

## Foundational Principles

### Lesson 1-5: Responding to Injustice

#### Discussion Guide

*“Don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives ... God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh — the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.” Genesis 45:5b-8 (NLT)*

**Life is just not fair: It’s a lesson we learn as a child but continue to experience as an adult.** Experiencing injustice can affect all aspects of our lives and create tremendous emotional stress. You may experience a professional injustice, such as being laid off or fired, getting passed over for a promotion, receiving the blame for a co-worker’s mistake, or working in a toxic environment. You may also experience a personal injustice, such as the death of a loved one, infidelity in a marriage, a divorce, a health issue, or bankruptcy.

**“You cannot control what happens to you in life, but you can always control what you will feel and do about what happens to you”** (Viktor Frankl, [Man’s Search for Meaning](#)). As a prisoner in the World War II Nazi concentration camps (including [Auschwitz](#)), Viktor Frankl experienced injustice on a scale that is difficult to comprehend. One in 28 Jews survived; Frankl was one of them. How did he and a few others survive through this tremendous atrocity and torture? They did not give up but found meaning in their lives, even in a concentration camp. Frankl had an overwhelming desire to see his wife again and held onto the hope of reuniting with her in the future. Those that could not get beyond what they were experiencing everyday did not survive.

He survived because:

- He found meaning in his life, beyond the tremendous suffering and torture he was enduring.
- He served his fellow prisoners by helping them realize that life was still expecting something from them.
- He had hope beyond his suffering and circumstances.
- He understood love in its deepest meaning is spiritual.

The atrocities committed against Jews and others were the result of sin and hatred that led to more than six million murders. Regardless of how someone experiences injustice, he/she has a choice about how to respond. From these stories we learn the following:

- **Don’t Blame** – Blaming others, even if justified, leads to bitterness that eventually becomes a cancer of the soul.
- **Learn** – Wisdom comes, in part, by learning from experiences. So, ask the question, “What can I learn from this?” It might also be helpful to ask others for their perspective.
- **Forgive** – There is no better thing to do than to forgive someone. It is the root of learning humility.
- **Find Meaning** – Frankl moved past unbearable circumstances to search for meaning in his life. He lived and then flourished because he found meaning.
- **Love** – Love allows conquering of life circumstances, no matter how difficult.

*Discussion:*

- What injustice have you experienced, either professional or personal? How did it affect you? Did you ultimately find any meaning in your suffering?
- How have you seen others respond to injustice? What did they do well/not well?
- How do you feel about the statement: You cannot control what happens to you, but you can control your response?
- Is there anything in your organization that feels unfair?

**Bottom line:** Adversity and injustice have the potential to bring deep meaning and purpose for your life, even though it might be difficult to see in the moment. You choose how you respond to every wrong that happens. This is solely up to you and no one else. And just because everything might not be going perfectly in your life, does not mean God does not love you or that he caused it. He loves you deeply.

### Dig Deeper

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#### Want to learn more?

- *Video*: Viktor Frankl discussion of [Youngsters need Challenges](#), a 1979 Frankl discussion of the psychological dangers of under-challenge and reductionistic indoctrination on U.S. campuses.
- *Video*: Viktor Frankl, [Finding Meaning in Difficult Times](#)
- *Book*: [“Man’s Search for Meaning”](#) by Viktor Frankl. This tells the incredible story of living through the atrocities of Nazi concentration camps. Two quotes from this book:
  - “The truth is that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: **The salvation of man is through love and in love**” (page 38).
  - “The experiences of camp life show that man does have a choice of action. There were enough examples, often of heroic nature, which proved that apathy could be overcome, irritability suppressed. Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress. We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, **but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way**” (page 65).
- *Documentary*: [Viktor & I](#), interviews of people from around the world impacted by Frankl done by his grandson. There is a section in another language but keep watching. Two quotes from the film:
  - “If it is not meaningful, it is not worth doing.”
  - “Think consequentially to the end.”

#### Joseph’s story of injustice and ultimate blessing in Genesis 37-50

The family stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sound like a soap opera. There was jealousy, greed, manipulation, power struggles, prostitution, anger, murder, bitterness and revenge, all culminating with Joseph’s forgiveness of all the injustices that were done to him by his family and others. Let’s examine these.

**Injustice 1:** Jacob’s favoritism to his son, Joseph, over his older brothers created resentment on their part. The brothers hatched a scheme to kill Joseph, but ultimately decided to sell him into slavery.

**The Blessing:** Upon arriving in Egypt, Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The Lord was with Joseph. Potiphar was so impressed with Joseph that he gave him complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned.

**Injustice 2:** Potiphar’s wife saw how handsome Joseph was and propositioned him multiple times, but Joseph always fled. One day, she falsely accused Joseph of attempted assault, and Potiphar sent him to prison.

**The Blessing:** Joseph soon found favor with the warden who put Joseph in charge of the prison.

**Injustice 3:** Joseph accurately interpreted the dreams of two prisoners who were former servants of Pharaoh. When one of these prisoners was restored to his former position, he promised he would remember Joseph. Instead, he forgot about Joseph until Pharaoh had a dream a few years later that his wise men could not interpret.

**The Blessing:** Joseph correctly interpreted Pharaoh’s dream, predicting severe famine in seven years and that would last for seven years. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the entire land of Egypt. This was when he was 30 years old.

**The Ultimate Purpose:** Eventually, Joseph saved the lives of his brothers when they arrived in Egypt to buy grain during the famine, even though they had sold him into slavery. Joseph saved his entire family, which was the lineage of Jesus. God worked through the injustices Joseph experienced to save the lives of all Abraham’s decedents.