

# Session Fourteen

## Lesser of Two Evils

### ***The objectives of this session are:***

- to consider why people sometimes think the “ends justifies the means”
- to understand why people may do things even though they know they are not morally right
- to explore how their faith can help them make the right decisions

### ***Materials and supplies you will need:***

- video of the movie, *Stargate: The Ark of Truth*
- DVD player and/or TV monitor
- chalice and matches or lighter
- several copies of the UU hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- statements from Resource 14-A

### ***Things to do ahead of time:***

- locate the video and rent it from the library, video store or service
- Using the menu, select scene #3
- watch the movie in its entirety (even if you have seen it before)

### ***Session Outline***

**Entering Activity:** Two Truths & A Lie.

**Premiere:** Watching an excerpt of the movie, *Stargate: The Ark of Truth*

**Rising Action:** Step Forward, Step Back.

**Plot Point:** Faith & Decision Making

**Wrap Up:** Popcorn & Closing Words.

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### ***Entering Activity***

As participants arrive, invite them to form groups of three and play the game “Two Truths & a Lie.” Participants can rotate into another group if they have already determined which are the truths and which are the lies and everyone has not yet arrived (or time allows).

For this game, each participant shares with the group two things which are true about themselves and one thing which is not. The things shared should not be something readily apparent by looking at them (or something which is already known by the others).

After everyone has had a chance to participate, invite some reflection. Was it easy to figure out which ones were the truth and which one wasn’t? Why or why not?

Then gather the group together to light the chalice and share reading #560 “Commitment” by Dorothy Day from the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*.

### ***Premiere***

#### **Watching *Stargate: The Ark of Truth*.**

Introduce the video by telling the group you will be watching an excerpt from the movie *Stargate Ark of Truth*. 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 like:

*This movie follows the Stargate team as they seek to end the war waged against them by the warriors of the Ori. One of the*

*characters, Daniel Jackson, believes the secret lies in an ancient artifact known as the Ark of Truth.*

Begin the video and watch scene #3 (Vala's Idea), #4 (A New Partner), #5 (Marrick), #6 (Explanations), #7 (Last Act), #8 (Face Off), #9 (The Search Begins) and #10 (Heart to Heart)

This segment begins with Daniel and Vala ducking for cover as Cam and Sam do their best to hold back the Ori troops.

"I do NOT remember sending out invitations to this party," Cam says sarcastically as he reloads his weapon with ammunition.

"We have to fall back," Sam yells.

Cam nods at her even as he continues to fire his weapon. Sam runs back for better cover, then Cam follows as the Ori closes in on their position. He joins Sam behind the iron doors of a ruined temple.

"What are you doing?" Vala asks in exasperation. "We have to go out that way."

"There's too many of them," Sam explains.

"But there's no other way out," Vala complains.

"We know," Cam says impatiently.

Vala turns toward Daniel who hovers over the unopened chest with his own weapon ready. "How about now?" she asks.

"Yeah, works for me," Daniel responds. He looks around, finds a hammer and chisel and attempts to pry open the chest.

Outside the temple doors, Commander Tomin approaches the front line of soldiers. "Commander," one of the soldiers says. "We have them trapped."

Tomin removes his helmet. "Vala, it's Tomin," he calls out.

Sam looks at Vala in surprise. Vala is surprised to hear his voice, too.

"Drop your weapons and surrender,"

Tomin says. "And I promise you will all be spared.."

"That's funny," Cam yells back. "I was just about to say the same thing."

Daniel is trying desperately to open the chest.

"Vala, you have to trust me," Tomin says. "Your position has been targeted from space. Comply now, or you will be destroyed."

Teal'c looks over at Vala. Then Vala says to Cam, "I think we have to trust him."

Cam turns toward Daniel. "Jackson?" he asks.

Daniel shakes his head. He cannot pry the chest open.

"What if we get them to open it?" Vala suggests.

Sam looks thoughtful. Vala turns toward Daniel. "Well, it wouldn't be the worst thing, now, would it?"

"Alright," Cam agrees reluctantly, lying down his weapon. "Invite them in," he instructs.

Vala and the rest of the team lay down their weapons. "You can come on in," Vala says with forced bravado.

Daniel steps back away from the chest. "I look like crap," Vala complains as she attempts to fuss with her hair.

Tomin and his army come in through the temple door and surround the Stargate team. "Hi," Vala says to Tomin with a slight smile. "How are you?" He just stands there staring at her. "What's new?" she asks. Then she bites her lip.

