

Virtue – Sincerity

פְּוֹנָה

Ka-va-nah / sincerity

noun / sin·cer·i·ty / 'ser-ə-tē, -'sir-
honesty of mind: freedom from hypocrisy

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: For sincerity, could you commit for one month to keeping track of the situations in which you say something you don't necessarily mean or believe?

Side-By-Side: Ben Franklin And Pirkei Avot

BEN FRANKLIN'S DEFINITION:

Use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and if you speak, speak accordingly.

PIRKEI AVOT

(PA 4:3)

He used to say, Do not despise any man, and do not dismiss anything, for there is not a man who has not his hour; and there is not a thing that has not its place.

(PA 2:13)

Rabbi Shimon says: Be careful in the reciting of Shema (and praying). When you pray, do not make your prayer fixed, rather prayers for mercy and supplication before the Omnipresent, blessed be He, as it says (Joel 2:13), "For He is gracious and merciful, long-suffering and full of kindness, and repents of the evil." And do not be wicked in your own eyes.

Questions To Ask The Group

- The first text discusses the importance of giving every person the benefit of the doubt and the second speaks of ensuring the sincerity of prayer. What connects the two ideas? How does Franklin's definition relate to them?
- 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."
- Why does Judaism create such a strong prohibition against gossip?
- Think of a time when it was hard to be sincere. What was it? Why was it hard?
- How might someone cultivate sincerity in his/her own life?