

Small Group Exercise: The Inward Journey

Timing: about an hour

Opening

Facilitator welcomes participants and selects a recorder who will report back to the larger group when it reconvenes.

Welcome and Purpose of the Group

Facilitator: This is an opportunity to get to know each other, to create a safe place to explore how an “inward journey” can strengthen and sustain your work for peace and justice.

Chalice Lighting

When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.

When action comes from another section, the feeling disappears.

—Rumi

Brief Check-In: Facilitator asks participants to introduce themselves by saying their names and briefly how they are feeling right now about the topic to be considered in this group.

Topic: The Inward Journey

Facilitator: Many of the world’s greatest social change agents relied on spiritual practices to keep centered inwardly and be effective publicly. Desmond Tutu famously said that on an extra demanding day he abandoned his one hour of prayer and prayed for two. Gandhi knew that the change the world needed began with how we lived our lives and asked his followers to *be the change*.

Facilitator asks participants to take turns reading aloud the following quotations:

Love takes off the mask we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.

—James Baldwin

And he whose soul is flat—the sky

Will cave in on him by and by.
—Edna St. Vincent Millay

To insist that I must be only what I am now is a restriction which human nature must abhor. —Rabbi Abraham Heschel

For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? —Psalm 137

There is no way to peace, peace is the way. —A.J. Mustie

I can lay no claim to goodness until I can prove that mean people have not made me mean. —Barbara Kingsolver

Today they tell me I’m going to Chiapas, to lead the people on a march.... When we get to the roadblock, there will be armed paramilitaries.... My fear disappears when I begin to speak in these situations, without raising my voice. —Patria Jiménez

If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.
—Isaiah 58:10

When society is made up of men [sic] who know no interior solitude it can no longer be held together by love: and consequently it is held together by a violent and abusive authority. —Thomas Merton

Questions for Reflection

Facilitator asks participants to take turns reading aloud the following questions:

- Which, if any, of the above quotes do you like and why?
- What can you do (or do you do) on a regular basis that brings you to the calm center of your being?
- What connection do you see between your “inward journey” and your work for peace and justice?

Facilitator invites participants to sit silently together for a minute.

Discussion

Facilitator then leads a discussion of both the quotations and questions, making sure that participants share the time fairly. Each person will have the chance to speak uninterrupted for up to three minutes. Facilitator lets people speak when they’re ready, popcorn style, and doesn’t call on them. If a person doesn’t speak for the whole three minutes, that’s

okay. When they're done, Facilitator goes on to the next person who wishes to speak. When each person who wants to speak has had an opportunity, Facilitator opens the floor for discussion. Facilitator ends the discussion leaving about five minutes for check-out and closing.

Brief check-out: Facilitator asks participants what they liked in the session and what is their most important “take-away.”

Closing: *Polish your heart for a day or two; make that mirror your book of contemplation.* —Rumi

Session by Stephen Shick, November 2014

Quotations from his book *Be the Change: Poems, Prayers and Meditations for Peacemakers and Justice Seekers*. Boston: Skinner House (2009). Available at www.uuabookstore.org or 800-215-9076 and wherever books are sold.

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