Tomin walks toward her stiffly, then can't help himself from smiling at her. "What are you doing here?" he asks in an affectionate voice.

"Wow," Cam says. "We really are on the same page. You took the words right out of my mouth." Tomin just glares at him.

"How did you know we were here?" Vala asks.

A Prior enters the temple, with his pale skin and gray glassy eyes, holding an impressive staff with religious ornamentation. Tomin and his soldiers bow down before the Prior, but the Stargate team does not.

“The power of the Ori need not be questioned,” the Prior says.

“Here we go,” Cam mumbles.

The Prior moves closer to Daniel and the chest while the soldiers move in closer around the Stargate team with their weapons pointed at them menacingly.

“Tell me,” the Prior commands. “What is this artifact that you have found?”

“Hang on a second,” Cam says. “Shouldn’t you know that already?”

Tomin cautions Cam with a reproachful look.

“Hang on, there,” Daniel says in a conciliatory way. “I’ll tell you what it is. Inside this ark is the secret to destroying the armies of the Ori. So I think the last thing you’re going to want to do is open it.”

“You think I fear the contents?” the Prior responds haughtily.

“Well, you should,” Daniel says.

“Open it,” the Prior commands.

“Didn’t you hear what I just said?” Daniel asks, even as the Ori soldiers move forward to grab the chest.

The Prior looks at Tomin and Tomin nods, then he raises his weapon and fires it at the lid of the chest.

Daniel backs away as the lid flies open and up into the air. Tomin approaches the chest and peers inside it. Vala also turns to look even as she keeps a safe distance.

Tomin reaches inside and pulls out an ancient scroll which crumbles in his hand.

“Okay,” Daniel says. “Not what I was expecting.”

“Foolhardy are those who do not follow the path,” the Prior proclaims.

“Anybody guess what he’s going to say next?” Cam jokes.

“Kill them!” the Prior commands. He turns away to leave, but Tomin pursues him.

“Prior,” Tomin says. “I gave them my word. They surrendered peacefully.”

“Your word?” the Prior asks incredulously. “The word of the Ori ...”

“The Book of Origin,” Tomin insists, “Says that truth is the beginning of the path.”

“Tomin, I grow tired of your questioning!” the Prior growls. “Kill them now, or you shall burn forever in the flames of eternal torment.”

Tomin spins around toward the Stargate team with his weapon raised.

“Don’t do it,” Vala pleads. “He can’t hurt you, Tomin.”

He looks doubtful.

“We trusted you,” Vala says. “Trust me, now.”

“Fire your weapon!” the Prior demands.

“You think he’s testing you,” Cam says. “Really, he’s forcing you to do it because for some reason beyond his comprehension, he’s completely powerless.”

“KILL THEM!” the Prior yells. “I command you!” He throws aside his staff, pushes Tomin aside, and takes his weapon. This provides just enough of a distraction for Cam to throw an elbow into the face of the nearest Ori soldier and grab for his weapon. The weapon fires as they struggle over it and the bullet strikes the Prior in the chest. The Prior falls backward over the chest, lifeless.

Tomin raises his arm to get the attention of the soldiers under his command. “Stop!” he orders as they would have shot at the Stargate team. “Do not fire.”

Tomin stares down in puzzlement at the dead body of the Prior, then looks up in confusion at Cam. “How?” he asks in bewilderment.

“Here,” Sam says as she pulls a circular metal object from her backpack. “We use this device. It temporarily neutralizes their

abilities.”

Tomin looks down at the dead body once again.

Back on Earth, in the Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Complex, Cam tells General Landry that the Ori plan to send ships to our galaxy and conquer Earth through the Super Gate sometime soon.

“Specifics?” General Landry asks as they walk through the corridor.

“I suspect the Priors only release these details on a need-to-know basis,” Cam says.

“Go find the real ark,” General Landry says.

“Yes, sir,” Cam replies.

“Any more intelligence?” General Landry asks.

“Well, right now Tomin is coming to grips with the fact that he’s devoted his life to serving false gods,” Cam says.

General Landry pauses at the top of the stairway. “Oh, Great,” he murmurs. “What does he want?”

“Who’s that?” Cam asks.

They can see a man waiting in General Landry’s office through a large glass window with a star chart on it.

“C’mon in,” General Landry says. “You might as well meet him.”

