



Want to Talk?

COMMUNICATION TOOLS
FOR DIVIDED TIMES



JUSTFAITH
ministries

PARTICIPANT PACKET

For In Person Groups



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WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Session	Assignments <i>Complete the items below <u>before</u> the session listed in the corresponding column.</i>	Spiritual Practice
Session 1: Laying the Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IMPORTANT: Read the Introductory Materials in this Participant Packet ● Lewis Brogdon: "Is America in Danger of Losing Its Soul?" https://justfaith.org/app/uploads/2021/10/Brogdon-Is-America-in-Danger-of-Losing-its-Soul-.pdf ● Walter Wink: "Jesus' Third Way": https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ahcbAoy-yYrAeA25CUQYsAd2D1ZSIjfE/view?usp=sharing 	
Session 2: Moving Toward Beloved Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IMPORTANT: Read the Introductory Materials in this Participant Packet (if you haven't already done so). ● <i>Crucial Conversations</i>: Chapters 1-2 ● <i>Compassion Book</i>: Read chapter 1 (the practices at the end are optional). ● Lewis Brogdon: "The Neglected Dimension of Verbal of Violence": https://institute.bsk.edu/the-neglected-dimension-of-verbal-violence-in-politics-part-one/ ● Watch the first part of Roxy Manning's video "An Introduction to NVC." Stop the video at 5:25. (Optionally, you can choose to continue watching to the end): https://www.roxannemanning.com/an-introduction-to-nvc/ <p>Before Session 2, think of something somebody said to you that you didn't like hearing. This should NOT be something traumatic, but it should still be stimulating enough to generate some emotional heat.</p>	<p>After reading chapter 1 of <i>The Compassion Book</i>, write down your responses to following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turn to Appendix B, and think back to Session 1. Which of your needs were met during your time together with your group? Which of your needs were NOT met? (Note: It is possible for the same need to be both met and unmet). 2. Turn to Appendix A. During Session 1, which feelings arose as a result of your needs being met? Which feelings arose as a result of your needs NOT being met?



Session 3: Sacred Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Crucial Conversations</i>: Chapter 4 (chapter 3 is optional) • Roxy Manning: "NVC: Changing Consciousness, Relationships and Systems": http://www.roxannemanning.com/nvc-changing-consciousness-relationships-systems/ <p>During Session 3, you'll be doing an activity to practice listening, even when it's difficult. Think of <u>three</u> social or political "positions" you hold that spark emotional heat when someone disagrees with you. Don't choose anything traumatic. Write three short sentences to sum up each of your positions. Examples include "The U.S. needs universal health care," "climate change is the most pressing issue of our time," and "the death penalty should be abolished."</p>	<p>Read chapter 2 of <i>The Compassion Book</i>. Then choose one of the three practices at the end of the chapter to engage in during the week.</p>
Session 4: Empathy for Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roxy Manning: "Why Don't They Get It?": http://www.roxannemanning.com/why-dont-they-get-it/ • <i>Crucial Conversations</i>: Chapter 5 <p>During Session 4, you'll be asked to describe an incident that generated some emotional "heat" for you. Examples include a disagreement with a family member, a friend who talked down to you, or a frustrating customer service experience. This incident should be at about a 3 out of 10 on a scale of emotional intensity (don't pick something traumatic). It should also be a story you can share with a partner in 30 seconds to a minute. Do NOT pick an incident that occurred with someone in the group.</p>	<p>Read chapters 5 and 10 of <i>The Compassion Book</i>. Engage in one of the practices at the end of Chapter 5.</p>
Session 5: Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Crucial Conversations</i>: Chapters 6 and 7 • Roxy Manning: "The Power of Authenticity and Care": https://www.roxannemanning.com/the-power-of-authenticity-care/ 	<p>Read chapters 14 and 23 of <i>The Compassion Book</i>. Engage in the practices at the end of chapter 23.</p>



	<p>During Session 5, you'll be asked to think of something someone said or did that stimulated your anger (you will NOT have to share your situation with the group).</p>	
<p>Session 6: Requesting Change, Demanding Change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Crucial Conversations</i>: Chapter 8 • Roxy Manning: "Navigating the Tangle of Yes and No": https://www.roxannemanning.com/navigating-the-tangle-of-yes-and-no/ 	<p>Read chapters 35 and 36 of <i>The Compassion Book</i>. Engage in both practices at the end of chapter 35.</p>
<p>Immersion Experience</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Session 7: What to Do When the Answer is 'No'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Crucial Conversations</i>: Chapters 9 and 11 (chapter 10 is optional) • Roxy Manning: "How Can NVC be Helpful in these Transformative Times": https://www.roxannemanning.com/how-can-nonviolent-communication-nvc-be-helpful-in-these-transformative-times/ <p>During Session 7, you'll be asked to reflect on a situation in your past or present in which you made a request and received a "no" in response.</p>	<p>Read chapters 16 and 24 of <i>The Compassion Book</i>. Engage practices 1-3 at the end of chapter 24.</p>
<p>Session 8: What Next?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Crucial Conversations</i>: Chapters 12-13 • IMPORTANT: Follow the instructions in Session 7 Attachment D. (Plan about 45 minutes to complete this activity). • Consider supporting JustFaith Ministries in order to inspire more people to work for justice: justfaith.org/donate 	<p>Included in Session 7 Attachment D.</p>
<p>Post-Session 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill out the Session 8 survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ For facilitators: https://justfaith.org/facilitator-post-program-survey/ 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ For participants: https://justfaith.org/participant-post-program-survey/	
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INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

Note: This Participant Packet contains everything you will need for this program. Please bring this document to every session. In the interest of sustainability, we recommend that you not print this packet but instead pull it up on a laptop or tablet, which you can bring to every session. Accessing your participant packet virtually will also enable you to click directly on the links embedded within the document.

WHY THIS PROGRAM?

"America is losing its soul," Dr. Lewis Brogdon, research professor at the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky and a consultant for this program, wrote in his op-ed in Louisville's *The Courier Journal*. Yes, America is experiencing widening economic inequality, gross racial injustice, and "persistent violence at every level of social interaction." But underneath all of these issues, Dr. Brogdon wrote, "our core problem is that we have placed hatred at the center of society."

Indeed, regardless of your political party, it is easy to see that our nation is in crisis. Journalists, politicians, and preachers on both the Left and Right warn their audiences of the extent of the problem, some going so far as to forecast the "unraveling of democracy" and a "threat of civil war." Our disconnection from one another keeps our government from addressing rampant violence in any of its forms, including economic, racial, and environmental injustice. It is easy to cast blame on ineffective individual politicians, but might the underlying issue be that politicians cannot be seen crossing the aisle due to their constituents' vehement contempt for "the other side"?

At the same time, our disconnection from one another is not confined to politics: it has also infiltrated our relationships with our loved ones, resulting in broken marriages, severed friendships, and splits within some of America's largest Christian denominations. At the heart of these conflicts lies the heartbreaking question: Can we remain in a relationship with someone who thinks so differently than we do about the most fundamental of our values, and if so, how?

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

While this program cannot answer this question for you, you *can* expect it to help you discern if and how to be in relationship with others. If your choice is to nurture the relationship(s), this program can help you develop communication tools so that you can remain true to your values and work toward connection and healing within and beyond yourself. Regardless of whether



you find yourself navigating a heated disagreement with a spouse, interrupting racism in the office, facilitating political tension in church, or working for systemic change around any justice issue, the principles of civil dialogue and nonviolent communication can assist you in deepening relationships while staying committed to your values.

Goals for *Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times*

- Learn how Jesus navigated systemic injustice, political unrest, and interpersonal conflict, in order to discern how we might respond to similar situations in 2021.
- Learn communication tools for seeking justice in the issue about which you are most passionate.
- Learn to navigate disagreement in a healthier way — whether in personal relationships or when working for systemic change.
- Guide divided congregations, organizations, and communities in moving from ‘us and them’ to a greater sense of shared vision.

Important Notes about *Want to Talk?*

1. ***Want To Talk? is justice-focused:*** This program is geared toward those who are committed or open to seeking social justice. Though we believe the tools offered in this program will be relevant to people across the political and theological spectrum, it is important that prospective participants be aware of JustFaith Ministries’ commitment to justice, particularly anti-racism.
2. ***Want to Talk? contains material from a variety of perspectives:*** You do not have to agree with the authors on every point; in fact, disagreement is fuel for practicing healthy dialogue. Take from this program the tools and wisdom that are helpful to you, and leave what is not. At the end of the program, you will be asked to put together a tough conversations “toolkit,” which will consist of the tips and tools you found most helpful from the readings and in-session materials.
3. ***Want to Talk? requires humility and playfulness:*** Some conversational tools, such as empathy and listening, seem simple. Many of us may even have read books or attended trainings on these topics in the past. In addition, some of the exercises may seem silly, or perhaps you know of a technique you think works better than the one your group is practicing in-session. If you feel this way, you are not alone: I (Kristin) was skeptical at first too. I attended my first Nonviolent Communication course with the hope that, if I turned up the Zoom lectures loudly enough, my significant other might benefit from the teachings! Somewhere around Session 3, it dawned on me that the one who *really* needed the course was “the [wo]man in the mirror.”



We ask that you approach this program as an experiment. Try out the exercises, and approach them with playfulness and vulnerability. If you notice that you are feeling resistance, turn to curiosity: what are you feeling, and why might you be feeling this way? Be open to what this program might teach you about yourself, *particularly* if you think you've already mastered a certain skill (or if you find yourself thinking that your spouse or your coworkers could really stand to read *this!*).

4. ***Want to Talk?* acknowledges the importance of boundaries.** We are aware that calls to "reconciliation" have been used to silence the hurt that individuals and communities have experienced. At its worst, reconciliation has been used to justify gaslighting, causing victims of violence to be re-traumatized over and over again as their suffering is ignored and perpetuated in the name of false peace.

On the one hand, theologians such as Howard Thurman and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. warned that hatred is psychologically and spiritually corrosive, even when that hatred may be justified due to the oppression someone has endured. Hatred transforms us into those we hate, as the oppressed take on the vindictive, ego-centric, and power-hungry qualities of the oppressor.¹

On the other hand, the radical love of nonviolence, whether enacted through action or communication, is more than a lofty ideal; it is a practical tool for standing up to the oppressor while protecting our minds and spirits. One form of nonviolence may include ending relationships that do not honor our inherent worth or setting clear boundaries within the relationships we choose to continue. This program seeks to help participants to discern when it is appropriate to take this path.²

5. ***Want to Talk?* requires that everyone complete the weekly assignments** (*especially* the spiritual practice!). It is completely understandable that other responsibilities must take precedence over completing the weekly assignments. However, during the pilot process, we discovered that attempting to participate in in-session activities without having completed the assignments was not only unhelpful for the individual, but it also impacted the experience of others in the group. For this reason, if you have not had a chance to complete the weekly assignments, follow these instructions:

- Attend the session, but spend most of the time listening.

¹ For more on this topic, watch JustFaith Ministries' webinar with Dr. Lewis Brogdon: https://youtu.be/yIKb7lzw_U

² This program is not intended to take the place of counseling with a licensed therapist.



- Let the group know at the beginning of the session that you have not completed the reading. Be honest, and your group will understand — we’ve all been there!
- Catch up on the reading and spiritual practice the following week.

6. ***Want to Talk?* is a starting point for a lifelong process.** Unfortunately, intellectually understanding how to engage in healthy dialogue will not immediately cause people to mistake us for Gandhi. Successfully implementing the tools you will learn in this program will take years of practice; after all, they require us to override our brains’ natural wiring, bypassing our instinct toward “fight or flight” to instead tap into the Spirit’s wisdom. You *will* make mistakes, and skills you learn *will* feel awkward at first. But if we truly want to heal our relationships, save our democracy, and participate in the beloved community that God has called us to be, we have no choice other than to pick ourselves up, take a deep breath, and try again.

