

Meeting Guide: TEMPERANCE

Congratulations! You made it to your first Ben Franklin Circle meeting. You can use our first meeting guide as much or as little as you need. And don't be nervous. The first meeting can be a little intimidating, but we've provided some tips below to get the conversation started (and trust us, that's the hardest part).

First, welcome your guests, and ask everyone to introduce themselves. Try an open-ended question to make everyone comfortable. For example, "What made you want to come today?" Or try an icebreaker. Here's one we like:

Rose, bud, thorn: This is a very quick and easy way to have people share something personal. Go around the circle. Ask everyone to say their name and (briefly!) share:

1. Something in their life that's going well (blooming, like the rose)
2. Something in progress (the bud)
3. Something they're struggling with (the thorn)

Now you're ready to introduce the topic for the meeting. It doesn't matter in which order you explore Franklin's virtues, but since he started with temperance, that's what we'll do here. Begin by reading Franklin's precept for temperance to the group: "**Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.**" Ask everyone to think about what it means.

Start the discussion with a big-picture question, such as:

- Franklin says he started with temperance because "**it tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head,**" and helps avoid other temptation. Do you agree? Do bad habits build on each other?
- Temperance isn't a word we use as much in the 21st century. What does the concept make you think of?
- Does our society value temperance? Why or why not?

Some sample follow-up questions:

- Some psychologists say that self-control diminishes as the day goes on. We might start the day strong, but weaken towards nighttime. Is that your experience?
- Others say that self-control is like a muscle — that the more you exercise it, the more it grows. Is that true for you?
- Is temperance an important virtue for the community? Why? What are the community consequences if people are weak or strong on temperance?
- Should temperance be imposed (as it was during the temperance movement), or should people be left on their own to cultivate this virtue?
- Franklin's definition has to do with food or drink. What are other things we might struggle with today? For instance, should we practice digital temperance and use our smart phones less?
- Work can also be an area where people overdo it, and work to "dullness". Should we apply temperance to our careers? Or does society require that we work all the time to get ahead?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on temperance to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, have people take turns reading a quote and ask the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

“Joy, temperance, and repose, slam the door on the doctor’s nose.”

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

“Everything in moderation, including moderation.”

— Oscar Wilde

“My doctor told me I had to stop throwing intimate dinners for four unless there are three other people.”

— Orson Welles

“I have heard that, with some persons, temperance – that is, moderation – is almost impossible; and if abstinence be an evil (which some have doubted), no one will deny that excess is a greater.”

— Anne Bronte

“Temperance is a tree which as for its root very little contentment, and for its fruit calm and peace.”

— Buddha

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice temperance in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they’d like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for temperance:

- Commit to sitting down for all your meals for a period of time (one week, one month, etc.) Creating a ritual around our meals can help us think more about what we’re eating.
- Think of a social activity that doesn’t involve drinking. Commit to meeting friends for a walk around the park instead of happy hour.
- Carve out device-free time. Commit to one hour a day without looking at your phone. Bonus points: One Ben Franklin Circle member said his struggle was not with food or drink but with Facebook! He committed to deleting the Facebook app from his phone.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<http://benfranklincircles.org/temperance/getting-started-with-temperance>

<http://benfranklincircles.org/temperance/quiz-how-temperate-are-you>

Meeting Guide: SILENCE

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month's virtue. What surprised them about practicing temperance? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Silence. Start by reading Franklin's precept for silence to the group: **"Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- Do you think silence is a virtue? Why?
- Are there times when it isn't? How do you make the distinction?
- What do you think people can learn by practicing silence?
- Do you make time for silence each day? How?
- Some people prefer silence more than others. What's the best way to interact with someone who is different from you on this virtue? Should you adapt your behavior to echo theirs, like being more gregarious with a chatty crowd? Or should you be yourself and keep quiet?
- Do you think our culture values silence?
- Today, we communicate on so many different platforms. What does silence mean in an era when we can always interact with others — on social media or via text or some other digital communication?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on silence to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

"Silence is golden when you can't think of a good answer."
— Muhammad Ali

"Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom."
— Francis Bacon

"No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow."
— Alice Walker

"In silence and movement, you can show the reflection of people."
— Marcel Marceau

"Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content."
— Helen Keller

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice silence in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they'd like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for silence:

- Commit to listening actively, without interrupting others, for one month.
- Try voicing your opinion only when absolutely necessary (with social media, we know this can be pretty tough!)
- Commit to starting or ending your day with 30 minutes of silence, away from the distractions of television, podcasts, etc.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<http://benfranklincircles.org/silence/the-sound-of-silence>

<http://benfranklincircles.org/silence/quiz-do-you-talk-too-much-silence>

Meeting Guide: ORDER

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month's virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Order. Start by reading Franklin's precept for order to the group: **"Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- Do you keep your life ordered and organized? What are some ways that you do?
- The opposite of order is chaos. If order is a virtue, does that make chaos a vice?
- Does order also have its time and place? When might it be inappropriate to prioritize order?
- What role does order play in a community? Should people keep their yards and street fronts clean and ordered? Why does it matter?
- What's the relationship between order and creativity? Artists order chaotic and disparate elements — pigments, words, musical notes — to create something meaningful. Yet creative types often have reputations for being unruly and disorderly in their own lives. Is this true? Why is it so?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on silence to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

“It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan.”
— Eleanor Roosevelt

“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”
— Arthur Ashe

“Chaos is merely order waiting to be deciphered.”
— José Saramago

“Good order is the foundation of all things.”
— Edmund Burke

“In chaos, there is fertility.”
— Anaïs Nin

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice order in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they’d like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for order:

- Start doing a deep clean of your living space. Sort out things you need and don’t need. Donate things you may not be attached to.
- Design a weekly schedule for yourself. Think about breaking your time up into blocks for work, hobbies, family time, etc. See if this makes you feel more productive.
- Start small. Commit to keeping order in one area instead of your whole house or office. For example, keep your nightstand orderly so you wake up to order every morning. Commit to cleaning your desk every day before you leave work.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<https://benfranklincircles.org/order/moving-from-disruption-to-order-to-peace>

<https://benfranklincircles.org/order/a-vision-of-order-2>

Meeting Guide: RESOLUTION

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month’s virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month’s virtue: Resolution. Start by reading Franklin’s precept for resolution to the group: **“Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.”** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- A more contemporary word for resolution might be grit — setting goals and accomplishing them no matter what. Do you think of yourself as a “gritty” person?
- Resolution has a personal and communal aspect: you should have resolution in your own affairs, but also in your affairs with others, like in keeping appointments and promises. Why is it important to keep your word to others?
- The opposite of resolution might be flakiness. What do you think of people who are flaky? Have you ever been flaky?
- Franklin says, “Perform without fail what you resolve.” Is that always the right thing to do?
- What resolution have you been proud of keeping?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on silence to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

“Nothing will work unless you do.”

—Maya Angelou

“If you hear a voice within you say ‘you cannot paint,’ then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.”

—Vincent Van Gogh

“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.”

— Theodore Roosevelt

“If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you’ll never get it done.”

— Bruce Lee

“It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.”

— Ursula K. Le Guin

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice resolution in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they’d like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for resolution:

- Set one attainable goal to accomplish in the next month. Instead of deciding to run a marathon, commit to walking to or from work once or twice a week. Track your progress.
- Identify one thing you think you’re neglecting in your life. Commit to making a plan for how you can prioritize it.
- Every morning for one month, write down the one most important thing you want to accomplish that day. At the end of the day, review and see if you were able to do it.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<https://benfranklincircles.org/resolution/your-3-big-rocks-how-to-live-with-resolution-every-day>
<http://benfranklincircles.org/resolution/with-a-little-help-from-my-friends>

Meeting Guide: FRUGALITY

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month's virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Frugality. Start by reading Franklin's precept for frugality to the group: **"Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself: i.e. Waste nothing."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- What's the difference between being frugal and being cheap?
- What do you think Franklin means when he says make no expense but "to do good"? What do you spend money on that does good for yourself or others? How do you evaluate what's good and what isn't?
- What do you spend money on that does not do good for others or yourself? How could you eliminate that expense?
- How does this virtue play out — or fail to — in our broader culture? Should we, as a society, be more frugal?
- Can being frugal actually make us more generous? How?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on frugality to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

"Nowadays people know the price of everything, and the value of nothing."
— Oscar Wilde

"I make myself rich, by making my wants few."
— Henry David Thoreau

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."
— Albert Einstein

"Balancing your money is key to having enough."
— Elizabeth Warren

"Too many people spend money they earned ... to buy things they don't want ... to impress people that they don't like."