They go into General Landry’s office and the man (Marrick) greets them with lavish praise which immediately alerts Cam that all is not right with this guy.

Then Marrick says: “I believe protocol requires that I notify you that I will be interrogating the prisoner personally.”

“What prisoner?” Cam asks.

“I believe your report refers to him as Tomin.”

“Oh, right, see I get confused,” Cam responds. “Since we were thinking of him more as a guest.”

“Of course,” Marrick responds with a smile. “My mistake. I trust the enemy commander hell-bent on our destruction has

been given comfortable quarters.”

Cam grins. “He’s had a change of heart,” he says.

“C’mon, Colonel,” Marrick says with a smile of his own. “Don’t all the bad guys say that after we capture them?”

“For the record,” Cam says in all seriousness. “He captured us. And THEN he surrendered..”

“Marrick,” General Landry says, “our people have already questioned the man.”

“I’m sorry, I don’t want to step on any toes here,” Marrick says. “My superiors have asked me to prepare a report personally.” His practiced smile remains. “I don’t want to disappoint them seeing as how its my job and all. You understand?”

“Of course,” General Landry says as he takes a seat behind his desk.

Marrick smiles again. “I can’t tell you how great it is to be here, working with you,” he says. “Actually, I used to do what you do,” he adds to Cam. “I’m sure you know I’m just trying to do my job.”

“Thank you, Mr. Marrick,” General Landry says impatiently in dismissal.

Mr. Marrick leaves and Cam closes the office door behind him. General Landry looks up at Cam questioningly.

“He used to do what I do?” Cam asks. “What the hell does that mean?”

“CIA, Black ops,” General Landry explains.

“Oh, great,” Cam murmurs. “So the IOA is having one of our own spies spy on us.”

“I have no doubt that the IOA chose him carefully,” General Landry responds.

“Why do I get the feeling we’re going to miss Woolsey?” Cam asks.

In another room, Tomin is talking with Daniel and Vala to get up to speed on what has been happening.

“So the Ori are all dead and gone,” he says in a monotone voice.

“We don’t know for sure,” Daniel explains. “We sent a weapon to the Ori galaxy that was supposed to be capable of destroying them.”

Tomin stands and turns, the shock still evident on his face. “But not those who worship them?” he asks.

“Not humans,” Daniel explains. “Just the ascended beings.”

“I know it sounds complicated,” Vala adds. “But unless we stop it, this holy crusade in the name of the Ori will end in a bloody mess for all humans.”

“A futile bloody mess,” Daniel says.

“And you believe that this ark will convince those who still believe in the Ori to stop believing as they do,” Tomin says.

“It’s called the Ark of Truth,” Daniel explains.

“I realize I have no right to say this,” Tomin says. “But it just seems wrong.”

“I’m not saying it’s right,” Daniel says. “Obviously the Alterans didn’t think it was morally right or we wouldn’t be in this situation.”

“But compared to the bloodshed we may be facing,” Vala says.

“We think the ark may be capable of making people believe in whatever it’s programmed to make them believe,” Daniel says.

“How did you know where to look?” Tomin asks.

“We didn’t,” Vala answers.

“The chest we found was obviously not the ark,” Daniel says.

“But still, you must have had some idea,” Tomin insists.

“I’ve had the vision several times,” Daniel says.

“Daniel shared his mind with an Alteran named Merlin,” Vala explains.

“His consciousness is gone, now,” Daniel says. “But he is the one who helped me

build the device that was designed to destroy the Ori.”

“We think these visions may be remnants of Merlin’s memories left behind intentionally to steer us in the direction of the ark.”

Tomin laughs. “And you think I’m crazy for believing in the Ori.”

“Not crazy,” Vala says. “Just wrong.”

Then something dawns on Tomin. “You’ve both read the Book of Origin, haven’t you?” he asks.

“Yes,” Daniel answers.

“Do you remember the part about Ortis Malum?” Tomin asks.

“You’ll have to forgive me,” Daniel says. “I don’t know it by heart.”

“Ortis Malum is the birthplace of all evil,” Tomin explains. “The passage speaks of a mountain that erupts and buries the place where all evil once sprang forth. I only ask because you mention a mountain that explodes in your vision.”

Daniel looks thoughtful.

In the next scene, Marrick questions Tomin in an interrogation room. “So,” he says. “You’re a commander in the Ori army.”

“I was,” Tomin corrects him.