Map of the Journey

Session 1 of *Want to Talk* will begin by laying out the scope of the problem: violent communication has not only disrupted relationships within our families, social networks, and faith communities; it has infected the very soul of America and sickened our democracy. However, in order to begin addressing this large-scale issue, we must first learn how to seek nonviolence within our relationships with ourselves and one another. For this reason, Sessions 2-5 zoom in to focus on personal and interpersonal communication skills. During this phase of your journey, you will learn concrete tools for fostering connection and mutual respect, especially when tension arises, as well as discern how to apply these skills both to your personal relationships and to your work for justice. Finally, sessions 6-8 will zoom back out, as your group explores how these communication skills can help you navigate differences of power and privilege, advocate for justice, and help to heal a divided nation.

Session 1: Laying the Foundation — Participants explore the impact of violent communication on our interpersonal relationships and our nation, in order to begin learning about tools for communicating in a way that reflects their faith, their commitment to justice, and their respect for God’s holy image in all people.

Session 2: Moving Toward Beloved Community³ — In moving beyond shame and blame, we

³ “[Beloved Community](#)” is a term coined by theologian Josiah Royce and popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For King, the Beloved Community, which reflects the Kingdom of God, was a realistic, achievable global vision in which the power of nonviolence and “agape” love would eradicate poverty, racism, and militarism.



can reclaim the connection we've lost, as well as subvert the "system" of isolation, alienation, and injustice. This session introduces a practical tool for recognizing and transforming shame and blame in our interactions with one another.

Session 3: Sacred Listening — How can we move beyond our judgments in order to encounter God's image in the other? How can we listen to someone with whom we vehemently disagree? This session addresses these questions and offers tools even for those who are already well-practiced in the art of listening.

Session 4: Empathy for Justice — Participants learn tools for empathy for ourselves and others, in order to embody the Beloved Community we are called to be. Skills addressed include making space for ourselves and others to be where we are and empathizing with the impact of injustice (even when we don't understand completely).

Session 5: Anger — The group learns how to deal with hostility and anger in ourselves and others.

Session 6: Requesting Change, Demanding Change: How can we lovingly and from a place of care ask someone to change their behavior? When we encounter injustice in our communities, how can we effectively ask for — or demand — change?

Immersion Experience — Using the skills they've learned in the program, participants initiate an important conversation with someone in their lives. The group then convenes to reflect on participants' individual experiences, share their learning, and pray together. Alternatively, the group may visit an organization working on civil dialogue and/or justice issues to learn more about their work and how participants can take action after the program.

Session 7: What to Do When the Answer is 'No' — What do we do when our personal or communal needs aren't met? This session includes tips and tools for finding a "third way" to proceed, setting or clarifying boundaries, and using nonviolent direct action.

Session 8: What Next? — Participants discern how they will commit to "holy conversation" in their personal relationships and in their work for justice.

WHAT TO BRING TO EACH SESSION

- Participant Packet (if possible, have it pulled up on computer or tablet)
- A Bible (or a trusted Bible app/website on your smartphone or other device)
- A journal and pen
- All books, as well as any supplemental resources you read for "homework"



PRAYER

The call to a quiet, reflective, prayerful space is an integral part of all JustFaith Ministries programs. Each session includes an opening and closing time of guided prayer. In the beginning of each session, prayer provides a transition from your daily routine into a place of deep listening, vulnerability, and sharing. At the end of each session, prayer provides a transition into our daily lives, as we take the spiritual guidance we have received in the session and incorporate it into the ways we live, work, and act.

CREATING A BRAVE SPACE

As articulated in the poem below, JustFaith Ministries programs foster a brave space, rather than a safe space, for conversation and learning. The intention of this program is to inspire action to address root causes of injustice while serving with love. Though we anticipate participants will experience the liberation and community that accompany justice formation and action, this program is not designed to facilitate group therapy or heal trauma. We highly encourage facilitators to attend facilitation trainings (including an anti-racist facilitation training), but most facilitators are volunteers — not professionals — who will be learning alongside your group. Also, fellow group members will be working through their own assumptions and biases and may express views you find hurtful or uninformed. When this occurs, care for yourself by taking a deep breath and noticing the emotions that arise within you. Take a break from the conversation if necessary: simply let the group know that you need to step out of the room or away from your computer for a moment. If you feel comfortable doing so, share your own perspective while following the group guidelines; however, know it is not your responsibility to fix or save anyone else. After the session is over, consider scheduling an appointment with a counselor, therapist, or spiritual leader, who can accompany you in processing the experience and discerning a way forward.

Before entering into your group's first gathering, journal and pray about the following questions:

- Why have you chosen to embark on this journey in the context of community, rather than as an individual?
- What are the risks of stepping into this brave space? What hardships might you encounter, and how do you plan to respond?



The Brave Ones

We gather, we brave ones,
to create courageous community.
Clumsily, we dance our dialogue
and lean into discomfort.
There is no safety here.

Uncomfortable tongues
speak truths of harm done.
As we reflect and learn,
we'll receive words we'd like to return
and say things we wish to unsay.
We wound and are wounded.

And yet....

We choose love over hate
We choose to connect instead of isolate
We choose to expand rather than shrink and disappear.

Our community will be flawed,
But perfection is not our goal.
Together, we find collective liberation
in our mutual growth.

So when you feel angry and afraid
(because you will),
Stop. And take a deep breath:
Inhale courage.
Exhale fear.
Feel the sacred presence in your breath
and in the holy yet human connection between us.

– Adapted from “We Brave Ones”
by Davelyn Hill,
Executive Director of Speaking Down Barriers
Speakdownbarriers.org



ABOUT THE READINGS AND RESOURCES

We wrote this program primarily in response to two concerns we continually heard from members of our JustFaith community. The first concern was that people were experiencing political polarization in their beloved churches, denominations, families, and communities. They were heartbroken by the now-strained and ruptured relationships that had once brought joy and meaning to their lives; for this reason, they sought out tools for navigating tough conversations in order to discern how and if healing could be possible. The second concern was that, as graduates emerged from our racial justice series, they wanted to talk with their loved ones, community, and people in positions of power about what they'd learned, in hope that they could work together to create change. However, these graduates felt they lacked communication tools to do so in a way that created space for people of differing perspectives to truly listen to what they were saying. In both cases, members of our audience expressed the need for practical tools that would guide them in building relationships while staying true to their values.

There are many wise and important books about *why* it's important to address tough issues, and others that present beautiful *theories* around how we might approach these topics. However, in order to respond to the specific needs of our audience, we sought out books that would cover the nuts-and-bolts, walking readers through exactly what to say and do when tension arises, step-by-step. Out of the fifty-or-so books we reviewed, the books *Crucial Conversations* (3rd Edition) and *The Compassion Book* do (what we believe to be) the best job of providing this practical guidance, offering two overlapping yet distinct models for approaching conversations around polarizing issues.

About *The Compassion Book*

The Compassion Book contains important wisdom, practical tools, and reflection activities that you will begin during the program and be encouraged to continue after Session 8. Though the readings we have chosen in *The Compassion Book* are short, the techniques they introduce require much thought and practice and are most easily absorbed in small spoonfuls. It is for this reason that **you will not be reading the entire book during your eight sessions together as a group.** When it comes to communicating in a way that reflects our core values, daily practice is key, and we hope you will find *The Compassion Book* to be a trusted companion as you continue on your lifelong journey toward justice and healing after the program is finished.

The readings we have selected in *The Compassion Book* complement one another: for example, for Session Four, you will be asked to read chapters 5 and 10, which are both on empathy. The chapters in *The Compassion Book* do not build on each other, and we have intentionally chosen to pair together certain readings despite that **they do not follow the sequence of the book!**



As you read, if the material briefly refers back to a chapter that has not been assigned (e.g. if chapter 14 states, “as we explored in chapter 3,” but you have not read chapter 3), do not fret: you do not need to have read every preceding chapter in order to understand the concepts outlined in the chapter you’ve been assigned for “homework.”

Each week, you will be asked to engage in a spiritual practice between sessions. Although these practices may at times seem silly or basic, completing them is absolutely essential to integrating conceptual learning into your lived experience. Most of these practices come from *The Compassion Book*, and some of them invite you into a practice that will span the course of several days. It will be important to read *The Compassion Book* early in the week, so that you have plenty of time to complete these very important practices.

About *Crucial Conversations*, Third Edition

As mentioned above, we chose the book *Crucial Conversations* because of its useful tips for approaching real-life interactions with people with whom we disagree. **That said, *Crucial Conversations* is certainly short-sighted, particularly around power dynamics involving race and gender.** We urge participants to take what is useful from *Crucial Conversations*, but to also read it with a critical eye. **Consistently ask yourself: how might power dynamics shape how this chapter or example unfolds?** During each session, group discussion questions, facilitator script, and additional readings will help to shed light on the elements that *Crucial Conversations* sorely lacks.

We anticipate that working together to answer these questions around power dynamics will guide your group in thinking deeply and critically about how equity (and lack thereof) affects our conversations, institutions, and relationships.

In addition, though *Crucial Conversations* contains many stories and examples that relate to the workplace, we have found that these tools are directly applicable to conversations within our families, congregations, neighborhoods, and communities. The specificity of these tips can be helpful when navigating disagreements around both interpersonal and political issues. As you read, you are invited to translate the tips, tools, and examples found in *Crucial Conversations* to the disagreements and tough conversations in your own life that weigh on your heart.

One last note about *Crucial Conversations*: Our survey responses have shown that, for a large group of participants, reading this book was the most helpful and transformative activity of the program. For a few others, it was the resource they enjoyed the least. We included a variety of resources in this program in order to speak to a diversity of participants. If *Crucial Conversations* (or one of the other resources) does not immediately resonate with you, challenge yourself to hear the authors out, just as you would in a conversation with someone



with whom you disagree. What can you glean from the authors' wisdom, even if you don't entirely agree with or relate to everything they say? How can you show curiosity and respect for group members who may find this resource helpful? Overall, our staff pilot group found that the diversity of perspectives among *Crucial Conversations*, *The Compassion Book*, and Dr. Roxy Manning complemented one another and provided an extensive toolbox of communication skills to choose from. We hope you will feel the same way!

About Dr. Roxy Manning

In addition to the books, this program draws heavily upon the work of Dr. Roxy Manning, a trainer in Nonviolent Communication (NVC) who supports organizations and individuals in "transforming ineffective, maladaptive, and dehumanizing patterns, cultures and systems to achieve their goals guided by their deepest values." We strongly encourage participants to check out the many resources on Dr. Manning's website, support her work, attend her workshops and events, and reach out to her for further support as you continue on your lifelong journey. To take advantage of these opportunities, visit her website: <https://www.roxannemanning.com/>

About Nonviolent Communication⁴

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is the body of wisdom that underpins both *The Compassion Book* and many in-session activities. NVC is a communication technique that draws upon the principles of nonviolent action. It has proved helpful to people and communities seeking to navigate situations ranging from repairing broken marriages to mediating reconciliation efforts following civil wars. The exercises included in the program come directly from the wisdom of Nonviolent Communication. **Though some activities may feel strange or uncomfortable, we ask that you trust the process (or at least give it an honest try!), refrain from "tweaking" the activities to your liking, and follow the instructions as they are written.**

In the introduction to his book *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, Psychologist and NVC founder Marshall Rosenberg provides a summary of what NVC is and how it can be helpful:

"NVC is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions. It contains nothing new: all that has been integrated into NVC has been known for centuries. The intent is to remind us about what

⁴ Did you know that for our 20th anniversary Cory Lockhart, who consulted with us on the creation of this program, led a webinar on Nonviolent Communication (NVC)? In addition to consulting with JFM and writing the JFM program *Cultivating Nonviolence, Harvesting Peace*, Cory facilitates classes and workshops on NVC and other techniques related to compassionate communication. You can find her webinar here (<https://youtu.be/e6CLJi4Er7Y>) and/or reach out to her for further training or educational opportunities by visiting <https://www.corylockhart.com/>.



we already know - about how we humans were meant to relate to one another — and to assist us in living in a way that concretely manifests this knowledge.

NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting. We are led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathic attention. In any exchange, we come to hear our own deeper needs and those of others. NVC trains us to observe carefully, and to be able to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us. We learn to identify and clearly articulate what we are concretely wanting in any given situation. The form is simple, yet powerfully transformative.

As NVC replaces our old patterns of defending, withdrawing, or attacking in the face of judgment and criticism, we come to perceive ourselves and others, as well as our intentions and relationships, in a new light..... When we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt, and needed rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion. Through its emphasis on deep listening — to ourselves as well as to others — NVC fosters respect, attentiveness, and empathy and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart.⁵

Toolkit for Tough Conversations

Before Session 8, you will be asked to compile a “toolkit” of your favorite techniques introduced in-session and through the readings. As you read, we recommend that you underline, highlight, or even write in your journal the tips and tools that are most helpful to you, so that you can easily access them toward the end of the program.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We want to get this program right, and we hope that you will help us continually revise this program so that it can be the best it can be. JustFaith has a survey for you to complete at the end of the program – it should not take more than fifteen minutes. You can find the link to this survey in the post-program assignments in this Participant Packet.

ABOUT JUSTFAITH MINISTRIES

⁵ Rosenberg, Marshall B. *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*. PuddleDancer Press, 2002.



Overview

JustFaith Ministries (JFM) is a nonprofit organization that serves the work of justice, community-building and reconciliation by creating small-group educational programs that transform hearts, deepen commitment, inspire engagement and equip for action. Over 70,000 people across the country have participated in JFM programs! Our work is crafted and customized for both those who belong to a Christian community as well as those who approach the work of justice from a more broadly spiritual perspective.

Programs for Christian Communities

JustFaith Ministries has a long history of serving churches and small faith communities to empower and expand their work on behalf of justice. Drawing from the heart of the Gospel, our faith-based programming allows participants to explore the intersection of faith and social mission, study an important issue intensively, build community, and discern next steps (faith-in-action). These small group programs include:

- **JustFaith Series:** this series explores the Gospel's call to respond to poverty, equipping participants to take action in a way that is effective, sustainable, and reflective of their Christian vision. The ecumenical version of this series (JustFaith) consists of three 8-session programs, while JustFaith Catholic comprises four.
- **Racial Justice Series:**
 - Faith and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege
 - Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration
 - Faith and Racial Justice: Changing Systems and Structures
- **Eco-justice Series:**
 - Sacred Land: Food and Farming
 - Sacred Air: Climate and Energy
 - Sacred Water: Oceans and Ecosystems
- **Youth for Justice:** Invites youth to explore contemporary social issues through the lens of the Christian tradition.
- **Faith and Immigration Justice**
- **Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice**
- **Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times**
- **The Land Is Not Our Own: Seeking Repair Alongside Indigenous Communities**

Programs for Broader Audiences

JustFaith Ministries also offers programs that are designed for broader audiences that may not define themselves as religious. Those who are unaffiliated with a church or religious tradition or who identify as "spiritual but not religious" will find these programs relevant and meaningful. These programs may also resonate with an interfaith audience. These programs include:



- Spirituality and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege
- Spirituality and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice, and Restoration
- Spirituality and Racial Justice: Changing Systems and Structures
- Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times

Impact

The best testimony to our work are the outcomes: JustFaith participant involvement in justice and social ministry is vast. Participants report bringing more affordable housing opportunities to their communities; reforming the criminal justice system; advocating for hunger relief at the local, national and international levels; standing in solidarity with our immigrant siblings; becoming ambassadors for Fair Trade and micro-businesses; engaging in anti-racism efforts; advocating for the end of the death penalty; working for sensible gun laws; and many other commitments. The true measure of our work is what happens after the programs are done!

Welcome

Welcome to the JFM community! We can't do this without each other. We are honored to walk alongside you in advancing peace, racial equity, economic justice and a sustainable world, and we hope that you will find as much love and liberation along this journey as we have. Please keep in touch: let us know how your life has been transformed, the ways you are taking action for justice, and how we can best support you in your spiritual growth and work for justice. Most of all, know that we, the JustFaith Ministries staff, are holding you in our hearts and praying for you throughout your journey.

JOIN THE JUSTFAITH NETWORK

The ultimate goal of this program — and all our JustFaith Ministries programs — is to invite participants into a deeper commitment to the work of love and justice. To support program graduates, we created the JustFaith Network to provide lively and current resources that can sustain you spiritually and equip you with the tools you need for your work to be effective. By joining the Network, you will have access to reflections, small group guided conversations, speaker events, blogs, best practices, and an expanding list of items.

The JustFaith Network is free and open to anyone. You can sign up at:

<https://justfaith.org/get-involved/justfaith-network>

SUPPORT JUSTFAITH MINISTRIES -



AND INSPIRE MORE PEOPLE TO WORK FOR JUSTICE

JustFaith Ministries is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. We rely on donations from graduates like you to help us create and distribute our high-quality programs. We hope you consider making a donation, and joining with us in building a more just, peaceful, and equitable world. To learn about ways you can donate (online; by check; through an IRA, donor-advised fund; and more), visit: <https://justfaith.org/donate>

SPECIAL THANKS!

We are grateful for the support of Dr. Lewis Brogdon, Cory Lockhart, and Maggie Jezreel, whose wisdom and experience shaped the content of this program.

Thanks to our partner, Bread for the World, who supported JustFaith Ministries in the creation of this and all of our programs.



Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision-makers to end hunger at home and abroad. Visit www.bread.org to learn more.

OPTIONAL GET-TO-KNOW-YOU

Attachment A: Opening Meditation

1 Corinthians 13

- Reader 1: If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
- Reader 2: And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
- Reader 1: If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.
- Reader 2: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
- Reader 1: It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
- Reader 2: It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- Reader 1: Love never ends.
- Reader 2: But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.
- Reader 1: For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.
- Reader 2: When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.
- Reader 1: For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.
- Reader 2: Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.



Reader 1: And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Invite the group to pause for silent reflection. Pause for 20-30 seconds. Then invite Reader 1 to begin reading the following prayer:

Prayer for the Gift of Tongues

Reader 1: God of Revelation,
Throughout history, you have shown yourself to your people.
In a century-by-century, year-by-year, day-by-day process,
We have learned how to see your light,
To hear your voice, to notice your presence.

Reader 2: You have communicated your grace in ways that we might understand.
Your word, your self-giving, your invitation
Have guided our steps.

Reader 1: Loving, giving God,
These days we find ourselves peculiarly unable to hear each other.
We speak to each other without listening, without caring to listen.
We shout, not to be heard, but to subdue.
We speak words, not to share, not to connect, not to support,
But to bully, mandate, order, attack and hurt.

Reader 2: We seem to have lost our way.
Disabled by our mis- and missing communication,
We are staggered by friends and family who we can no longer talk with, be with.
We feel estranged and alienated by a wall so tall and wide,
It is hard to know how to get beyond it.

Reader 1: So, be with us, guide us, equip us
For the task of this day.
These times seem like no other.
What IS the same is your presence communicating love and love's beckon.

Reader 2: So, we ask not be deterred, even as we are unsure.
We will love the stranger and the enemy, with our actions and our words. We will
seek understanding, even as it might be elusive.



Reader 1: We do these things, because the love you have revealed to us
Guides our hearts and our steps.
And we are thankful.
Amen.

— Jack Jezreel

Optional Get-to-Know-You Session

Attachment B: Closing Meditation

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

- Reader 1: If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
- Reader 2: And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
- Reader 1: If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.
- Reader 2: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
- Reader 1: It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
- Reader 2: It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- Reader 1: Love never ends.



SESSION 1

Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Reader 1: This space is for the tired: for those tired of fighting, tired of trying, tired of the old tired strategies where no one wins, tired of the mental gymnastics of manipulation and resentment, tired of being tired. If you are tired,

All: We welcome you.

Reader 2: This space is for the fearful: fearful of conflict, fearful of vulnerability, fearful of what might happen to a relationship — or a democracy — if the conversation goes wrong. If you are fearful,

All: We welcome you.

Reader 1: This space is for the lonely: for those isolated from community due to conflicting values, for those who are aching to be seen and known and understood, for those haunted by the sound of a slamming door and the lonely silence that follows. If you are lonely,

All: We welcome you.

Reader 2: This space is for the angry: angry that, for every hundred dollars in White family wealth, Black families have twelve dollars and eighty cents.⁶ Angry that air pollution, which is entirely preventable, annually kills more people than smoking or the coronavirus. Angry that millions suffer in crowded refugee camps, while wealthy countries avert their eyes and turn their backs. Angry at the subtle daily messages that certain people aren't worthy of love, respect, or leadership. If you are angry,

All: We welcome you.

Reader 1: This space is for the ashamed: for those regretting words spoken out of fear

⁶ Federal Reserve, “Disparities of Wealth by Race and Ethnicity in the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances,” September 28, 2020: <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/disparities-in-wealth-by-race-and-ethnicity-in-the-2019-survey-of-consumer-finances-20200928.htm>



and anger, and for those whose shameful memories wake them in the night. If you're ashamed,

All: We welcome you.

Reader 2: This space is for the hopeful: hopeful that broken relationships can be healed, hopeful that opposing political parties can work together for justice, hopeful that the Kingdom of God, where love and justice both prevail, can become our reality. If you are hopeful,

All: We welcome you!

Session 1 Attachment B: Community of Trust Guidelines

Adapted by Anne and Tom Johnson from:

- *Circle of Trust® Touchstones developed by Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal www.couragerenewal.org (primary source)*
- *JustFaith Group Guidelines www.JustFaith.org*

1. **Give and receive welcome.** People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this community, we support each other's learning by giving and receiving welcome.
2. **Be as fully present as possible.** Be here with your doubts, fears, and failings, as well as your convictions, joys, and successes, your listening as well as your speaking. Listen intently in order to fully understand different points of view. Honor the space between "no longer" and "not yet."
3. **What is offered in our community is by invitation, not demand.** Share what your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Commit to ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to speak. Invite others to speak before speaking again.
4. **Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.** Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in our community does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Knowing that we are each created uniquely, and



have different backgrounds, experiences, and views, we commit to honoring differences, knowing they add to the richness of the community's experience.

5. **No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting.** This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.
6. **Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions....** Instead of counsel or corrections. With such questions, we help "hear each other into deeper speech." Commit to respectfully seeking clarification of others' perspectives to add to our understanding.
7. **When the going gets tough, turn to wonder.** If you feel judgmental or defensive, ask yourself:
 - "I wonder what brought her to this belief?"
 - "I wonder what he's feeling right now?"
 - "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?"Set aside judgment to listen to others — and to yourself — more deeply.
8. **Attend to your own inner teacher.** We learn from others, of course. But as we explore prayer, readings, questions, and silence, as well as engage with people both inside and outside our community, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, which are your most important teacher.
9. **Trust and learn from the silence.** Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.
10. **Observe deep confidentiality.** Our community of trust depends on knowing that whatever we say will remain with the people to whom we choose to say it — whether in small groups or in the large circle — and will never be passed on to others without our explicit permission.
11. **Know that it's possible....** To leave a meeting of our community with whatever it was you needed when you arrived, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.