— Will Rodgers

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice frugality in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they'd like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for frugality:

- Set a monthly budget for yourself. See if you can stick to it.
- Commit to saving a certain amount of money this month and at the end of it, commit to finding some way to use it to do good for others.
- Journal every item you spend for a week, then categorize the items into wants and needs.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<http://benfranklincircles.org/frugality/4-ways-to-practice-frugality-in-your-life>

<http://benfranklincircles.org/frugality/how-to-raise-financially-responsible-kids>

<http://benfranklincircles.org/frugality/ben-franklin-has-something-to-say-to-millennials-directly>

Meeting Guide: INDUSTRY

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month's virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Industry. Start by reading Franklin's precept for industry to the group: **"Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- Franklin writes, "Be always employed in something useful." What's your definition of something useful?
- What are some examples of those unnecessary actions that Franklin thinks we should cut off?
- Today, we might call industry productivity. Do you consider yourself a productive person? Do you think our society is productive?
- Should we leave time for idleness in our lives — for moments or periods when we are at rest and not engaged in anything useful?
- How can our practice of industry benefit the larger community?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on industry to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

“Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.”

— Abraham Lincoln

“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”

— Confucius

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”

— Colin Powell

“Luck? I don't know anything about luck. I've never banked on it and I'm afraid of people who do. Luck to me is something else: Hard work — and realizing what is opportunity and what isn't.”

— Lucille Ball

“Work gives you meaning and purpose and life is empty without it.”

— Stephen Hawking

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice industry in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they'd like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for industry:

- Track the way you spend your time on any given day. Are you surprised by how much time you're spending on any one task?
- Keep a diary of the times you feel most productive. What and when are they? Can you take you take better advantage of those times/circumstances? For instance, if you work best in the morning, can you schedule your most important tasks then?
- Franklin says always be engaged in something useful. Can you commit to some way of giving back or doing some work that helps someone else?

Fun stuff from our blog:

<http://benfranklincircles.org/industry/the-key-to-industry>

<http://benfranklincircles.org/industry/industry>

<http://benfranklincircles.org/industry/industriousness-as-a-form-of-worship>

<https://benfranklincircles.org/industry/why-we-should-slow-down-at-mealtimes>

Meeting Guide: SINCERITY

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month's virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Sincerity. Start by reading Franklin's precept for sincerity to the group: **"Use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- How would you define sincerity? Does your definition align with Franklin's?
- Some might associate the word sincerity with being honest and authentic. What role does the white lie play in a virtuous life? Is it better to be honest or to fib in order to spare someone's feelings? Franklin says, "Use no hurtful deceit."
- How might someone cultivate sincerity in their own lives?
- What do you think Franklin means by "Think innocently and justly"?
- What is the opposite of sincerity? Dishonesty? Cynicism? Deceit?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on sincerity to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

"Sincerity: if you can fake it, you've got it made."
— George Burns

"How can sincerity be a condition of friendship? A taste for truth at any cost is a passion which spares nothing."
— Albert Camus

"I'm not always sincere. One can't be in this world, you know."
— Greta Garbo

"You can play a shoestring if you're sincere."
— John Coltrane

"People are very sincere in their praise, and you can't take it lightly."
— Joan Jett

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice sincerity in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they'd like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for sincerity:

- Think of a time this past week you didn't "speak accordingly." Hold yourself accountable for the next month.

- Commit to taking a minute before you speak. We often say things we don't mean because we don't know what else to say. Commit to pausing before you say something to others and making sure you really mean what you are about to say.
- No gossip! Can you commit to not gossiping for one month?

Fun stuff from our blog:

<http://benfranklincircles.org/sincerity/sincerity>

<http://benfranklincircles.org/sincerity/our-honesty-is-textured>

<http://benfranklincircles.org/sincerity/practicing-sincerity-through-actively-listening>

Meeting Guide: JUSTICE

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month's virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Justice. Start by reading Franklin's precept for justice to the group: **"Wrong none, by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- Franklin's precept for justice seems to be do no harm. Is that a good definition? What's your definition of justice? What do you think society's definition is?
- The phrase "social justice" gets thrown around a lot. What does it mean exactly? Are social justice and justice different?
- Can you think of any paragons of justice?
- What's the best way to respond after you've been unjust to someone? What's the best way to respond after someone has been unjust to you?
- Is there something you identify in the community as a sign of injustice? How often do you find yourself speaking out against it?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on justice to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

— James Baldwin

"Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are."

