May Meeting Primer

An optional read-ahead and quick reference, about 10 minutes

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Guiding Question: Whose good is missing from what I want?

At the Meeting

- **Today's reading: Seneca, *Letters* 48.1–3**. We'll bring it into discussion question 2.
- **The shared case:** A preferred meeting time conflicts with colleagues' care responsibilities. Everyone can reason from these facts, whether or not they have done the weekly practice.

Making Room for Other People

Four o'clock suits your workday. You're about to propose it for the team's regular meeting when you remember two colleagues need to collect their children then. The same plan that protects your mornings would burden them.

May asks how our desires can make room for the good of others. We begin with whom our wants include. We then consider what return we might quietly require for giving them consideration. Recognition and agreement can be welcome. If either becomes a condition of our concern, another person's answer begins to govern what we want for them.

A wider aim includes your legitimate needs too. You can want protected work time and a meeting that takes care responsibilities seriously. The final arrangement may still need discussion. What changes first is what you want the arrangement to serve.

The readings examine shared interests, recognition, and care when a response differs from what we hoped. *For ancient texts, use any translation you like.*

Optional Reading (about 8 minutes)

1. **Seneca, *Letters* 48.1–3** (2 minutes) This is the passage we'll read together. How does friendship change whose advantage Seneca considers his concern?
2. **Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 5.6** (2 minutes) Compare the ways of giving. What does the person keeping a private account expect in return?
3. **Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.24.22–24** (3 minutes) What effort to help does Epictetus permit, and what demand about the other person's distress does he reject?
4. **Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 6.50** (1 minute) How can an aim stay serious while allowing for resistance? What role does justice retain when the first plan is blocked?

Think About

The shared case is enough to participate. We explore reasons and alternatives before using the application steps.

- Whose interests are easiest to leave out when a plan suits you?
- What return might you expect for considering someone else?
- What would show that you wanted the shared good differently?

Application at the Meeting

Application after discussion: Include the Common Good. Use the steps once to test the understanding developed together.

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1. **Notice.** What do I want, and whose good is missing?
2. **Include.** I want this, while taking their legitimate interests seriously.
3. **Loosen.** If they respond differently, what goodwill can I keep?
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Compare “I want a time that protects my mornings” with an aim that also takes the colleagues’ care responsibilities seriously. Use Notice → Include → Loosen once. Introduce the refusal to test whether concern survives disagreement; the group need not choose the meeting time.

A wider aim can be understood while the schedule remains unresolved. Generous words and another person’s gratitude do not establish that desire has changed.

Key Terms

For reference during the meeting. No need to memorize these.

Desire (*orexis*). Movement toward what appears good. The aim you form shows what you are treating as worth pursuing.

Goodwill. A sincere wish for another person’s good. A particular offer can be declined while the wish remains.

Benevolence (*eunoia*). In Stoic terms, a form of rational wishing directed toward another person’s good. This meeting practices the orientation without claiming we already possess the sage’s settled judgment.

Common good. A just and cooperative shared life. A majority’s convenience still needs to answer to the interests and claims of those affected.

Circles of Hierocles. An ancient image of relationships reaching outward toward humanity. It invites closer concern for people whose good we tend to overlook.

The Fundamental Rule. Recognizing what belongs to our use of choice and what depends on others or circumstances. Your concern is yours to form; another person’s response is theirs.

Reservation. Holding an external aim with allowance for what may prevent completion. It leaves room for changed plans and another person's refusal.

Approval. Another person's favorable judgment. It may be pleasant and useful while remaining distinct from what makes a choice good.

The Discipline of Desire. Training what we pursue, avoid, and treat as necessary. May's question is *How can my desires make room for the good of others?*