Session 1 Attachment C: Violence and Nonviolence

Violence: *Violence is emotional, verbal, or physical behavior that dominates, diminishes, or destroys ourselves or others. Violence crosses boundaries without permission, disrupts authentic relationships and separates us from other beings.*

(Definition adapted from From Violence to Wholeness, Ken Butigan, Pace e Bene Franciscan Nonviolence Center, 1999)

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Principles of Nonviolence⁷

1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.

- It is active nonviolent resistance to evil.
- It is assertive spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.
- It is always persuading the opponent of the justice of your cause.

2. Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.

- Nonviolence does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent.
- The end result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation.
- The purpose of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.⁸

3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.

- Nonviolence attacks forces of evil, rather than the people doing the evil.
- Nonviolence holds that evildoers are also victims.

4. Nonviolence avoids both physical violence and violence of the spirit.

- At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of *agape* love.
- Nonviolent love is active, not passive.
- Nonviolent love does not sink to the level of the hater.
- Love for the enemy is how we demonstrate love for ourselves.
- Love restores community and resists injustice.
- Nonviolence recognizes the fact that all life is interrelated.

⁷ These principles are drawn from King's writings, which include: "Nonviolence and Racial Justice," (1957), "The Most Durable Power," (1956), and "An Experiment in Love."

⁸ "[Beloved Community](#)" is a term coined by theologian Josiah Royce and popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For King, the Beloved Community, which reflects the Kingdom of God, was a realistic, achievable global vision in which the power of nonviolence and "agape" love would eradicate poverty, racism, and militarism.



5. Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.

- The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win.

Session 1 Attachment D: Reading Dialogue

Instructions:

- *You will have 15 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups.*
- *Assign a facilitator to read the discussion questions and facilitate the conversation.*
- *Also ask for a representative who will share 1-2 sentences about a key point from your group's discussion when the large group reconvenes.*

Discussion of Lewis Brogdon's "Is America in Danger of Losing its Soul?" (5-7 minutes)

- Take a minute or two of silent reflection to choose one to two sentences that were meaningful to you from Lewis Brogdon's "Is America in Danger of Losing its Soul?" Then take turns sharing your excerpts aloud and explaining why they were meaningful. *Ensure that everyone has had time to choose their passages before your small group begins sharing.*

Discussion of Walter Wink's "Jesus' Third Way" (5-7 minutes)

- Take a minute or two of silent reflection to choose one to two sentences that were meaningful or challenging to you from Walter Wink's "Jesus' Third Way." Then take turns sharing your excerpts aloud and explaining why they were meaningful.

Optional Questions (if your group has time):

- Brogdon writes: "Our core problem is that we have placed hatred at the center of our society." Without casting blame on any person or group, where have you witnessed hatred in our society?
 - How has this hatred affected you spiritually, emotionally, or physically?
 - How has this hatred impacted your community, family, and/or nation?
- What are some remedies to hatred, and where have you witnessed healing?



SESSION 2

Attachment A: Opening Meditation

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

— Rumi



Session 2 Attachment B: Reading Dialogue

Instructions: You will have 30 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. You probably won't have time to visit every question, but try to get to at least one question from each reading. Assign a facilitator to read the question and facilitate the conversation. When the large group reconvenes, you will be asked to share a 1-2 sentence insight that arose from your small group's conversation.

The Compassion Book: Chapter 1

Thom Bond writes: "Everything we've ever done, everything any human being has ever done, or will ever do, is an attempt to meet a need, or needs (successfully or not). All human acts can be seen as an attempt to meet needs." What do you think of this statement? If you share Thom's "way of seeing things," how might this statement affect your interactions and relationships with others?

Crucial Conversations: chapters 1 and 2

- Take a minute or two of silent reflection and choose one to two sentences that were meaningful to you from this week's reading of *Crucial Conversations*. Take turns sharing your excerpts and explaining why they were meaningful. *Ensure that everyone has had time to choose their passages before your small group begins sharing.*
- Chapter 2 of *Crucial Conversations* describes dialogue as a shared pool of meaning.
 - If you feel comfortable, share about a time when you forced meaning into the pool.
 - If you feel comfortable, share about a time when you withheld meaning from the pool.

"Neglected Dimensions of Verbal Violence"

- Take a minute or two of silent reflection and choose one to two sentences that were meaningful to you from Dr. Lewis Brogdon's article "Neglected Dimensions of Verbal Violence." Take turns sharing your excerpts aloud and explaining why they were meaningful.
- Brogdon writes: "[King] draws attention to the ***violence of the spirit*** or what I describe as violence within oneself.... King's words challenge us to identify the hate and violence within us that fuels these responses and not draw on them in the work we do in the public square. Doing this will require discipline and strength that must be nurtured in



prayer, meditation, mindfulness, confession, and other spiritual practices that free the soul from the shackles of violence.

Where do you see violence in your own spirit?

- *"First, Dr. King reminds us that it is important to use Christian methods and weapons in justice work."*
 - What exactly do "Christian methods and weapons" look like, and how do we employ them? Can you think of any real-life examples?
 - What are some consequences of when we do *not* use Christian methods and weapons in our justice work?

- *"Second, discernment applies to media platforms we utilize, support, and allow ourselves to be exposed to."* Do Dr. Brogdon's suggestions around media platforms have any implications for your own life?



SESSION 3

Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Reader 1: How
 Do I
 Listen to others?
 As if everyone were my Master
 Speaking to me
 His
 Cherished
 Last
 Words.
 – Hafiz

5 second pause

Reader 2: "Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, **told him the whole truth.**" — Mark 5:33

5 second pause

Reader 3: Jairus is in a hurry. His daughter is dying. So he boldly presses through the crowd, throwing himself at Jesus's feet, begging him to heal her. As a religious leader, Jairus's name is important enough to be remembered in Mark's text. But his wealth and status cannot save his daughter. Maybe Jesus can.

Jairus and Jesus swim through the crowd to Jairus's home. In the crowd is a woman, name unknown, and she is bleeding in the most embarrassing way imaginable. She really isn't supposed to be here: she's considered "unclean" and must isolate herself so as to not contaminate others. For twelve years she's spent all she has on painful medical treatments that haven't worked. She can't call attention to herself like Jairus can, so she touches Jesus's cloak. The pain evaporates from her body.

Presumably to Jairus's horror (his daughter is taking her last breaths after all!), Jesus stops in his tracks. "Who touched my clothes?" he asks the crowd pressing



in around him. After a moment of tense silence, the woman, shaking with fear, emerges and falls at Jesus's feet. There, she *tells him the whole truth*.

The whole truth.

We don't know the content of the "truth" the woman told, but we do know it was the *whole truth* — not the watered-down truth or just the highlights. She tells the *whole truth*, and, despite Jairus's medical emergency, despite the crowd pressing in around them, despite that she's breaking the rules by talking to Jesus and touching his clothes, *Jesus stops to listen*.

5 second pause

Reader 4: This unnamed woman carries her own unique story with her own specific pain. But at the same time, she represents *all* people in *all* times who are hurting and alone, and *all* those whose stories don't seem important enough to be heard. Jesus didn't *have* to listen in order to "fix" her: her pain was already gone. But he listened anyway.

Can you imagine how it felt to finally be *seen* and *known* like that?

5 second pause

"Daughter," he says at last, and it's not hard to guess how much this title means to her, after all the names she's been called (or *not* called) for twelve years. He continues: "Your faith has healed you. Go in peace, and be freed from your suffering."

5 second pause

Reader 1: How
Do I
Listen to others?
As if everyone were my Master
Speaking to me
His
Cherished
Last



Words.
– Hafiz

5 second pause.

Facilitator: Amen.



Session 3 Attachment B: Sacred Listening Exercise

Instructions:

- Each person will have five minutes to share and five minutes to listen to their partner.
- You can share your responses to ANY or ALL of the questions below.
- If you don't see a clock on the wall, pull up a timer on your phone, watch, or tablet.
- When sharing, speak from the heart. Take your time, and if you finish before five minutes have elapsed, wait in silence.
- When listening, give your wholehearted attention. Do not interrupt or make comments. Wait quietly until you are prompted to offer your sharing.

Reflection questions:

- Who is someone who truly listens to your “whole truth” without judgment? (This can be someone currently in your life, or it can be someone you crossed paths with in the past).⁹
- When do you find it difficult to receive “the whole truth” from others?
- What actions, words, or postures indicate to you that someone is truly listening? What actions, words, or postures indicate that someone is NOT listening?
- What resonated with you from the story of Jairus and the bleeding woman?

⁹ As described in the opening meditation, the “whole truth” is not the watered-down truth or just the highlights; it is the specific, messy story of our own unique pain, shame, fear, and hope, and joy.



Session 3 Attachment C: Reading Dialogue

Instructions: You will have 25 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. You might not have time to get to every question, but be sure that you discuss all the questions from Roxy Manning's article. Choose a facilitator to read the questions and facilitate the conversation. Ask a representative to share with the large group 1-2 sentences about key points your group discussed.

Roxy Manning: "NVC: Changing Consciousness, Relationships and Systems"

- This article is extremely important. Take a few minutes to review key points.
- How might emphasizing equality over equity bring harm to a relationship?
- How might you apply the wisdom of this article to your own life?

The Compassion Book: Chapter 2

- What resonated with you from chapter 2?
- Take turns sharing about your experience with the spiritual practice.

Crucial Conversations: Chapter 4

- What did you find most helpful from chapter 4 of *Crucial Conversations*?
- Take a moment to think of a conversation that didn't go as well as you'd liked. How might you have navigated the conversation differently if you had read chapter 4 of *Crucial Conversations* beforehand?



Session 3 Attachment D: The Power of the Pause

Exercise 1 (2 minutes: 1 minute for steps 1-3, and 1 minute for step 4)

1. Choose who will be Partner 1 and who will be Partner 2.
2. Partner 1 shares their three sentences describing their strongly-held viewpoints.
3. Partner 2 chooses one of the three sentences to work with for this exercise.
4. Partners 1 and 2 engage in a quick debate around the sentence. Partner 1 will defend their viewpoint, while Partner 2 plays “devil’s advocate.” The goal is not to implement good listening skills, but to simulate a heated discussion that you’ve seen or participated in.

Exercise 2 (6 minutes)

- Engage in the same conversation a second time: Partner 1 defends the same position they defended in Exercise 1, while Partner 2 simulates an opposing viewpoint *and* a willingness to listen.
- This time around, Partner 2 is invited to insert “the power of the pause” into the conversation. In other words, after Partner 1 speaks, Partner 2 is invited to **pause, reflect** on both partners’ feelings and needs, and then **ask a follow-up question**. Follow-up questions may include:
 - a. How did you come to that perspective?
 - b. Can you tell me more about your belief?
 - c. Would you be willing to share any experiences you’ve had that shaped this belief?
- If and when Partner 1 seems to have said all they want to say, Partner 2 is invited to check in, asking: “Is there more you want me to know?”
- When Partner 1 has completely finished speaking, Partner 2 asks: “Would you be open to listening to my perspective?” If Partner 1 says “yes,” Partner 2 can then begin to share.



- If the conversation gets to this point, then Partner 1 is invited to practice pausing, reflecting, and asking followup questions, too.

