

Spiritual Practices Zeal

Facilitator _____

Date _____

Chalice/Candle Lighting

Opening Words:

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

— Howard Thurman

Check-in/Sharing

Topic:

An Excerpt from *To Life! A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking* by Harold Kushner

In this primer, Harold Kushner explores Jewish traditions and practices. A key one is to live life to its fullest, which we call the spiritual practice of zeal.

To life — these two words represent so much of what Judaism is about. They suggest first that Judaism is about how to live, not just what to believe. They convey an optimistic attitude toward life, investing our energy in living rather than in worrying about dying, asking us to enjoy the pleasures of this life rather than noticing all the things that are wrong with it, emphasizing life in this world rather than pinning our hopes on finding satisfaction in some world to come. As the traditional Jewish toast over a glass of wine, *To Life* conveys a sense of exuberance, a readiness to enjoy the pleasures of this world. It removes from wine, and from other pleasures, that taint of sin and self-indulgence, and invites us to look at all that God has created and find it good. The sages teach us

that 'in time to come, everyone will have to account for all the good things God created which he refused to enjoy.'

Does any other people celebrate the special moments of life, the births and birthdays and weddings, with as much food, as much laughter and as many tears as Jews do?"

Questions: Plan a "Toast to Life" celebration for your group. Have each person come prepared to talk about a vivid experience of being fully aroused by life. Also have each person bring a special goblet, glass, or mug to the gathering. Gather in a circle, bless your goblets, and fill them with celebratory liquids. After each person shares his or her story, all raise your glasses and toast "to Life!"

Check-out/Likes and Wishes

Closing Words:

You feel your own life — your heart, your mind, your body, your sexuality, the people and things you are connected to — and you spontaneously fill with the exclamation: "God, it feels great to be alive!" That's delight.

— Ronald Rolheiser in *The Holy Longing*

To Practice This Thought: Start your day with the affirmation 'I am vibrantly alive!' Say it enough times so that it sinks into your consciousness and seeps into your body. Whenever your energy feels depleted during the day, repeat the affirmation. In the last hours of the evening, let your 'I am vibrantly alive' extend outward to support others through your prayers.

Group Session Plan based on resources from www.spiritualityandpractice.com