

Confronting Evil

Chalice Lighting

To face the world's shadows, a chalice of light.
To face the world's coldness, a chalice of warmth.
To face the world's terrors, a chalice of courage.
To face the world's turmoil, a chalice of peace.
May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.
—Lindsay Bates

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings:

*Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.
Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*
—Exodus 21:24-25

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,
Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which spitefully use you.
And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek, offer also the other . . .
—St Luke 6: 27 - 29

The hatred you're carrying is a live coal in your heart - far more damaging to yourself than to them.
—Lawana Blackwell

Evil when we are in its power is not felt as evil but as a necessity, or even a duty.
—Simone Weil

*Overcome anger by non-anger, overcome evil by good.
Overcome the miser by giving, overcome the liar by truth.*
—The Dhammapada

The world is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.
—Albert Einstein

*Those who beat you with fists,
Do not pay them in the same coin,
But go to their house and kiss their feet.*
—Sikhism

He who does not punish evil, commands it to be done.
—Leonardo DaVinci

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I Name one or two emotions you have felt when confronted by evil.

Round II Using insights you gained from doing the homework, talk about your encounters with evil, understandings you have developed, and the disquiet you feel when you are around evil.

Round III In this session, did you discover anything new about confronting evil? What has been especially meaningful to you?

Closing Words

What is important is to keep learning, to enjoy challenge, and to tolerate ambiguity. In the end there are no certain answers.
—Marina Horner

Song

Go Now in Peace

Group Business

Pass out homework for the next session.

Covenant Groups

CONFRONTING EVIL



The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent.
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others.
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories.
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn.



Leader's Notes for Confronting Evil

This session focuses on the dilemma of confronting evil in the world. For many participants, there are no easy answers. However, the process of examining the problem may give us new insights.

Chalice Lighting: (2 min)

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin

Sharing of Joys and Concerns: (10 min)

Ask group members to tell in one or two sentences...How you are today? Share information about absent members.

Silence: (3 min)

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it!

Shared Readings: (5 min)

Go around your group, letting each person in turn read from Shared Readings found in the bulletin until all readings are finished.

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening: Do your rounds of deep sharing/deep listening. Pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure all get to share at least once.

Round I (10 min)

Name one or two emotions you have felt when confronted by evil.

Round II (40 min)

Using insights you gained from doing the homework, talk about your encounters with evil, insights you have developed, and disquiet you feel when you are around evil.

Round III (15 min)

In this session, did you discover anything new about confronting evil? What has been especially meaningful to you?

Closing Words

Read the closing words:

What is important is to keep learning, to enjoy challenge, and to tolerate ambiguity. In the end there are no certain answers.—Marina Horner

Song

Go Now in Peace

Group Business: (5 min)

Pass out Q and Q (homework) for next time.

Confronting Evil

In a perfect world it would be very easy to be a good person. When people around us conduct themselves in mature, loving ways it is simple to respond in kind. Unfortunately the world isn't perfect and we often must respond to others' less than perfect behavior. Sometimes that behavior goes beyond immature or impolite, and we are faced with behavior that is intentionally cruel or downright evil.

According to the Wikipedia, "**Evil** refers to the "bad" aspects of the behavior and reasoning of human beings — those which are deliberately void of conscience, and show a wanton penchant for destruction. Evil is sometimes defined as the absence of a good which could and should be present; the absence of which is a void in what should be. In most cultures, the word is used to describe acts, thoughts, and ideas which are thought to (either directly or causally) bring about affliction and death — the opposite of goodness, which itself refers to aspects which are life-affirming, peaceful, and constructive."

In our everyday lives, we deal with evil on many levels.

- ✓ A family member or co-worker whose malicious comments and behavior cause hurt and discord in the family or workplace.
- ✓ A person who steals our purse or billfold, robs our house, or vandalizes our neighborhood.
- ✓ Someone who causes intentional physical harm, or even death, to us or to someone we care about.
- ✓ A government or commercial entity whose policies cause harm and suffering to countless beings.

Dealing with evil behaviors presents a dilemma to those who try to always behave ethically. The approach of "Let's find a way to work this out." isn't always effective. Fighting evil can involve behaving in ways that are uncomfortable to us, yet ignoring evil allows it to fester and spread. Sometimes fighting evil can make us feel strong and empowered, but more often we are left with a residue of doubt, anger, or bitterness inside us.

These quotations may give you insights as you ponder the dilemma of confronting evil.

We ought always to deal justly, not only with those who are just to us, but likewise to those who endeavor to injure us; and this, for fear lest by rendering them evil for evil, we should fall into the same vice. —Hierocles

All that is necessary for evil to succeed is that good men do nothing. —Edmund Burke

Yield not to evils, but attack all the more boldly. —Virgil

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." On the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by doing so you will heap burning coals upon his head." —Romans 12a; 19-20

It may be necessary temporarily to accept a lesser evil, but one must never label a necessary evil as good. —Margaret Mead

We may draw good out of evil: we *must not* do evil, that good may come. —Maria Weston Chapman

The spread of evil is the symptom of a vacuum. Whenever evil wins, it is only by default: by the moral failure of those who evade the fact that there can be no compromise on basic principles. —Ayn Rand

To overcome evil with good is good, to resist evil by evil is evil. —Mohammed

Questions to Ponder

1. Think about a situation in which you were faced with evil. What were your options? Which did you choose? What regrets do you have, if any?
2. Anger is a natural response to evil. On one hand, it gives us the energy and resolve to fight. On the other, it can fill us with hate and diminish our own humanity. How have you channeled anger to positive action? Have you experienced anger that has become poison to your own soul?
3. Sometimes to fight evil we have to get down and dirty. Few would argue our right to defend ourselves when attacked physically. Regrettably, many contentious situations we find ourselves in are not as clear-cut as self-defense, and we have to make tough choices. Have you ever had to use means you were not comfortable with in order to reach an end you believed in? Would you do it again, or was there another option?
4. Other times it seems that fighting evil is impossible or will exact a price we are not willing to pay. Have you ever closed your eyes to a situation because you felt that your efforts would be futile or because the consequences were too severe? Would you make the same choice again?
5. Where does revenge fit into your struggle with evil? What about forgiveness?