Session 3 Attachment E: Power of the Pause Reflection

Reader 1: *There was a time in the last century when most homes had a front porch. It was very common in the evening to have neighbors join each other for porch conversations. They would sit in old, comfortable chairs and talk and sit and talk and sit. There would be long comfortable pauses and deep listening as stories, ideas and perspectives were shared. It was a great way to make connections and to gain an understanding of each other.*

Reader 2: *Things are very different today. Communication is often hard. Polarization is the norm and perspectives seem worlds apart. We have also been trained through news media soundbites to communicate in brief, quick snippets. Our cell phones have trained us to communicate in short texted phrases or with emojis. Sadly, it seems rare to have these quick threads of communication weave together to become deep conversations.*

Reader 3: *[But we can do] something that is rarely seen in today's conversations. We can push back against the norm of fast-paced talking and pause to slow the conversation down. Pausing is the deliberate act of momentarily stepping back from a conversation....*

But how do we create a pause in difficult conversations when our cultural habits push against it so strongly? One way is to say something like: "I really want to fully understand what you are sharing, could you give me a moment to think about what you just said?" Note: It is important that, while making this comment and during a pause, all nonverbal communication projects loving kindness and openness.

Reader 4: *A pause in the conversation is purposeful. It allows us to:*

- *Take a few deep breaths to connect with my center of peace and calmness.*



- *Reflect on what feelings bubbled up inside of me from what I just heard. Am I feeling anxious, defensive, perplexed, curious? Identifying my feelings helps me [to be more grounded in how I respond to] these feelings.*
- *Reflect on if I fully understood what was just said. Was I listening [to understand] or was I listening only enough to create a response?*
- *Reflect on what feelings might be behind what was said by my conversation partner. Did I detect fear, anxiety, anger as the other person spoke? Was there pain and vulnerability behind her words? Can I connect to these feelings with an open heart and loving kindness?*
- *Reflect on a question I can ask that will invite further discussion and a deeper understanding of what is being shared.*

Reader 1: After the pause, the best way to pick up the conversation [may be] to ask a question that will prompt the other person to share deeper... Once the conversation partner has shared more, invite her to go deeper with more gentle nudges. Soon she may open up and share not only her perspectives but the feelings behind them, all because we were open and showed loving kindness and a real longing for understanding and connection. Doing these things often helps our conversation partner become more open and want to understand our perspectives as well...

Reader 2: Once we have tried pausing during difficult conversations, we will be inspired to use a pause again and again. Making deeper connections with others is very satisfying. However, it is really hard to do. For most of us, it takes lots and lots of practice, like developing any new habit. We are conditioned to eagerly express our perspectives and our points of view. In addition, sometimes our "buttons are pushed" and our emotions get the best of us. Pausing helps with both of these.

Reader 3: It is easier to use pauses in conversations if you have a regular practice of spiritual quieting like Centering Prayer, meditation or chanting. These practices connect us to our spiritual center, that place of calmness and peace where the Spirit speaks to us. This is the same place we are trying to connect with when we are pausing during difficult conversations.



Reader 4: In summary, this simple practice of pausing, reflecting and inviting can have a powerful impact on our conversations and relationships. It can move us "back to the porch" where the conversations were slower with lots of pauses. It can be a tremendous help with our desire to "first seek to understand" and it moves us closer to being a "channel of peace."



SESSION 4

Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Scripture Reflection

Reader 1: When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked.
 "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept.

Pause briefly.

Reader 2: Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" — John 11:32-37 (NIV)

Opening Prayer

Between¹⁰

by Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

Facilitator: God is not in me
 nor in you
 but between us

God is not me or mine
 nor you or yours
 but ours.

God is known
 not alone

¹⁰ Note: Although we cannot speak for the author's intentions, JustFaith Ministries included this poem not as a theological statement to be read literally, but as a reminder that we are inextricably bound together as God's children.



but in relationship.

Reader 1: Not as a separate, lonely power
but through our kinship, our
friendship,
through our healing and binding
and raising up of each other.

To know God is to know others,
to love God is to love others,
to hear God is to hear others.

Reader 2: More than meditation,
more than insight,
more than feeling,
between us are
claims, obligations, commandments;
to act, to do, to behave our beliefs.

Reader 1: I seek God
not as if God were alone,
an isolated person, He or She,
a process, a power, a being, a thing.
I seek God
not as if I were alone,
a thinker, a mediator, a discrete entity.

I seek God in connection,
in the nexus of community.
I pray and celebrate the betweenness
which binds and holds us together.

Reader 2: And even when I am left alone,
I am sustained by my
memory of our betweenness
and the promise of our betweenness.

Facilitator: God is not in me, or in you, or in God's self,
but in betweenness
and it is there we find the evidence of



God's reality and our own. Amen.

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To learn more about the life and legacy of Rabbi Schulweis, visit <https://hmsi.info/>



Session 4 Attachment B: Empathy Exercise Instructions

In this exercise, you and your partner will practice giving and receiving empathy. In preparation, turn to Appendix A and B in *The Compassion Book*. Instructions:

1. Partner 1 shares about an incident that happened in their life that generated some emotional “heat” for them.
 - This incident should be at about a three out of ten on a scale of emotional intensity.
 - It should be a story they can tell in 30 seconds to a minute.
 - Don’t choose an incident that involves someone in the group.
2. Partner 2 practices sinking into the heart space and empathizing with Partner 1’s experience, using this formula: “Are you feeling _____ (feeling from the Feelings List) because you need more _____ (need from the Needs List)?” *Be careful to use ONLY the feelings and needs that are printed on the lists!*
3. Partner 1 lets Partner 2 know whether their guess is correct. Keep guessing until you identify the needs and feelings that resonate with Partner 1.
4. After five minutes, the partners switch roles.

Note: This exercise may feel uncomfortable, and that’s normal! The empathy language we’ll be using may or may not mirror how we actually speak in real life. However, we can use this language as part of our internal dialogues to inform what we choose to say. Practicing it aloud will help us generate empathetic responses more quickly and naturally.



Session 4 Attachment C: Reading Dialogue

*Instructions: You will have 30 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. You may not have time to get to all the questions, **but be sure to touch on the questions in bold**. Assign a facilitator to read the instructions and facilitate the conversation. Also ask for a representative who will share 1-2 sentences about a key point from your group's discussion when the large group reconvenes.*

Roxy Manning: "Why Don't They Get It?"

- What resonated with you from the article "Why Don't They Get it?"
- Can you think of a real-life example of when someone needed empathy, yet your perspective on the experience differed from theirs? What did you do or say? If you had a "do-over," what would you do differently?
- Have you ever needed empathy, but your conversation partner "just didn't get it"? In situations like these, how can you care for yourself? Can you find other ways to get your needs met?
- "Tend to the wound before you try to explain how the wound occurred." How might this wisdom speak to your own life?

The Compassion Book: Chapters 5 and 10

- Describe your experience with the spiritual practice. What insights did you gain?

Crucial Conversations: Chapter 5

- Choose a sentence from chapter 5 that was helpful to you. Share your sentence and explain why it was helpful.
- **As discussed in the Introductory Materials in the Participant Packet, while *Crucial Conversations* describes many helpful tips for navigating tough conversations, it does not adequately address how power dynamics can affect relationships. One participant of the *Want to Talk* pilot group expressed: "I found the story/illustration in [this chapter failed to address] the presence of male dominance in the power dynamic of the story. A 'crucial conversation' as**



described by the authors assumes that everyone in the workplace are 'equals' (and can 'operate' as equals) but they are not."

- **In what ways might power dynamics influence Maria's interactions with Louis and her boss?**
 - **Are there techniques suggested in *Crucial Conversations* that Maria might find unhelpful or inadequate? If so, which ones?**
 - **Are there aspects of the "master my stories" technique that someone in Maria's situation could find helpful? Explain.**
 - **What wisdom might Roxy Manning have for someone in Maria's situation?**
 - **Have you seen or been in a similar situation to Maria's? If so, were you able to have a crucial conversation about the issue?**
- Which type of "clever story" — victim stories, villain stories, or helpless stories — are you most prone to telling?
 - Think of a time when you told a "clever story." Give a summary of the clever story you told, and then tell a *useful* story.

Session 4 Attachment D: Closing Meditation

The Mustard Seed Medicine

Reader 1: Kisa was a beautiful young woman with neither father nor mother to care for her. In the city market one day, a young man saw her as she stood in a booth selling flowers. They fell in love at first sight. Later they married. Everyone thought: "What a happy life Kisa will now have!"

Some time after that, a baby was born, a beautiful little boy. The days slipped by very fast as she watched her little son grow and learn. Almost before she knew it, he could run about and talk. She loved him more than anyone else in all the world. She loved him when he was obedient and when he was stubborn. She loved him when he laughed and when he cried.

Reader 2: But one day the little boy suddenly became very sick. Even though his mother and father did everything they knew how to do for him, the little boy did not get well. In a few days he died.



Kisa could not believe her little boy was really dead. She thought his sickness had only put him to sleep. Some kind of medicine would surely wake him up. So she wrapped the little body in its baby sheet and lifted it up in her arms. She carried it to her neighbor's door.

"Please, my friend, " she begged, "give me some medicine that will cure my child." But when her neighbor lifted the sheet and saw the baby's face, she shook her head sadly. She knew there was no medicine that could cure him. Kisa was not easily discouraged. She went from door to door. She begged each neighbor she saw: "Please give me some medicine to cure my little boy." But each neighbor in turn looked at the baby's sleeping face and shook their heads sadly. The neighbors all felt very sorry for Kisa. When she was gone, they said: "Poor Kisa! Has she lost her senses?"

Reader 3: Finally she met a man on the street who said: "My good woman, I can't give you any medicine for your child, but I know a man who can help you."

"Oh, tell me, please, who is he and where may I find him?"

"Go to the teacher," said the man encouragingly. "He can always help people." So Kisa hurried to the teacher's home. She stood before him and said:

"Good teacher, I am told you are always able to help people in trouble. Please give me some medicine that will cure my child."

The teacher looked tenderly at the anxious mother. He knew the child was dead. He knew he could not bring the dead back to life again, but he knew also that he could help the mother to feel peaceful and comforted.

Reader 4: "My good woman, you must help me find the medicine," said the teacher kindly. "Go and bring me a handful of mustard seed."

"Surely I can easily find a handful of mustard seed," said Kisa eagerly.

"Do as I tell you," said Buddha. "But remember this: The mustard seed must be taken from a house where no one has ever died or it will be of no use."

Believing she could find the mustard seed in some house where no one had ever died, Kisa thanked Buddha and went back home. There she gently laid her child's lifeless body on its little bed. Then she went out alone to find the handful of mustard seed.



Reader 1: First she went hopefully to her next-door neighbor. "Have you a handful of mustard seed?" she asked. "The teacher says it will cure my child."

"Certainly I have mustard seed. I will gladly give you a handful and more."

"Thank you so much, kind neighbor," said Kisa, "but before taking the seed I must ask you a question. Has anyone ever died in your house — a father or grandfather or grandmother or anyone else?"

"O Kisa dear, have you forgotten?" said the neighbor in surprise. "Our dear grandfather died here scarcely more than a year ago."

"Then your mustard seed cannot cure my child," said Kisa sadly. "The teacher said that I must find the seed in a home where no one has ever died."

Reader 2: Kisa went hopefully to another house. She went from door to door, to every house in the village, asking for a handful of mustard seed. When she asked the question: "Has anyone ever died in this house?" one said:

"Yes, our oldest son died here. It was ten years ago, but we still miss him." Another said:

"Both our grandparents died in this house." Another said:

"My husband died here many years ago." At every door it was the same.

At last, tired and discouraged, Kisa went outside the village and sat down alone on a rock under a banyan tree. She knew now that even the teacher had not medicine for her child. Nothing could bring him back to life again. Tears blinded her eyes. Although it was broad daylight, it seemed as though the darkness of night had fallen over her.

