

Virtue – Chastity

צְנִיעוּת

tzne-yut / chastity

noun / chas·ti·ty / 'chas-tə-tē

the state of not having sex with anyone

Guide For Your Circle

1

ICE - BREAKER

Ask each person to introduce themselves, and to share with the group:

(a) their name; and

(b) a part of their day they would like to bring with them as they begin this conversation, and/or a part of their day they would like to leave behind

2

RECAP LAST MONTH'S VIRTUE

Ask the group to reflect on how they fared with their commitment from the last month

- Did you achieve your commitments around this virtue?
- What challenges did you face?
- What surprised you about the experience?
- Did your understanding of the virtue change over the month?

3

DISCUSS NEXT MONTH'S VIRTUE

Compare Ben Franklin's definition of the virtue with the passage from Pirkei Avot. Use the questions below to help guide the conversation.

4

MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT:

Before your meeting ends, set a goal for yourself for how you can better live that month's virtue. Share it with the group and plan to follow up on how you did at your next meeting.

Example: This is perhaps the most personal of Franklin's virtues. We ask you to reflect on what this means in your own lives and personal relationships.

Side-By-Side: Ben Franklin And Pirkei Avot

BEN FRANKLIN'S DEFINITION:

Rarely use venery but for health or offspring; never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

PIRKEI AVOT

(PA 3:10)

He would say: Anyone from whom the spirit of creations find pleasure, from him the spirit of God finds pleasure. And anyone from whom the spirit of creations do not find pleasure, from him the spirit of God does not find pleasure. Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinus says: [Late] morning sleep, midday wine, chatter of children, and sitting in the assembly houses of unlearned people remove a person from the world.

(PA 3:13)

Rabbi Akiva says: Joking and lightheartedness acclimate toward promiscuity. Tradition is a safeguarding fence around Torah. Tithes are a safeguarding fence around wealth. Vows are a safeguarding fence around abstinence. A safeguarding fence around wisdom is silence.

(PA 4:21)

Rabbi Elazar HaKapor says: Envy, lust and honor drive a man from the world.

Questions To Ask The Group

- How does Franklin's definition relate to Pirkei Avot? Some people might hear the word "chastity" and think the passages are advocating a sexless life. Is that what these passages convey?
- The Hebrew word that comes closest to chastity is "tzniyut" which better translates to modesty. Do you believe there is a connection between modesty and chastity?
- We used the same passage from Pirkei Avot (3:13) in the sections about temperance and chastity. How do these two virtues relate?
- Of all the virtues on Franklin's list, this one might strike a modern person as most outdated. Is it outdated? Or do you think chastity is a virtue that people ought to practice? Why or why not?
- Franklin also seems to argue not to use or abuse sexual and intimate relationships. How has sex become used and abused in our society and our community? What can we do to remedy this?