— Ben Franklin

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

“Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.”

— Cornel West

“The noblest worship is to make yourself as good and as just as you can.”

— Socrates

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice justice in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they’d like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for justice:

- Think of someone you have acted unjustly toward this past year. Commit to reaching out to them and admitting you acted unfairly.
- Commit to one civic activity in the next month. Could you volunteer in your community? Attend a local community board meeting?
- Is there something you see happening in the community that you think is unjust? Can you commit to finding a way to speak up about it?

Fun stuff from our blog:

<http://benfranklincircles.org/justice/does-justice-evolve-in-time>

Meeting Guide: MODERATION

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month’s virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month’s virtue: Moderation. Start by reading Franklin’s precept for moderation to the group: **“Avoid extremes. Forebear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.”** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- Franklin seems to be calling for emotional and psychological moderation. Is it important to control your emotional and psychological states? Why? How can someone learn to control their inner states more effectively?
- Is it more important to be moderate in how you think and feel, or in what you do and say?
- Why would Franklin caution specifically against resentment? Why is resentment a problem?
- What’s the biggest challenge for you when it comes to moderation? Describe something you feel or do in an extreme way that could benefit from some moderation.

- Should society as a whole practice more moderation? What might be the benefits?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on moderation to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

“Moderation in temper is always a virtue; but moderation in principle is always a vice.”
— Thomas Paine

“Everything in moderation, including moderation.”
— Oscar Wilde

“Use, do not abuse ... neither abstinence nor excess ever renders man happy.”
— Voltaire

“Moderation is a virtue only in those who are thought to have an alternative.”
— Henry A. Kissinger

“Saints have no moderation, nor do poets. Only exuberance.”
— Anne Sexton

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice moderation in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they’d like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for moderation:

- Identify something you do in excess. Commit to cutting back on that activity.
- For the next month, commit to making a list of the times you feel offended by others. Wait a couple days, look back at list and ask if you were “resenting the injury” more than it deserved.
- Commit to being moderate in the way you respond to someone whose views differ from yours. One way to do this is invite them to explain their viewpoint fully.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<http://benfranklincircles.org/moderation/what-is-your-idea-of-moderation>

Meeting Guide: CLEANLINESS

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month’s virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Cleanliness. Start by reading Franklin's precept for cleanliness to the group: **"Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- Does cleanliness enable us to think more clearly? When our desks or homes are clean do we feel less distracted?
- Do you feel overwhelmed by household tasks? How can you make them more manageable?
- Do you like tidying up and doing chores? If not, are there ways to make the process more pleasurable and fun?
- How are cleanliness and the concept of self-care related? How can you practice more self-care?
- How can we turn the concept of cleanliness outward to help improve the community?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on cleanliness to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

"The best time for planning a book is while you're doing the dishes."
— Agatha Christie

"The objective of cleaning is not just to clean, but to feel happiness living within that environment."
— Marie Kondo

"Civilization is the distance that man has placed between himself and his own excreta."
— Brian W. Aldiss

"Mrs. Joe was a very clean housekeeper, but had an exquisite art of making her cleanliness more uncomfortable and unacceptable than dirt itself."
— Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice cleanliness in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they'd like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for cleanliness:

- Find a way to clean or beautify your community. Invite a neighbor to collaborate with you.
- Identify one household chore you neglect. Commit to doing it every day for one month.
- Commit to helping someone else. Could you offer to rake a busy neighbor's yard or help an elderly friend straightening up their home?

Fun stuff from our blog:

<https://benfranklincircles.org/cleanliness/how-cleanliness-can-impact-society>

Meeting Guide: CHASTITY

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month's virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Chastity. Start by reading Franklin's precept for chastity to the group: **"Rarely use vengery but for health or offspring; Never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- What are your thoughts on Ben Franklin's precept for chastity?
- Is chastity important in the context of a relationship? How about in the context of the community?
- 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?
- How might we encourage and cultivate chastity in our community — and among our children — without sounding too prudish and old-fashioned?
- 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?