“Your duties as commander involved ...”

“Following the orders of the Priors,” Tomin says. “Supervising the warriors under my command.”

“Okay, so, no big deal,” Marrick says. “Moving on.”

Then: “In the time you have been here in our galaxy, how many humans do you believe you’ve slaughtered?”

“I’m talking personally here,” Marrick says when Tomin doesn’t answer. “I’m sure you didn’t keep a running tally. Just a general estimate. Hundreds? Thousands? More?”

“What do you want from me?” Tomin asks.

“I want you to answer my questions,”

Marrick says angrily. He rises to his feet and circles around Tomin. "I have quite a few." He buttons his coat. "I want plans, tactics, details, any information that you can give on the attack that you say is coming."

"I don't know," Tomin responds in a monotone voice.

Marrick leans forward on the table to lean over Tomin threateningly. "How many innocent human beings have you slaughtered because they chose not to believe in the Ori?"

Tomin does not answer and Marrick straightens up.

Teal'c watches through a one-way mirror as Tomin is being interrogated. Cam enters. "Where's Vala?" Cam asks.

"She could not bear to watch," Teal'c responds.

"Did you hear the plan?" Cam asks.

"Tomin wishes to accompany us," Teal'c says. "He believes he can help us establish contact with the anti-Ori underground."

"Well, we can definitely use all the help we can get," Cam says. "Let's just hope the Ori are actually dead. Otherwise it will be a very short mission."

"Indeed," Teal'c says.

General Landry informs Cam that the mission into Ori space to retrieve the Ark has been approved. Then he tells Cam that Marrick will be going along as part of the Oversight Committee.

"Can I confine him to quarters?" Cam asks.

General Landry smiles. "Your call," he says. "One of the decisions those of us in command have to make."

Meanwhile, Teal'c joins Tomin at a table in the cafeteria. Tomin looks sad as Teal'c slides his tray onto the table and sits down.

Then Teal'c says; "Nothing I have done since turning against the G'oul has made up for the atrocities I once committed in their

name."

After a pause, he continues: "Somewhere deep inside you, you knew it was wrong. A voice you did not recognize screamed for you to stop. You saw no way out. It was the way things were. It could not be changed. You tried to convince yourself the people you were hurting deserved it. You became numb to their pain and suffering. You learned to shut out the voice speaking against it."

"There's always a choice," Tomin says through tight lips. "I chose to ignore it."

"Yet you sit here now," Teal'c says.

"I sit here," Tomin says. "And I cannot imagine the day when I will forgive myself."

"That day will never come," Teal'c says sternly. "One day others may try to convince you they have forgiven you. That is more about them than you. For them, imparting forgiveness is a blessing."

"How do you go on?" Tomin asks.

"It's simple," Teal'c explains. "You will never forgive yourself. Accept it. You hurt others. Many others. It cannot be undone. You will never find personal retribution. But your life does not have to end. Which is right, just, and true can still prevail. If you do not fight for what you believe in, all may be lost for everyone else. But do not fight for yourself. Fight for others. Others that may be saved through your effort. That is the least you can do."

The star ship drops out of hyperspace and approaches the Super Gate.

If you will not be watching the entire movie, pause the video at this point.

## ***Reflection***

Begin a discussion by asking for first impressions of the sequence just watched. Then, if no one brings it up, ask the participants questions like:

*Tomin says there is always a choice. Do you think that soldiers who are in the midst of fighting a war get to make such choices? Why or why not? What might happen if they were to 'rebel' against their superiors?*

*Do you think members of the military engaged in modern wars also need to convince themselves that the people they are killing or injuring deserve it? How might this thinking affect them when they are at home on leave or after they leave the military?*

*Tomin says he thinks that using the ark on the followers of the Ori is wrong and Daniel agrees that he doesn't think it's right, either. So why do they agree to go on this mission to retrieve the ark?*

*Does the ends justify the means in this case? Does the ends ever justify the means?*

## ***Rising Action***

### **Step Forward, Step Back.**

Designate one side of the room as "agree" and the other as "disagree." Have the group line up in the center, about halfway between the two points.

Tell them that as you read each statement from Resource 14-A, they should step forward if they agree with it and step back if they disagree.

Then read each statement, one at a time and invite reflection after everyone has moved. Encourage them to say why they agree or disagree. If anyone would like to change their spot given the conversation which occurs, they may do so.

