.15

As he thus saw rightly the evils of the world, the evils of disease, old age, and death, pride of self in an instant departed from him, pride resulting from his strength, youth, and life. He did not give in to dejection or delight; he did not give in to doubt; or to sloth or sleep; he felt no attachment to sensual delights; he did not hate others or treat them with contempt. As this awareness, stainless and free -of passion, began to wax strong in that noble man...

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 225

You want, if possible (and no "if possible" is crazier) - to abolish suffering. And us? –it looks as though we would prefer it to be heightened and made even worse than it has ever been! Well-being as you understand it-that is no goal; it looks to us like *an end!* –a condition that immediately renders people ridiculous and despicable – that makes their decline into something *desirable!* The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering- don't you know that *this* discipline has been the sole cause of every enhancement in humanity so far? The tension that breeds strength into the unhappy soul, its shudder at the sight of great destruction, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, surviving, interpreting, and exploiting unhappiness and whatever depth, secrecy whatever masks, spirit, cunning, greatness, it has been given – weren't these the gifts of suffering, or the disciple of great suffering?

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 9

Beware! The time approaches when human beings no longer launch the arrow of their longing beyond the human, and the string of their bow will have forgotten to whirl! I say to you: one must still have chaos in oneself in order to give birth to a dancing star. I say to you: You still have chaos in you. Beware! The time approaches when human beings will no longer give birth to a dancing star. Beware! The time of the most contemptible human is coming, the one who can no longer have contempt for himself. Behold! I show you *the last human being*.

Ezra 3:10-13 (NRSV)

¹⁰When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; ¹¹and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. ¹²But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³so that the people

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could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

Pirkei Avot, 1.1-3

It is not in our power to explain either the peace of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous.

Christian Wiman, *My Bright Abyss*, 156

Despite all that I have gone through, and despite all that I now face, I am still struck by the singular nature of the pain in the weeks after my diagnosis. It was not simply the fact itself searing, through all the circumstances of my life, nor was it, as many people might suspect, the full impact of meaninglessness, the arbitrary nature of existence; the utter illusion of God. No, it was an excess of meaning for which I had no context. It was the world burning to be itself beyond my ruined eyes, it was God straining through matter to make me see, and to grant me the grace of simple praise.

Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 167

Humankind is, then, redeemed through Jesus' *ministerial* vision of life and not through his death. There is nothing divine in the blood of the cross. God does not intend black women's surrogacy experience. Neither can Christian faith affirm such an idea. Jesus did not come to be a surrogate. Jesus came for life, to show humans a perfect vision of ministerial relation that humans had very little knowledge of. As Christians, black women cannot forget the cross, but neither can they glorify it. To do so is to glorify suffering and to render their exploitation sacred. To do so is to glorify the sin of defilement.

Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save*, 18

Suppose you have just sent \$200 to an agency that can, for that amount, save the life of a child in a developing country who would otherwise have died. You've done something really good, and all it has cost you is the price of some new clothes you didn't really need anyway. Congratulations! But don't celebrate your good deed by opening a bottle of champagne, or even going to a movie. The cost of that bottle or movie, added to what you could save by cutting down on a few other extravagances, would save the life of another child. After you forgo those items, and give another \$200, though, is everything else you are spending on as important, or nearly as important, as the life of a child? Not likely! So you must keep cutting back on unnecessary spending, and donating what you save, until you have reduced yourself to the point where if you give any more, you will be sacrificing something nearly as important as a child's life-like giving so much that you can no longer afford to give your children an adequate education.

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What Should I Do When I Fail?

Layli Long Soldier, *Whereas*, (4)

I have thought carefully about certain terms in English, the language in which the Apology is written. Likewise, since the Apology is issued to Native people, I have considered Native languages. For months, I dwelled on the word "apologizes." As you may already know, in many Native languages, there is no word for "apologize." The same goes for "sorry." This doesn't mean that in Native communities where the word "apologize" is not spoken, there aren't definite actions for admitting and amending wrongdoing. Thus, I wonder how, without the word, this text translates as a gesture-

Sec. 8113. (a) Acknowledgment and Apology- The United States, acting through Congress-

...

(3) recognizes that there have been years of official depredations, ill-conceived policies, and the breaking of covenants by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes;

(4) apologizes on behalf of the people of the United States to all Native Peoples for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States

...

(b) Disclaimer- Nothing in this section- (1) authorizes or supports any claim against the United States; or (2) serves as a settlement of any claim against the United States.

Pema Chodron, *Start Where You Are*, 74-75

2. REFRAINING. The second part of confessing neurotic action is refraining. It's painful when you see how in spite of everything you continue in your neurosis; sometimes it has to wear itself out like an old shoe. However, refraining is very helpful as long as you don't impose too authoritarian a voice on yourself. Refraining is not a New Year's resolution, not a setup where you plan your next failure by saying, "I see what I do and I will never do it again," and then you feel pretty bad when you do it again within the half hour. Refraining comes about spontaneously when you see how your neurotic action works. You may say to yourself, "It would still feel good; it still looks like it would be fun," but you refrain because you already know the chain reaction of misery that it sets off. The initial bite, or the initial drink, or the initial harsh word might give you some feeling of well-being, but it's followed by the chain reaction of misery that you've been through not once but five thousand times. So refraining is a natural thing that comes from the fact that we have basic wisdom in us.

