

Session Twelve

Have Fun Storming the Castle!!

The objectives of this session are:

- to consider the concept of true love or soulmates
- to think about the difference between seeking justice and seeking revenge
- to explore the idea of the enduring nature of love
- to consider what things inspire us to bravery or to act selflessly
- to see how determination and hope can lead to accomplishing your goals

Materials and supplies you will need:

- the DVD (or videotape) of the movie, *The Princess Bride*
- DVD player (or VCR) and TV monitor
- a copy of the UU hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- chalice and matches or lighter
- one copy of Resource #14
- a copy of resource #15 for every participant
- pens or pencils

Things to do ahead of time:

- locate the DVD or videotape and rent it from the library or video store if necessary
- If you will not be watching the whole film, use the DVD menu to select scene #20 (or if using a VHS tape, cue it by finding the right)
- watch the movie in its entirety beforehand (even if you have seen it before)
- Cut apart the picture on Resource #12 and arrange them on the table before the participants arrive.

Session Outline

Opening Activity: Chalice lighting and check-in (10 min)

Premiere: Introducing the movie and watching an excerpt of *The Princess Bride* (30 min)

Reflection: True Love (10 min)

Processing: Justice vs. Revenge (10 min)

Closing: (10 min)

Opening Activity

Light the chalice and share inspirational reading #638, "Love", from *Singing the Living Tradition* with the group. (Or make a copy of the reading, number each paragraph and give them to group members to read.)

Ask the members to check-in with their name and one person or thing in their lives that they love.

Remind the group that anyone always has the right to pass during times of sharing.

Premiere

Watching The Princess Bride

Introduce the video by telling the group you will be watching an excerpt from the movie, *The Princess Bride*. Ask if anyone has already seen it. If anyone has, ask them if they would be willing to share the premise of the film with the group. If not, introduce the video

yourself by saying something along these lines:

*As the story begins, a grandfather reads a favorite book to his sick grandson. The book he reads, *The Princess Bride*, is about the most beautiful woman in the world, the hero who loves her, and the evil prince who says he wants to marry her.*

The lovely Buttercup and a farmhand named Westley, are truly and deeply in love with each other. But when Westley left to make his fortune so that he could marry Buttercup, his ship was captured by the notorious take-no-prisoners Dread Pirate Roberts and she's heard nothing for five years. In despair she has agreed to marry Prince Humperdinck.

Humperdinck has arranged for Buttercup to be kidnapped in order to start a war with the neighboring country of Guilder. The kidnapers, a Sicilian "mastermind" named Vizzini and his two henchmen, Fezzik the giant and Inigo Montoya, carry Buttercup away but are pursued by a mysterious masked man in black. At the top of the cliffs, Vizzini leaves his two henchmen, Inigo and Fezzik, to deal with the man in black while he absconds with Buttercup. Inigo is a superb swordsman and Fezzik is huge and immensely strong, but the man in black manages to defeat them both.

Soon the man in black catches up with Vizzini and dispatches him as well. The man in black turns out to be Westley and the two lovers are happily reunited.

Meanwhile, Prince Humperdinck has raised the alarm about the kidnapping and given chase. In order to escape, Westley and Buttercup flee into the fearsome Fire Swamp.

Westley and Buttercup safely navigate the dangerous Fire Swamp, but they're captured by Prince Humperdinck and his men as soon as they emerge from the swamp.

In order to save Westley, Buttercup makes a deal; she'll go back and marry Humperdinck in exchange for Westley's freedom. Humperdinck agrees even though he has no intention of holding up his end of the bargain. As soon as Buttercup is out of earshot, he turns Westley over to his lieutenant, Count Rugen with orders to imprison and torture him.

Count Rugen is a cruel and arrogant man who killed Inigo's father, Diego Montoya, twenty years ago. Inigo was only 11 years old when his father died and never knew the name of his father's murderer, only that the man has six fingers on his right hand. The grief-stricken boy vowed to avenge his father and spent the next twenty years studying swordsmanship and searching for the six-fingered man. Count Rugen is the six-fingered man.

In the days leading up the wedding, Prince Humperdinck orders Florin's Thieves' Forest cleared of potential troublemakers and the guard at the castle gate increased to 60 men. Fezzik is hired into the Brute Squad assigned to purge the Thieves' Forest and learns that Count Rugen -- Inigo's long-sought six-fingered man -- is in the castle. When he finds a very inebriated Inigo in the Thieves Forest, Fezzik takes him home, sobers him up, and tells him that he's found the six-fingered man. Together they go to find Westley so that he can help them devise a plan to enter the castle.

Begin the video and watch scenes #20 (Ultimate Suffering) through the end, Scene 27 (As You Wish).

This sequence starts with the Prince discussing his plan to kill Buttercup with his henchman. Buttercup enters and she and the Prince argue. She accuses Prince Humperdinck of being a slimy, weak coward. In his anger, he locks Buttercup away in her room and goes to the dungeon to torture Westley to death.

Meanwhile, Fezzik and Inigo are searching for Westley when they suddenly hear a tremendous cry of pain. Inigo immediately recognizes it as belonging to the "man in black." Inigo and Fezzik follow the cry of anguish into the woods where Inigo calls upon the spirit of his deceased father to help them find the path to "the man in black."

When they find Westley he is unconscious and appears to be dead. Inigo tells Fezzik to pick up Westley and they head out to find a miracle.

They trio visits the cottage of Miracle Max who informs them that their friend Westley is "only mostly dead." Max asks how much money Inigo and Fezzik have and says that he'll only work so cheaply for a truly noble cause, Inigo makes up a pitiful lie, but Max uses a bellows to pump air into Westley's lungs in order to find out what he really has to live for. When Westley wheezes out the words, "true love," Max tries to convince them that Westley said something totally different and he therefore doesn't have to help them. Max's wife comes out of her hiding place and forces Max to help the trio. Max concocts a miracle pill (coated with chocolate) and sends them on their way.