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice chastity in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they'd like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitment for chastity:

- Commit to not over-sharing about sexual experiences. Keep them between you and your partner.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<https://benfranklincircles.org/chastity/chastity-in-the-21st-century>

<https://benfranklincircles.org/chastity/chastity>

Meeting Guide: TRANQUILITY

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month's virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month's virtue: Tranquility. Start by reading Franklin's precept for tranquility to the group: **"Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable."** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- What are the consequences of failing to be tranquil?
- When was the last time you were bothered by a "trifle" or something that couldn't be helped? Were you able to practice tranquility and let it go? If so, what helped you successfully let go? If not, what hindered you?
- We might paraphrase Franklin here as saying: Don't be petty and don't cry over spilled milk. Why is tranquility, understood in this way, important?
- How do you try to practice tranquility in your life? How you find balance?
- How does physical activity play a role in your own quest to lead a tranquil life?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on tranquility to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

"What I dream of is an art of balance."

— Henri Matisse

"In the madness, you have to find calm."

— Lupita Nyong'o

"It is neither wealth nor splendor; but tranquility and occupation which give you happiness."

— Thomas Jefferson

"Calm mind brings inner strength and self-confidence, so that's very important for good health."

— Dalia Lama

"With tranquility, we allow ourselves to build resilience."

— Sharon Salzberg

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice tranquility in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they'd like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for tranquility:

- Commit to setting aside some unscheduled time every week to relax.
- Commit to doing a regular physical activity that helps you unwind.
- Commit to saying “no” to at least one thing that you can’t take on without becoming overextended.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<https://benfranklincircles.org/tranquility/finding-tranquility-by-changing-the-picture>

<https://benfranklincircles.org/tranquility/finding-tranquility>

<https://benfranklincircles.org/tranquility/finding-tranquility-at-a-monastery>

<https://benfranklincircles.org/tranquility/tranquility>

Meeting Guide: HUMILITY

Welcome your guests. Feel free to do another ice-breaker.

Check in on their experience with the last month’s virtue. What surprised them about practicing it? What did they learn? Was it easier than they thought it would be? Was it harder?

Turn the discussion to this month’s virtue: Humility. Start by reading Franklin’s precept for humility to the group: **“Imitate Jesus and Socrates.”** Ask everyone what that means to them.

Some sample questions to ask:

- There are a lot of different ways to think about humility. By referencing Jesus and Socrates, Franklin suggests that humility involves thinking of yourself as unimportant and undistinguished, and being a loving servant or others. How else can humility be defined?
- Why is it important to be humble? How does it improve the community? Can it ever hurt the community?
- How does the concept of humility intersect with the concept of leadership? Can strong leaders be humble? Can humble leaders be strong?
- What is the relationship between being humble and being a servant to others?
- Is there a danger in being too humble? When does humility become servility or obsequiousness? Have you ever been too humble?

Pro tip! It can be fun to provide some quotes on humility to get people talking. You can write these on index cards and leave them on the table. If the conversation stalls, people may take turns reading a quote and asking the group to respond.

Sample quotes:

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.”

— C. S. Lewis

“Thank you’ is the best prayer that anyone could say. I say that one a lot. Thank you expresses extreme gratitude, humility, understanding.”

— Alice Walker

“Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, but humility.”

— Nelson Mandela

“Real genius is nothing else but the supernatural virtue of humility in the domain of thought.”

— Simone Weil

“Humility is the mother of all virtues; purity, charity and obedience. It is in being humble that our love becomes real, devoted and ardent.”

— Mother Teresa

Set commitments. Before you conclude your meeting, ask everyone to take a moment and think how to practice humility in their own life. Ask them to identify a goal for something they’d like to achieve or work on until the next meeting.

Sample commitments for humility:

- Commit to praising people for small achievements. Point out when others are doing a good job.
- Commit to doing one small act of kindness every day for a month.
- Commit to asking others their opinions in social or work situations. Invite others to suggest ways in which your idea, event or project could be improved.

Fun stuff from our blog:

<https://benfranklincircles.org/humility/a-lesson-in-humility>

<https://benfranklincircles.org/humility/teaching-humility-over-family-dinner>

<https://benfranklincircles.org/humility/are-you-proud-of-your-humility>