After all statements have been read and people find their places, reflect upon the responses to that statement, and then reflect upon the entire experience:

*Was it hard at times to decide whether you agreed or disagreed?*

*How did having more information help you to make a decision?*

*For those of you who changed your opinions during this exercise, what encouraged you to do so?*

## ***Plot Point***

Ask the participants how their faith factored into their decision-making.

*Did you use any of our Principles (such as inherent worth and dignity of all people) to guide your decisions? Why or why not?*

*Do you believe our Unitarian Universalist faith helps you to make decisions when the choices are difficult? Why or why not?*

*How might Principle number four (a free and responsible search for truth) and meaning factor in here? What about the right of conscience as referenced in Principle number five?*

## ***Wrap Up***

### **Popcorn.**

Invite the participants to gather in a circle to engage in the usual closing activity, "Popcorn." For this activity, a person pops up (either a hand or full body as they are able or choose to do) and says aloud a short statement (one sentence or less) about something they do to make difficult decisions.

After the first "popper" has finished his or her statement, then everyone who agrees with this statement should also "pop" up (a hand or body as desired). One of the people

already “popped” can then choose to share something of their own to which the rest of the group can then “pop.” If no one already “popped” has a comment to add, then someone else can feel free to “pop up” with a comment of their own. This “popping” can continue as long as time allows.

### **Closing Words.**

End the session with a responsive reading of #650 “Cherish Your Doubts” from the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*.

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### ***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:

#### **More Discussion.**

*Why did the Alterans decide not to use the ark on the followers of the Ori? How might things have been much different if they had done so?*

*Unbeknownst to Cam and the rest of the crew of the star ship, Marrick had his own agenda and that put the entire ship in danger. How can one person acting alone on their beliefs cause problems for the rest of us?*

*What happens when people become so righteous about their beliefs that they start to believe those who think otherwise are the enemy?*

#### **More Activities.**

Try some of these online decision making activities and exercises:

[Crashed Airplane  
www.crosscultured.com](http://www.crosscultured.com)

5 Square Activity and Group Decision Making from the Utah Education Network  
<http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=29144>

**Determining Personal Values.** Allow time for participants to complete a personal value statement. They can do it on line through <http://www.valuescentre.com/pva/> or simply write down a set of values they believe in and once they have done so, rate them in order of importance.

**It Matters What We Believe.** As a group, read responsive reading #657 “It Matters What We Believe” from the hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*. After you read it, go back and read each section again, one at a time, as you reflect and process what is said in each paragraph.

**Decision Voting.** Select a topic on which to focus, something that will be of interest to the participants in your group, such as school uniforms or serving soft drinks in school lunches instead of milk.

Write this topic questions on a piece of newsprint. Underneath the topic question, draw a line straight down the newsprint.

Ask participants to volunteer arguments for and against the topic, listing each on the newsprint in either the “for” or “against” column.

Then encourage them to assign each item on the list a point value from 1 to 4, depending upon how compelling that argument is to them and write it down on a

sheet of paper. (For example, if they are debating whether to serve soda with lunch, one participant might say that an argument for this practice is that soda is tasty and an argument against is that soda is bad for you. Someone else might decide that taste is relatively unimportant and assign the "for" argument a 1, and that health is very important and assign the "against" argument a 4.)

After everyone has assigned the point values as necessary, have them add up their point totals, creating a value for the "for" column and a value for the "against." Explain to the participants that, based upon what they believe, the column with the highest point value is the column with which they most agree as a group. Do they think these numbers reflect how they actually feel as a group about the issue? Why or why not?

## Resource 14-A

### Statements of Belief

I believe that it is more important to be honest than to be “nice.”

I think it is okay to copy mp-3 files from my friends iPod to mine since she already bought it.

Stealing something that isn't yours is always the wrong thing to do.

Lying is okay if it doesn't hurt anyone.

Sometimes radical people need to break the law if they feel it is unjust.

I think that anyone who accepts the beliefs of a religion without questioning them is willing to accept anything.

I believe that the people in government are only there to gain riches and power for themselves and not to make our country better.

Abortion is a choice that should be made between a woman and her doctor.

If a woman is having an abortion, she should have to tell the father of the baby.

I think the law applies equally to everyone.

A woman can withdraw her consent for sex at anytime.

People who think differently from me are wrong.

I don't like talking with people who think differently from me.

It is important to point out the errors in a person's thinking, especially if the person believes something which is totally out-there.