Asad Tarsin, *Being Muslim: A Practical Guide*, 107

1. If you are obedient to God, you must exhibit awareness of God's favor upon you, having guided you to obey Him.
2. If you are disobedient to Him, you must remorsefully repent to Him for your transgressions.
3. If you are in a time of ease you must sense deep gratitude to God for his gifts.
4. If you are challenged by adversity, you must endure God's decree with patience.

To make use of this timeless wisdom requires a level of awareness and introspection regarding the states we are in. Too often we live our lives at so fast a pace that we do not reflect upon ourselves. With reflection and

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introspection, we will be more able to engender the appropriate virtuous response of heart. Now we will examine more closely these and other spiritual virtues one should strive to embody.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, 323

Remorse. -Never yield to remorse, but at once tell yourself: remorse would simply mean adding to the first act of stupidity a second. -If we have done harm we should give thought to how we can do good. -If we are punished for our actions, let us endure our punishment with the feeling that we are thereby already doing good: we are deterring others from falling victim to the same folly. Every ill-doer who has been punished is entitled to feel he is a benefactor of mankind.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 274-275

What is most human to you? –To spare someone shame.

What is the seal of having become free? – No longer to be ashamed before oneself.

Romans 7:14-25 (NRSV)

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³ but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Langston Hughes, *Let America Be America Again*

O, yes, I say it plain, America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath— America will be!
Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people,
Must redeem The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain— All, all the
stretch of these great green states— And make America again!

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What Should I Do When I Fail?

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Life Worth Living Small Groups Pre-Assessment

Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1-10, 1 being "not at all" and 10 being "very."

How capable are you at making good decisions?

How confident are you in your ethical reasoning?

How strong do you feel spiritually?

How prepared are you for a major life crisis.

Life Worth Living Small Groups Post-Assessment

Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1-10, 1 being "not at all" and 10 being "very."

How capable are you at making good decisions? _____

How confident are you in your ethical reasoning? _____

How strong do you feel spiritually? _____

How prepared are you for a major life crisis. _____

What did you like about this training?

What did you not like about this training?

If you were in charge, how would you change this training to make it more effective?

Do you think other Soldiers might benefit from this training?

Life Worth Living - Small Groups Pilot Implementation Assessment

RANKS: 1, PFC, 6 SPC, 4 SGT

AGE: 22,27,30,21,22,21,20,20,22,21,21: 22.45 (AVG)

On a scale of 1-10, 1 being "not at all" and 10 being "very."

How capable are you at making good decisions?

PRE: 10,7,8,10,8,9,10,10,8,5,7 = 8.37 POST:8,8,10,9,5,9,10,8,9,8,5 = 8.09

How confident are you in your ethical reasoning?

PRE: 10,8,7,10,7,9,10,9,7,8,9 = 8.55 POST:8,10,8,8,5,8,8,7,9,9,7 = 7.91

How strong do you feel spiritually?

PRE: 2,3,4,4,6,10,10,3,6.5,3,8 = 5.41 POST:5,8,4,9,2,8,4,7,10,9,3 = 6.27

How prepared are you for a major life crisis.

PRE: 1,10,9,7,9,10,10,6,7,7,9 = 7.73 POST:9,10,5,6,10,7,5,8,9,7,6 = 7.45

What did you like about this training?

"The open floor concept for share out interpretations of the readings, as well as giving a diverse and wide range of diverse readings." -SGT, 30

"The discussion we had with other Soldiers, the actual strive to help Soldiers and ask the hard questions." -SPC, 22

"It allowed me to delve deep and actually critically think about the way I have been living my life." -PFC, 21

"People don't have good talks like this enough." -SGT, 21

What did you not like about this training?

"Personally I'm not entirely bound by a religion, I do think the excerpts were good but some of them took a very strong religious stance that personally I had a harder time understanding but after the discussions I did seem to understand them better." -SPC, 21

"It felt like there was a larger emphasis on religion I couldn't always relate to. That being said, there were always other comparisons or examples that made up for it." -SPC, 21

"It felt cramped." -SGT, 22

If you were in charge, how would you change this training to make it more effective?

"...I heard a lot of wise words and experience from others who have thought about things I wish not to." -SPC, 20

"More drawing individuals who aren't sharing into sharing, focused questions to the individuals if necessary," -SGT, 30

"I would've liked to analyze the language of the readings to fully comprehend the entirety of each one as a group..." -SGT, 21

Do you think other Soldiers might benefit from this training? (100% positive)

"Absolutely, introspection on this level is essential for mental, emotional, and spiritual health." -SPC, 22

"Definitely." -SPC, 20

"Honestly one of the best trainings I've had in a while. I thoroughly enjoyed the training." -SGT, 27