Reader 3: As she sat quietly under the banyan tree, she slowly began to feel peaceful. After all, she was not all alone and deserted. Nor did she feel that her little boy was all alone. The little boy she loved was gone. That was true. She did not know where he had gone or why he had gone, but she did know now that his body was dead, just as thousands of other persons' bodies had died before. Just as her own body would sometime die. Kisa felt that all people were together in dying. No one was ever all alone.

But Kisa wanted to talk with the teacher again. She was beginning to understand why he had sent her to get the handful of mustard seed. But she wanted him to tell her. So she arose and went back to his home. The teacher greeted her in the same gentle way he had done before.



Reader 4: "Dear friend, have you brought the mustard seed?" he asked.

"No, my teacher. There is no house in all the village where someone has not at sometime died."

"Sit down beside me," said the teacher. "Let us talk together a while."

"Our lives in this world are all short whether we live for one year or for a hundred years. We all have our times of happiness and also our times of pain and sorrow. Do not try to free yourself from suffering. Try rather to free yourself from hate and selfishness.

"Do not struggle, dear friend," said the teacher. "Be at peace. Accept your life as a gift. Take the days as they come one by one. Fill them as full of kindness as you can."

Kisa went often to the teacher. The thoughts that he gave her to think about were the best kind of medicine for her loneliness. Now that she knew how much it hurt to be lonely, she began to learn how to comfort others who also were sad.

Kisa went often to the homes of the poor. She brought them food. She played with their children. In these ways she slowly became whole again.

Reader 1: When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept.

Reader 2: "If one part of our body hurts, we hurt all over. If one part of our body is honored, the whole body will be happy." (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Facilitator: "Carry each other's burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)



SESSION 5

Attachment A: Meditation on Anger

Anger is like a smoke alarm alerting us that something is wrong, that a need, on a personal, collective, or systemic level, is not being met. If we hear the smoke alarm and take a look around, we can locate the source of the issue and tend to it. In other words, when we stop to examine our anger, we can consider what needs are not being met and find a way to meet them, which in turn allows us to respond with intentionality, creativity, and integrity. Pause briefly.

Many of us, particularly women and people of color, have been discouraged from — and some have even been killed for — expressing anger. If anger is a smoke alarm that awakens us to the fact something is wrong, and if that smoke alarm is not permitted to ring, how many fires have consumed us, and what is the cost of the destruction — not only for ourselves, but for our world? Pause.

Ephesians 4:26 instructs us to be angry but sin not. After all, anger is a universal human emotion, and feeling angry by no means makes us “bad people!” Christians from the contemplative tradition use the phrase “sacred anger,” which is a protest against that which does not honor the dignity of God’s people. However, when we do not stop to examine our anger in order to consciously choose how we will respond to it, our energy is often funneled into punishing ourselves and others. The way in which we inflict punishment may look different depending on our personalities and social location.¹¹ These factors in turn may influence whether we tell a victim story, a villain story, or a helpless story in order to justify the violence of our anger.

Reflection question (5-7 minutes): How does social location affect if and how we express our anger? What are the effects of these explicit and implicit rules around who is “allowed” to express their anger and how they are “allowed” to express it?

When we do not examine our anger, we retreat to the fight-or-flight center of our brains, in which we resort to shame and blame by forcing or withholding information from the pool of meaning. Shame and blame, as we discussed in Session 2, are ineffective ways of getting what we need. Even when we’re seeking to “be prophetic” or create social change, our unexamined anger merely perpetuates the violence we’re attempting to undo.

¹¹ “Social location” refers to factors including (but not limited to) our race, gender, socio-economic status, age, and ability.



But what about when others express anger toward us? As we learned in Sessions 3 and 4, we can engage in listening and empathy, as we attempt to connect with the feelings and needs beneath their anger. In addition, we can practice the power of the pause, and we can also practice *Crucial Conversations* tools such as “making it safe,” contrasting to clarify misunderstanding, and finding a mutual purpose. Pause briefly.

However, particularly in situations in which we hold greater systemic power, it is crucial that we refrain from *tone-policing*, or telling someone else how they are “allowed” to express themselves. The invitation of Nonviolent Communication is to truly connect with what someone is saying, rather than refusing to listen because they aren’t expressing themselves in the way we’d prefer. Pause briefly.

Nonviolent Communication offers a few techniques that, with practice, can help us transform our anger into connection and creative problem-solving, as well as learn to listen and empathize even when anger is directed toward us. After all, though someone can *stimulate* our anger, they cannot *make* us angry. There is power in understanding this difference, as we have a choice in how we respond! In a few minutes, we will learn a basic technique we can use when anger arises in a conversation, but first, let’s take a few minutes to process this important background information.

Reflection questions:

- *What resonates with you from what we just read?*
- *How does this introductory message challenge you?*



Session 5 Attachment B:

Feelings Versus Evaluations Masquerading as Feelings

From Ike Lasater and Julie Styles, *Words that Work in Business, 2nd Edition*, pages 175-17

Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
abandoned	terrified, hurt, bewildered, sad, frightened, lonely	nurturing, connection, belonging, support, caring
abused	angry, frustrated, frightened	caring, nurturing, support, emotional or physical well-being, consideration, for all living things to flourish
(not) accepted	upset, scared, lonely	inclusion, connection, community, belonging, contribution, peer respect
attacked	scared, angry	safety
belittled	angry, frustrated, tense, distressed	respect, autonomy, to be seen, acknowledgment, appreciation
betrayed	angry, hurt, disappointed, enraged	trust, dependability, honesty, honor, commitment, clarity
blamed	angry, scared, confused, antagonistic, hostile, bewildered, hurt	accountability, causality, fairness, justice
bullied	angry, scared, pressured	autonomy, choice, safety, consideration
caged/boxed in	angry, thwarted, scared, anxious	autonomy, choice, freedom
cheated	resentful, hurt, angry	honesty, fairness, justice, trust, reliability
coerced	angry, frustrated, frightened, thwarted, scared	choice, autonomy, freedom (to act freely, to choose freely)



Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
cornered	angry, scared, anxious, thwarted	autonomy, freedom
criticized	in pain, scared, anxious, frustrated, humiliated, angry, embarrassed	understanding, acknowledgment, recognition, accountability, nonjudgmental communication
discounted/ diminished	hurt, angry, embarrassed, frustrated	acknowledgment, inclusion, recognition, respect, to matter
disliked	sad, lonely, hurt	connection, appreciation, understanding, acknowledgment, friendship, inclusion
distrusted	sad, frustrated	trust, honesty
dumped on	angry, overwhelmed	respect, consideration
harassed	angry, frustrated, pressured, frightened	respect, space, consideration, peace
hassled	irritated, distressed, angry, frustrated	serenity, autonomy, to do things at my own pace and in my own way, calm, space
ignored	lonely, scared, hurt, sad, embarrassed	connection, belonging, inclusion, community, participation
insulted	angry, embarrassed	respect, consideration, acknowledgment, recognition
interrupted	angry, frustrated, resentful, hurt	respect, to be heard, consideration
intimidated	scared, anxious	safety, equality, empowerment



Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
invalidated	angry, hurt, resentful	appreciation, respect, acknowledgment, recognition
invisible	sad, angry, lonely, scared	to be seen and heard, inclusion, belonging, community
isolated	lonely, afraid, scared	community, inclusion, belonging, contribution
left out	sad, lonely, anxious	inclusion, belonging, community, connection
let down	sad, disappointed, frightened	consistency, trust, dependability, consistency
manipulated	angry, scared, powerless, thwarted, frustrated	autonomy, empowerment, trust, equality, freedom, free choice, connection, genuineness
mistrusted	sad, angry	trust
misunderstood	upset, angry, frustrated	to be heard, understanding, clarity
neglected	lonely, scared	connection, inclusion, participation, community, care, to matter, consideration
overpowered	angry, impotent, helpless, confused	equality, justice, autonomy, freedom
overworked	angry, tired, frustrated	respect, consideration, rest, caring
patronized	angry, frustrated, resentful	recognition, equality, respect, mutuality
pressured	anxious, resentful, overwhelmed	relaxation, clarity, space, consideration



Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
provoked	angry, frustrated, hostile, antagonistic, resentful	respect, consideration
put down	angry, sad, embarrassed	respect, acknowledgment, understanding
rejected	hurt, scared, angry, defiant	belonging, inclusion, closeness, to be seen, acknowledgment, connection
ripped off/ screwed	anger, resentment, disappointed	consideration, justice, fairness, acknowledgment, trust
smothered/ suffocated	frustrated, fear, desperation	space, freedom, autonomy, authenticity, self-expression
taken for granted	sad, angry, hurt, disappointed	appreciation, acknowledgment, recognition, consideration
threatened	scared, frightened, alarmed, agitated, defiant	safety, autonomy
trampled	angry, frustrated, overwhelmed	empowerment, connection, community, to be seen, consideration, equality, respect, acknowledgment
tricked	embarrassed, angry, resentful	integrity, trust, honesty
unappreciated	sad, angry, hurt, frustrated	appreciation, respect, acknowledgment, consideration
unheard	sad, hostile, frustrated	understanding, consideration, empathy



Session 5 Attachment C: Guided Meditation on Anger

1. Take a deep breath.

Taking a deep breath is an opportunity to recenter ourselves through the Power of the Pause. It can also give us a moment to discern whether to gently let our conversation partner know that we wish to step out of the conversation, reflect on the situation, and return to the conversation later.

2. Make a vertical list of your judgments about the other person.

A good way to get started is to begin with the phrase "I don't like people who are...." Pay extra attention to any thoughts that begin with should or shouldn't: these are judgments!

3. Continue listing judgments: only this time, list the judgments you make about yourself.

These may even include judgments about the fact that you are judging! A good way to get started is to begin with the phrase I should or I shouldn't.

4. Look at the list of judgments you made. Next to each judgment, write the feelings and needs that lie beneath the judgment.

For example, if your judgment is "he belittles me," your feelings may be "angry" and "embarrassed," and your needs might be "respect" and "understanding."

5. Guess the needs and feelings of the person who stimulated your anger: *What needs and feelings may have been behind their words or actions?* Write them down.



