September Meeting Primer

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

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Guiding Question: What responsibility deserves my steadiness now?

At the Meeting

- **Today's reading: Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 5.1**. We'll bring it into discussion question 1.
- **The shared case:** A trip invitation calls for an honest answer about a cost that cannot responsibly be accepted. Everyone can reason from these facts, whether or not they have done the weekly practice.

Doing the Right Thing When It Is Hard

Your friends are planning a trip that costs more than you can responsibly spend. You would like to join them. "I'll work something out" would spare an awkward moment, but the organizer might reasonably begin making plans on your behalf.

September brings courage into action. A worthwhile responsibility can ask for something uncomfortable: a clear limit, a correction, or continued work when enthusiasm has faded. Prepare the response the situation calls for, then do the fitting part when its occasion arrives.

A plan remains answerable to the circumstances. New information may justify a different arrangement. If you have already given a misleading answer or missed a responsibility, there may be amends to make and work to return to. Another person's disappointment can remain while you fulfill your part more carefully.

The readings connect social responsibility, action despite criticism, and returning after a lapse. *For ancient texts, use any translation you like.*

Optional Reading (about 8 minutes)

1. **Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 5.1** (3 minutes) This is the passage we'll read together. How does Marcus connect his work with human fellowship, and what place does he allow for rest?
2. **Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 35** (1 minute) What distinction does Epictetus draw between doing wrong and receiving wrongful criticism for doing right?
3. **Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 5.9** (2 minutes) Why does Marcus encourage returning after a lapse? What standard remains when discouragement is set aside?

4. **Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 8.32** (2 minutes) How can one action at a time preserve justice and reflection while adapting to an obstacle?

Think About

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

- What makes speaking about the cost your responsibility?
- What needs attention first, and what can responsibly wait?
- How could clearer judgment and re-aimed aversion help you follow through?

Application at the Meeting

Application after discussion: Do It Anyway. Use the steps once to test the understanding developed together.

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1. **Locate.** What needs doing now, and why is it mine?
2. **Prepare.** What will I say or do when the difficulty comes?
3. **Carry through.** Carry it out, listen, and adjust or repair as needed.
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Compare two possible clear answers and what each lets the organizer reasonably assume. Use Locate → Prepare → Carry through once to rehearse an exchange, including an objection. If time allows, add the earlier yes and identify the correction and any further repair now owed.

The application tests reasons, execution, and responsiveness. Rehearsing an apology does not establish completed amends; others' disappointment does not by itself show that the limit is wrong.

Key Terms

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

Appropriate action (*kathēkon*). A response that admits a reasonable justification in its circumstances. Its manner and follow-through matter alongside the chosen aim.

Roles and responsibilities. Relationships and justified commitments that help identify what is yours to do. A role remains answerable to justice.

Steadiness. Returning to what a justified responsibility calls for when inconvenience, reluctance, or criticism makes withdrawal attractive.

Premeditation of Adversity. Anticipating a likely difficulty and rehearsing a fitting response before the occasion arrives.

Implementation intention. A modern planning form tying an occasion to a response: “When this happens, I will do this.” It helps carry preparation into conduct.

Making amends. Acknowledging your part in a lapse and providing what your conduct withheld where possible. Forgiveness belongs partly to the other person.

Circle the Present. Defining a useful timeframe, distinguishing its demands, and choosing what deserves attention first. Future commitments can still inform the present act.

Reservation. Allowing for circumstances that could prevent completion while intending to fulfill your responsibility well.

The Discipline of Action. Training fitting conduct and execution. September’s question is *How can I act well and remain steady when doing so is difficult?*