Inigo, Fezzik and the still unconscious Westley arrive at the front gate of the castle. They find it very heavily guarded,

so they decide to revive Westley so that he can think of a brilliant scheme to get them inside.

Westley and Inigo wheel Fezzik up to the front gate where he shouts to the men there that he is the dread pirate Roberts and had come to take all their souls. With aid of a holocaust cloak, they set Fezzik on fire which terrifies the guards so much that all but the gate keeper flees. Inigo, Westley and Fezzik overcome the gate keeper and soon are inside to the castle.

While Westley, Inigo and Fezzik are gaining entrance to the castle, the wedding ceremony of Prince Humperdinck and Buttercup is being conducted inside. The Prince motions to Count Rugen to go and find the cause of the noise outside. Count Rugen runs into Westley, Inigo and Fezzik and orders his men to attack. After Inigo dispatches all four of the Count's guards, Count Rugen runs away. The Prince panics when Count Rugen doesn't return immediately and he orders the bishop to cut the wedding ceremony short. He has Buttercup taken to the honeymoon suite as he runs off to find out what has happened outside.

Meanwhile Count Rugen ambushes Inigo, wounding him badly. While he taunts Inigo, the Spaniard gathers his strength and soon, despite his injury, kills Count Rugen as the two duel.

Westley has managed to crawl to Buttercup's room and is hiding on the bed when she enters. Buttercup is despondent and doesn't notice him until he speaks which stops her from committing suicide. In the midst of their reunion, they are interrupted by Prince Humperdinck. Westley convinces the

Prince that he should surrender or be slowly and painfully disfigured. The Prince being a coward, surrenders and is tied up by Bittercup, not knowing that Westley still doesn't have his strength back. Inigo stumbles in the room after his duel with Count Rugen and Fezzik shouts up from the courtyard that he has found four horses. Westley, Buttercup, Fezzik and Inigo escape into the night.

The next morning, when they are safely away, Westley and Buttercup kiss and the book ends. Stop the DVD just after Grandpa says, "As you wish."

Reflection

True Love

Begin the discussion by asking for general impressions, and things which occurred to the group as they were watching the video. Then, if no one brings it up, ask the group to consider:

Buttercup tells Prince Humperdinck that she and Westley are joined by the bonds of true love. She says that he can't track that "with a thousand bloodhounds or break it with a thousand swords." Do you think that there is such a thing as true love? If there is, do you think that it is as unbreakable as Buttercup says? When Inigo & Fezzik hear the anguished cry Westley makes, Inigo immediately recognizes it as being made by the man in black. How do you think he knew it was Westley? (He says that since Westley's true love is marrying another man that night, only he has cause for ultimate suffering.) Prince Humperdinck tells Westley that since he (Westley) and Buttercup truly love each other they might have had a chance for real happiness and that only one couple in a century has that chance.

Do you think this is true? How would you define true love? (One possible definition is: True love is when you put your partner's interests and needs above your own. It is when you will do anything to see them happy, willing to sacrifice anything you have just to have your partner in your life. It is a deep, profound belief that you and your partner are meant only for each other, each completing the other and making each other whole.)

Miracle Max says that "true love is the greatest thing in the world." Do you agree? Why do you think that the little boy is so outraged when he finds out that Prince Humperdinck lives? Do you think the Prince should have been permitted to live? Why is sparing the Prince's life a greater punishment than death? (One possible answer is that the humiliation that Prince Humperdinck suffers may eventually cause his downfall.)

Processing

Justice vs. Revenge

Invite all of the participants to silently consider the two concepts of justice and revenge. After they have had some time to think about the two concepts, ask how they would define each. Some simple definitions might be: Justice - The quality of being righteous; The law. Revenge - The act of taking retaliation for injuries or wrongs.

We usually require justice to fit a number of criteria:

1. Closure: Justice should be final, without a repeating cycle of vengeance.
2. Healing: Similarly, justice should result in something positive overall.

3. Deterrence: Something to encourage the event never to happen again.
4. Order: Justice should be according to a set code - there must be consistency and reliability to justice.

Ask the group to consider the following: *Can revenge ever be just? Can justice ever have the same effect as revenge? Is justice merely societal revenge? At the end of the movie, Inigo says that he's been in the revenge business for so long that he never thought about what to do with the rest of his life. How has Inigo's quest for revenge blinded him to the rest of what life has to offer? Why do you think that Inigo doesn't seem happier after killing his father's murderer? In our American legal system, it is often said that "justice is blind." What does this mean to you? Do you think it is true?*

Closing

End your time together by extinguishing the chalice and reading (or inviting someone to read) #562 "A Lifelong Sharing" by Mother Teresa from the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*.



Taking It One Step Further:

If your group will be watching the entire movie rather than just an excerpt, here are some additional ideas to expand the experience and have some fun as a group:

More Discussion

True Love has been used as a theme in many works of literature and film. Ask

the group to brainstorm other movies, plays, or stories that have true love as a central theme. Do the other stories end as happily as the movie *The Princess Bride* does? In the Shakespeare play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Lysander laments that "the course of true love never did run smooth." Do you think this is true? What other proverbs or sayings about love can you think of?

More Activities

Have a valentine party – make cards that express love, decorate plain cupcakes with hearts or valentine sprinkles. Make heart shaped sugar cookies together and decorate them. (If it isn't close to Valentine's Day, you can find decorating supplies online at:

www.shopbakersnook.com/ or at www.kitchenkrafts.com/ and choose Valentine's Day from the drop down "choose your event" menu.)

