

Session 5: Chapters 7 & 8

Gather

Create and protect connections

If needed, reconnect to your group by introducing yourself with your name and your connection to the congregation. Then go around and share one word that reflects how you are feeling coming to small group.

Then, have someone read out loud the guidelines for gathering found in the *About this Guide* document and any additional guidelines added for your group. Make sure you all understand what time to wrap up your conversation to best honor each other's time.

Center

Ground yourselves in common purpose

Have one person read: *An invitation to a Brave Space* by Micky Scottbey Jones

Together we will create brave space Because there is no such thing as a "safe space"

We exist in the real world

We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.

In this space

We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world.

We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,

We call each other to more truth and love

We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.

We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.

We will not be perfect.

It will not always be what we wish it to be

But It will be our brave space together,

And

We will work on it side by side.

Discuss

Pick a few questions below to respond to as a group

1. What does a good apology require? Why do so many apologies fall short? What is the role of apology in the work of repentance?
2. Do you agree with Maimonides that refusing forgiveness after multiple sincere apologies constitutes a sin or harm of its own?
3. What do you think: is the person who is harmed obligated to forgive the harm-doer? Even if they apologize multiple times, sincerely?
4. How has cultural pressure to grant forgiveness affected your own interactions with people who caused you harm? With those you have harmed?
5. Ruttenberg quotes Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's response to the question of post-Holocaust forgiveness, saying that "no one can forgive crimes committed against other people" (190). What are your thoughts on this? What do you think are some appropriate ways to do repentance work when the victim of harm is no longer alive?
6. Nearly every week we recite this line from the prayer that Jesus gave us: "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Do we mean this? How have we practiced this? Where could we still?
7. How does Ruttenberg define atonement? How is it different from repentance or forgiveness?
8. Ruttenberg writes that, though the process of repentance is challenging, "the only way out is through" (201). What are some concrete techniques you can take from Ruttenberg's work that will help you to work through this process of repentance?
9. What parts of these chapters were most challenging or thought-provoking for you?

Close*End your discussion with prayer*

In your final session, close your time together with the prayer below, adding any prayer concerns from your group.

Loving God, We seek to walk the pathway of your love and compassion. Strengthen us in this work. Where we feel anxiety, grant us peace. Where we encounter fear, grant us courage. Where we face unknowns, grant us hope. May Christ guide us, the Spirit sustain us, and this community uphold us. Thank you for the brave space this group has held...for the truth we have shared, for the questions we have asked, for the challenge and gift it has been. May these blessings carry us beyond this space we've created which we now close. Amen.