

Virtue – Moderation

אִמְצָעוּת

Em-tza-ye-ut / moderation

noun / mod·er·a·tion / mädə'rāSH(ə)n

an avoidance of extremes in one's actions, beliefs, or habits

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: In Franklin's definition he urges us to "forebear resenting injuries." Could you commit to practicing moderation by controlling how you respond to what you perceive to be insults or slights?

Side-By-Side: Ben Franklin And Pirkei Avot

BEN FRANKLIN'S DEFINITION:

Avoid extremes. Forebear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

PIRKEI AVOT

(PA 4:1)

Who is the mighty one? He who conquers his impulse, as it says, "slowness to anger is better than a mighty person and the ruler of his spirit than the conqueror of a city." (Proverbs 16:32). Who is the rich one? He who is happy with his lot, as it says, "When you eat [from] the work of your hands, you will be happy, and it will be well with you" (Psalms 128:2). "You will be happy" in this world, and "it will be well with you" in the world to come.

Questions To Ask The Group

- How does Franklin's definition relate to Pirkei Avot's idea of "the mighty one" or "the rich one"?
- Franklin seems to be calling for emotional and psychological moderation (i.e. avoid resentment). Is it important to control your emotional and psychological states? Why? How can someone learn to control their inner states more effectively?
- 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.
- How does Judaism encourage moderation?
- Should society as a whole practice more moderation? What might be the benefits?