Session 5 Attachment D: Reading Dialogue

*Instructions: You will have 30 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. You may not have time to get to all the questions, **but be sure to touch on the questions in bold.** Assign a facilitator to read the instructions and facilitate the conversation. Also choose a representative who will share 1-2 sentences about a key point from your group's discussion when the large group reconvenes.*

Roxy Manning: "The Power of Authenticity and Care"

- Choose a sentence that stood out to you from this article. Share your sentence and explain why it was impactful.
- **How can you discern the difference between intensity and aggression? What does communicating with both intensity and care look like? Can you think of an example in which you've witnessed someone communicating in this way?**
- **In our society, who is "allowed" to speak with intensity, and who is not?**
- How would you answer Dr. Manning's initial questions:
 - Where in your life do you stay silent and not show up fully?
 - What prevents you from showing up?
 - **Is it possible to be intensely authentic and real and yet hold care for everyone in the situation? If so, how?**

Crucial Conversations: Chapter 6 and 7

- Take a minute or two of silent reflection to choose one to two sentences that were meaningful to you from **chapter 6** *Crucial Conversations*. Then take turns sharing your excerpts aloud and explaining why they were meaningful. *Ensure that everyone has had time to choose their passages before your small group begins sharing.*
- Take a minute or two of silent reflection to choose one to two sentences that were meaningful to you from **chapter 7** *Crucial Conversations*. Then take turns sharing your excerpts aloud and explaining why they were meaningful. *Ensure that everyone has had time to choose their passages before your small group begins sharing.*



- ***Crucial Conversations* titles its chapter “Make it Safe.” The phrase “safe space” has become popular over the last few years. However, some justice advocates point out that “safe spaces” can exclude certain topics from being discussed for fear of making someone uncomfortable. Instead, many advocates suggest the word “brave spaces,” which encourage open dialogue based on respect. For example, a “safe space” might discourage speaking out about a racist remark for fear of hurting feelings. A “brave space” would allow the remark to be addressed with openness and respect.**
 - Do you have any “safe spaces” in your life that you would like to transform into a “brave space?” If so, how might you go about it?
 - “When it’s safe, you can say anything.” This statement may be true; however, when we are in a position of power, we may overlook the ways in which our environments are *not* safe for people who hold less systemic power than we do — perhaps due to their race, gender, ability, educational background, age, economic status, sexuality, or citizenship status. Consider the power dynamics in the communities of which you’re a part, such as your church, workplace, and family. Are there any spaces that might feel safe to you, but might not feel safe for someone else?
- **Imagine that a friend makes a joke you consider to be racist and hurtful toward People of Color. Though she wasn’t *trying* to be hurtful, her remark stimulated feelings of alienation, discomfort, and embarrassment in you. How might you use the skills you’ve learned from *Crucial Conversations* to address this issue in a way that may increase the likelihood that she will truly hear your concerns?**
- How does what you’ve read so far in *Crucial Conversations* connect with what you’ve read so far in *The Compassion Book*?

The Compassion Book: Chapters 14 and 23

- What insights arose for you from chapters 14 or 23 or from the spiritual practice?
- How does the way in which *Crucial Conversations* describes an apology compare with how *The Compassion Book* describes restoration?



SESSION 6

Attachment A: Opening and Closing Meditation

- Reader 1: What makes a fire burn
 is space between the logs,
 a breathing space.
- Reader 2: Too much of a good thing,
 too many logs
 packed in too tight
 can douse the flames
 almost as surely
 as a pail of water would.
- Reader 1: So building fires
 requires attention
 to the spaces in between,
 as much as to the wood.
- Reader 2: When we are able to build
 open spaces
 in the same way
 we have learned
 to pile on the logs,
 then we can come to see how
 it is fuel, and absence of the fuel
 together, that make fire possible
- Reader 1: We only need to lay a log
 lightly from time to time.
- Reader 2: A fire
 grows
 simply because the space is there,
 with openings
 in which the flame
 that knows just how it wants to burn
 can find its way.



— “Fire” by Judy Sorum Brown

Read more about her work at <https://www.judysorumbrown.com>

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Instructions for journaling:

- During today’s session, we will be discussing how to “build open spaces,” so that we can truly hear one another when requests are made. Can you think of a relationship or an environment in which you could give and receive requests with ease and openness? Jot down the needs that were met and the feelings you had as you recall this experience, as well as any other insights you have about it.
- Write a brief prayer of gratitude for the relationships in which your needs — and the needs of others — were acknowledged and honored.
- Can you think of a time in your life in which “too many logs [were] packed in too tight,” and the lack of openness smothered the flame? In other words, can you think of a relationship or environment in which you did not feel that you could give and receive requests with ease and openness? Jot down the needs and feelings that come to mind as you recall this experience, as well as any other insights you have about it.
- Take a moment to write a prayer for healing for yourself, for the person or community that came to mind, or both.



Session 6 Attachment B: Reading Dialogue

*Instructions: You will have 30 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. You may not have time to get to all the questions, **but be sure to touch on the questions in bold**. Assign a facilitator to read the instructions and facilitate the conversation. Also choose a representative who will share 1-2 sentences about a key point from your group's discussion when the large group reconvenes.*

Roxy Manning: Navigating the Tangle of Yes and No

- Choose a sentence that stood out to you from this article. Share your sentence and explain why it was impactful.
- **"We've all experienced very real negative consequences when we say no to, or disagree with, people in our lives, especially those who have more power than we do."**
 - **During the next session, your group will be exploring how to respond to someone's "no." However, it is important to understand that power dynamics play a huge role in how we give and receive requests. Can you think of a real life example in which power dynamics influenced the way in which you made a request, or someone made a request of you?**
 - **How might this article shape the way in which you make a request or hear a request when power dynamics are at play?**
- "I was raised to be independent, to not 'be a burden.' I remember hearing over and over the phrase, 'God helps those who help themselves.' Making requests was completely foreign to me. Once I became more adept at asking for what I needed, I began to realize how difficult it was for me to hear what other people wanted without making it a demand of myself!" Can you relate to Dr. Manning's experience? If so, in what way?

Crucial Conversations, Chapter 8

- Choose a sentence that stood out to you from *Crucial Conversations*. Share your sentence and explain why it was impactful.



- **Think of a crucial conversation that did not go well. Narrate how you would use the STATE process if you had a “do-over.”**
- **Power dynamics are not mentioned in the author’s description of the STATE process. How might power dynamics affect how we STATE our path?**

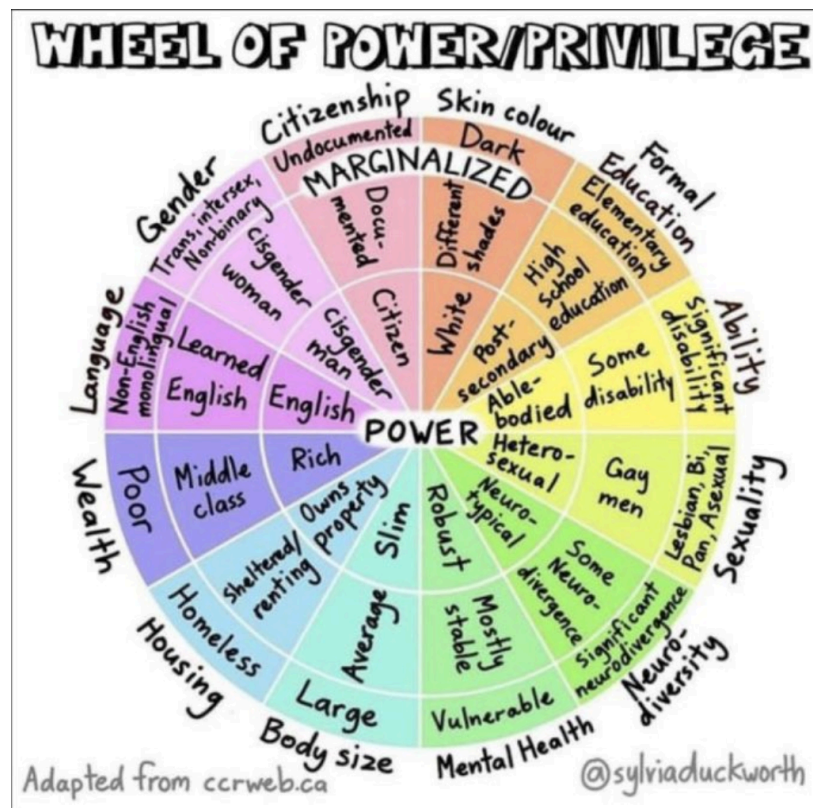
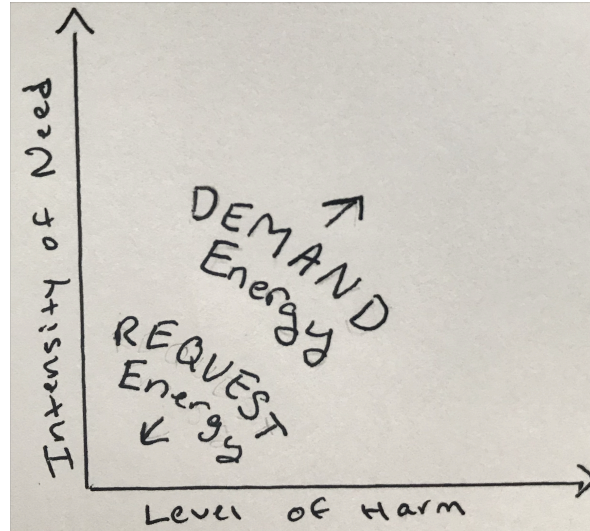
The Compassion Book, Chapters 35 and 36

- Choose a sentence that stood out to you from chapter 35 or 36 of *The Compassion Book*.
- Describe your experience with the spiritual practice.



Session 6 Attachment C: Charts

Requests and Demands





IMMERSION

Opening Meditation

This Grace That Scorches Us

- Reader 1: Here's one thing
 you must understand
 about this blessing:
 it is not
 for you alone.
- Reader 2: It is stubborn
 about this.
 Do not even try
 to lay hold of it
 if you are by yourself,
 thinking you can carry it
 on your own.
- Reader 3: To bear this blessing,
 you must first take yourself
 to a place where everyone
 does not look like you
 or think like you,
 a place where they do not
 believe precisely as you believe,
 where their thoughts
 and ideas and gestures
 are not exact echoes
 of your own.
- Reader 4: Bring your sorrow.
 Bring your grief.
 Bring your fear.
 Bring your weariness,
 your pain,
 your disgust at how broken
 the world is,



how fractured,
how fragmented
by its fighting,
its wars,
its hungers,
its penchant for power,
its ceaseless repetition
of the history it refuses
to rise above.

Reader 1: I will not tell you
this blessing will fix all that.

Reader 2: But in the place
where you have gathered,
wait.
Watch.
Listen.
Lay aside your inability
to be surprised,
your resistance to what you
do not understand.
See then whether this blessing
turns to flame on your tongue,
sets you to speaking
what you cannot fathom

Reader 3: or opens your ear
to a language
beyond your imagining
that comes as a knowing
in your bones,
a clarity
in your heart
that tells you

Reader 4: this is the reason
we were made:
for this ache
that finally opens us,

Reader 1: for this struggle,
 this grace
 that scorches us
 toward one another
 and into
 the blazing day.

—Jan Richardson

from [Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons](https://www.janrichardson.com/)
<https://www.janrichardson.com/>

Immersion: Closing Meditation

Reader 1: After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:
 "Salvation belongs to our God,
 who sits on the throne,
 and to the Lamb."

Pause for 10-15 seconds of silent reflection.

Reader 2: I took part in a retreat once in which the leader gathered the group into a circle and handed out three balls of colored yarn. She asked us to toss the balls back and forth to one another across the circle, each holding onto a piece of it. The result was a beautiful, multi-colored web stretched across the center of the circle. "Each of you take turns and wiggle your thread," the leader instructed. What we found was that every movement vibrated the entire web. And it dawned on me—this immeasurable truth we were portraying. We are each a thread woven into the vast web of the universe, linked and connected so that our lives are irrevocably bound up with one another. I looked at those faces around the circle in a new way. The old adage, "I am my brother's keeper" — or in this case, my sister's keeper — melted into something new: I am my sister. And suddenly I wanted to gather them to me and do what I could to heal them and bless them and affirm to them how beautiful they were.

— Sue Monk Kid

Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life, p. 483

Ed. Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Touchstone, 1996

Pause for 10-15 seconds of silent reflection.



SESSION 7

Attachment A: Opening Meditation

BLESSING FOR FALLING INTO A NEW LAYER OF GRIEF

- Reader 1: You thought
 you had hit
 every layer possible,
 that you had found
 the far limit
 of your sorrow,
 of your grief.
- Reader 2: Now the world falls
 from beneath your feet
 all over again,
 as if the wound
 were opening
 for the first time,
 only now with
 an ache you recognize
 as ancient.
- Reader 1: Here is the time
 for kindness—
 your own, to yourself—
 as you fall
 and fall,
 as you land hard
 in this layer
 that lies deeper than
 you ever imagined
 you could go.
- Reader 2: Think of it as
 a secret room—
 this space
 that has opened



before you,
that has opened
inside you,
though it may look
sharp in every corner
and sinister
no matter where
you turn.

