



Defying Hate Resources Small Group Reflections

The **Session plan** is a guide and a springboard for discussion. The **Standard Format** includes:

- An *opening* reading that introduces but does not guide the topic.
- A *check-in* during which each person briefly shares about such questions as, "What's most on your mind today?" or "How is it with your spirit today?"
- A time for the *focus* or theme of the meeting with sharing from personal stories, guided by questions in the Session Plan, and learning from listening to others, rather than wanting others to agree with a perspective.
- The *check-out* gives opportunity for each participant to say how the session was for him/her.
- A *closing reading*.
(<http://smallgroupministry.net/basiclements.html>)

Suggested Opening Readings and Reflection Questions:

Ervin Staub:

"Both evil and goodness evolve. Heroes are not born; their evolution often begins with small steps. People learn by doing, change as a result of their own actions. Very often rescuers agreed to hide a person or family, expecting this to be for a short time. But once people begin to help, their concern for the welfare of those they helped increases. They begin to see themselves as caring people. Some rescuers would take in more people to hide, or if they succeeded to move people to a safer place, they looked for more opportunities to help. What sometimes began as limited commitment often became intense involvement."

Reflection Questions:

How has your commitment to love evolved over time?

In what ways do you see yourself increasing commitment to issues or problems?

How does this evolution help strengthen not just ourselves, but our communities?

Elie Wiesel

"The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of beauty is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, but indifference between life and death."

Reflection Questions:

What are some of the ways that I use my indifference to protect me from pain?

What would it take to wake me from my indifference?

Who would be impacted by such a choice?

Brené Brown

“Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the [shadow] will we discover the infinite power of our light.”

Reflection Questions:

What is my experience of being vulnerable?

Where does my vulnerability shine a light on my courage?

How does my vulnerability allow me to defy hatred?

Bell Hooks, All About Love: New Visions

“As more people have found the courage to break through shame and speak about woundedness in their lives, we are now subjected to a mean-spirited cultural response, where all talk of woundedness is mocked. The belittling of anyone's attempt to name a context within which they were wounded, were made a victim, is a form of shaming. It is psychological terrorism. Shaming breaks our hearts. All individuals who are genuinely seeking well-being within a healing context realize that it is important to that process not to make being a victim a stance of pride or a location from which to simply blame others. We need to speak our shame and our pain courageously in order to recover. Addressing woundedness is not about blaming others; however, it does allow individuals who have been, and are, hurt to insist on accountability and responsibility both from themselves and from those who were the agents of their suffering as well as those who bore witness. Constructive confrontation aids our healing.”

Reflection Questions:

What is my experience of shame?

Where does my shame prevent me from recognizing another's humanity or wholeness?

How does my vulnerability give me strength to defy hatred?

Martin Luther King Jr., A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Great Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Now there is a final reason I think that Jesus says, "Love your enemies." It is this: that love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals. Just keep being friendly to that person. Just keep loving them, and they can't stand it too long. Oh, they react in many ways in the beginning. They react with guilt

feelings, and sometimes they'll hate you a little more at that transition period, but just keep loving them. And by the power of your love they will break down under the load. That's love, you see. It is redemptive, and this is why Jesus says love. There's something about love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So love your enemies. (from "Loving Your Enemies")

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to you to love your enemies?
 - How do you respond to those who have harmed you?
 - How do you respond to those not close to you who have caused harm?
 - Is there a time when you have been loved into truth?
 - How is possible that love can defy hate?
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Paulo Coelho, *The Devil and Miss Prym*

"When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change; at such a moment, there is no point in pretending that nothing has happened or in saying that we are not yet ready. The challenge will not wait. Life does not look back. A week is more than enough time for us to decide whether or not to accept our destiny."

Reflection Questions:

- When have you been challenged to test your courage and willingness to change?
 - What was like for you?
 - What effect has this had on the choices that you make now?
- What is it that calls us to respond in love, to defy hate?

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them."

Reflection Questions:

- When have you felt the fear but done it anyway?
 - How did you respond to others when they told you couldn't do it?
 - What does courage mean to you?
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Elie Wiesel

"As long as one dissident is in prison, our freedom will not be true. As long as one child is hungry, our life will be filled with anguish and shame. What all these victims need above all is to know that they are not alone; that we are not forgetting them, that when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours, that while their freedom depends on ours, the quality of our freedom depends on theirs."

Reflection Questions:

How does your liberation help others?

How does another's liberation help you? Or alternatively: How does their oppression impact you?

How does defying hatred free you as an individual?

Audre Lorde

"When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."

Reflection Questions:

What is your vision of Beloved Community?

When have you dared to use your power?

How does that impact your ability to manage fear?

Adrienne Rich

In those years, people will say, we lost track

of the meaning of we, of you

we found ourselves

reduced to I

and the whole thing became

silly, ironic, terrible:

we were trying to live a personal life

and yes, that was the only life

we could bear witness to

But the great dark birds of history screamed and plunged

into our personal weather

They were headed somewhere else but their beaks and pinions drove

along the shore, through the rags of fog

where we stood, saying I

Reflection Questions:

What the "dark birds" in our history? Today?

How do we balance "I" and "We"?

How does/Does reflecting on our past give us strength to defy hatred today?

Additional Resources:

Facing History & Ourselves Curriculum

#WeDefy

Martha and Waitstill Sharp (Adult Curriculum)
Martha and Waitstill Sharp (Children's Curriculum)
Taking It Home, Session 14: Justice (Children's Curriculum)
Righteous Among the Nations (Children's Curriculum)

USHMM Resource on Martha & Waitstill Sharp

The Sharps' Collection at Brown