Reader 1: Think of it as
a hidden chamber
in your heart
where you can stay
as long as you need,
where you will
find provision
you never wanted
but on which
your life will now
depend.

Reader 2: I want to tell you
there is treasure
even here—
that the sharp lines
that so match your scars
will lead
to solace;
that this space
that feels so foreign
will become for you
a shelter.

Reader 1: So let yourself fall.
It will not be
the last time,
but do not let this be
cause for fear.

Reader 2: These are the rooms



around which your
new home will grow—
the home of your heart,
the home of your life
that welcomes you
with such completeness,
opening and
opening and
opening itself to you,
no part of you
turned away.

Jan Richardson, *The Painted Prayerbook*

<https://www.janrichardson.com/>



Session 7 Attachment B: Reading Dialogue

*Instructions: You will have 20 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. You may not have time to get to all the questions, **but be sure to touch on the questions in bold**. Assign a facilitator to read the instructions and facilitate the conversation. Also choose a representative who will share 1-2 sentences about a key point from your group's discussion when the large group reconvenes.*

Roxy Manning: "How Can NVC be Helpful in these Transformative Times?"

- Choose a sentence that stood out to you from this article. Share your sentence and explain why it was impactful.
- **"When we uncover the needs, we are not saying the strategies are okay. We're not saying 'Gee, now that I know your intention, I forgive you.' We can fully acknowledge the incredible loss and pain stimulated by certain strategies, working to stop the use of the strategies, while still seeing the need those strategies were trying to meet. By seeing the need, we can then work toward new strategies that result in far less harm."**
 - What implications might this statement have for your personal and professional relationships?
 - What implications might this statement have for civic life and/or your work for social justice? (It may be helpful to think back to Dr. Brogdon's article on "The Neglected Dimension of Verbal Violence.")

Crucial Conversations, Chapters 9 and 11

- What insights can you take from this week's reading of *Crucial Conversations* to apply to your own life?
- **How do chapters 9 and 11 of Crucial Conversations connect with Dr. Manning's wisdom you've read so far? How does it diverge?**
- Can you think of an interaction in which the other person "blew up" or "clammed up"? After having read chapter 9, how might you respond differently if you could have a "do-over"?



- What wisdom from chapter 11 might you be able to bring to an organization, institution, or a team of which you are a part? (Note: the intention behind this question is not to badmouth anyone on your team, but to give your team some resources for clear and connective communication!)

The Compassion Book, Chapters 16, 24, practices at the end of chapter 24.

- Choose a sentence that stood out to you from chapters 16 or 24 of *The Compassion Book*, and explain why it was meaningful.



Session 7 Attachment C: Closing Meditation

Blessing the Distance

For Ascension Day

Reader 1: It is a mystery to me
how as the distance
between us grows,
the larger this blessing
becomes,

Reader 2: as if the shape of it
depends on absence,
as if it finds its form
not by what
it can cling to
but by the space
that arcs
between us.

Reader 1: As this blessing
makes its way,
first it will cease
to measure itself
by time.

Reader 2: Then it will release
how attached it has become
to this place
where we have lived,
where we have learned
to know one another
in proximity and
presence.

Reader 1: Next this blessing
will abandon
the patterns



in which it moved,
the habits that helped it
recognize itself,
the familiar pathways
it traced.

Reader 2: Finally this blessing
will touch its fingers
to your brow,
your eyes,
your mouth;
it will hold
your beloved face
in both its hands,

Reader 1: and then
it will let you go;
it will loose you
into your life;
it will leave
each hindering thing

Reader 2: until all that breathes
between us
is blessing
and all that beats
between us
is grace.

Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*
<https://www.janrichardson.com/>



Session 7 Attachment D: Discerning Next Steps

Read between Sessions 7 and 8

"Vocation is where our greatest passion meets the world's greatest needs."

— Frederick Buechner

During Session 8, your group will plan the action steps you will take in response to what you have experienced in this JustFaith Ministries program. While it is important to use your newfound communication skills to deepen your personal relationships, you also have an enormous opportunity to help people of many different backgrounds come together to work for healing and justice in your community and our world. If your group would like assistance with discerning the action steps you will take together, contact Outreach and Engagement Manager Leila Oakley by emailing leila@justfaith.org.

To prepare for your group's discernment process, follow the instructions below.

1. **Center yourself in the Holy Presence:** Find a quiet, comfortable space where you will not be distracted. Take a few moments to notice your breath. Invite God's Spirit into your discernment process.
2. **Individual Action: Creating a Toolkit for Tough Conversations**
 - Flip back through everything you have read for this program. Review the "sessions and topics" section of the Participant Packet introductory materials as you recall each in-session conversation.
 - Write down any tips or tools that you found particularly helpful throughout the course of the program.
 - Organize these tips and tools into a step-by-step action plan for how you will respond the next time a crucial conversation arises. You can either consider a specific crucial conversation you're planning to have in the future, or you could create a more broad plan for crucial conversations in general.
3. **What action steps will you take with your group?** Taking action as a community can help you maximize your impact and engage in mutual support. During Session 8, your group will choose one of four options for how you will take action as a group.



Prayerfully consider each of the options so you can bring an informed opinion to your group's discernment process during Session 8. Choose at least two options you'd be open to taking.

Option 1: Continue on to another JustFaith Ministries program.

Who is this for? Option 1 may be the best fit for groups who want to explore how they can use their newfound communication skills to advocate for justice around a specific topic (racial justice, eco-justice, poverty, etc).

How to prepare: Peruse the JustFaith Ministries programs page to discern which program might be most interesting and relevant to you and your group.

JFM program page: <https://justfaith.org/programs/>

Option 2: Cultivate a new group. Together with your current group, offer *Want to Talk* for a new group of participants. Option 2 requires all hands on deck from everyone in your current group: in addition to two co-facilitators, you will also need volunteers to invite new participants into the group, create social media and/or bulletin announcements, and help plan other logistical details.

Who is this for? Option 2 can be a particularly effective next step if your current group belongs to the same church or organization, particularly if your institution is experiencing tension around competing ideas or values. Getting more individuals from your institution on the same page about healthy communication can help you to navigate the tension you are experiencing, as well as lay the foundation for productive dialogue when future disagreements arise.

How to prepare: Consider who from your current group might be a good facilitator and if there is a role you would like to serve in coordinating and supporting a new group.

Option 3: Create a community action plan using the JFM program *Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice* to guide your process: *Just Action* will walk your group step-by-step through creating and implementing an achievable action plan around a justice topic of your choice. Along the way, it will introduce practical grassroots organizing and advocacy tools that can equip you for effective and sustainable action that aligns with your faith.



Who is this for? Option 3 is especially great for groups who are passionate about a common justice concern (mass incarceration, affordable housing, eco justice, local poverty, etc), serious about creating systemic change, and can dedicate about four to six months to participating in *Just Action* and implementing their action plan.

How to prepare: Read about *Just Action* on JustFaith Ministries' website, and consider whether it could be a helpful next step for your group:

<https://justfaith.org/just-action-how-to-advocate-and-mobilize-for-justice/>

Option 4: **Take action as a group without using *Just Action*:** If you choose this option, your group will articulate a concrete, achievable goal around how you will use your communication skills to help bring justice and healing to your community and/or our nation. Next, you will name action steps to help you achieve that goal.

Who is this for? Option 4 is for groups who feel they are ready to jump into action without further guidance from JustFaith Ministries, or for those who cannot commit to continuing on to *Just Action*.

How to Prepare: Consider ideas for what your group's goal might be, as well as steps you might take together to achieve it.



SESSION 8

Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Facilitator: A reading from Psalm 121:1-2:

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Reader 1: Holy God, we pause to center ourselves in your presence. As the sands shift around us, as cultures clash, and as each side dehumanizes the other, we stand firmly on the rock of your salvation.

As we breathe in, we notice stillness that surrounds us.
As we breathe out, we release our anxiety unto you.

Reader 2: God of grace, we pause to celebrate our interconnectedness with one another: with those who share our thirst for justice, and with those who think very differently than we do. Regardless of political parties, regardless of our theological convictions, and regardless of our differing priorities, we honor the ties that bind us together as one family.

As we breathe in, we receive God's unconditional love.
As we breathe out, we pour out God's love onto others.

Reader 1: Creator of all things, we pause to celebrate our interconnectedness with the earth. An oak tree captures carbon dioxide from the air and releases it as the oxygen we breathe. Wild berries provide joy and sustenance for humans and other animals, who return their gift by dispersing their seeds. A handful of soil contains more microorganisms than there are people on the face of our planet, tiny beings that sustain human life.

As we breathe in, we honor our oneness with all Creation
As we breathe out, we release our loneliness and isolation.

Reader 2: God of compassion, cleanse us of the poisonous anger and self-righteousness



that eats away at our own souls, our relationships, and the justice work we seek to accomplish. We lay down our resentments and commit to seeking justice through nonviolent words and actions.

As we breathe in, we inhale compassion.
As we breathe out, we release our bitterness.

Reader 1: God of hope, we give to you the cynicism that paralyzes us from action. Help us hold onto your promise that every valley shall be lifted up and every hill made low. We open our hands to receive a new understanding of our own calling and vocation, and we ask for your guidance as we seek justice and healing in our divided world.

As we breathe in, we are filled with hope.
As we breathe out, we release our cynicism.

Facilitator: Loving God, as we continue throughout our time together, we ask that you continue to be present with us, filling us with hope, surrounding us with love, and restoring us with your peace. Amen.



Session 8 Attachment B: Continue on to Another JFM Program

Attachment A is in the Participant Packet and is not needed to facilitate this session.

Continuing on to another JustFaith Ministries program can be a great fit for groups who want to explore how they can use their newfound communication skills to advocate for justice around a specific topic (racial justice, eco-justice, poverty, etc).

If your group has chosen this option, follow the steps below.

Step 1: Decide which program your group would like to take next.

If some participants have not had a chance to read the descriptions of each program on the JustFaith Ministries website, it may be helpful to display the program page so that participants can see all the options available:

<https://justfaith.org/programs/>

Step 2: Decide the following logistical details:

- When will you begin your next program?
- If your group will be meeting in-person, decide where your meetings will take place.
- Decide if you would like to open your group to new participants. The recommended group size is 7-14 for in-person groups and 7-12 for virtual groups, including facilitators.

Step 3: Decide who will co-facilitate.

- You will need two co-facilitators. While current co-facilitators can certainly continue in their roles, choosing new co-facilitators can prevent facilitator burnout and create opportunities for shared leadership.
- Co-facilitators should have the capacity to invest the following time each week:



- 1 hour for weekly session preparation, plus additional time for coordinating a guest speaker and immersion experience
 - 1-1.5 hours to complete weekly assignments
 - 2 hours to facilitate each weekly session
- Facilitator training and support is available from JustFaith Ministries.

Step 4: Brainstorm about the immersion experience and guest speaker:

During most programs, you will have the opportunity to hear from a guest speaker (someone who has experience or knowledge around the program topic), as well as engage in an immersion experience (an encounter with a group or organization working for justice around the program topic). With your group's program topic in mind, can you think of anyone you would invite as a guest speaker? How about a group or organization you would like to visit with for your immersion experience?

You do not have to decide the answer to this question today! However, it can be helpful to begin thinking about who you would like to invite, as well as who from your group could coordinate the guest speaker's visit and immersion experience.

Step 5: Reflect on the following questions:

- Thinking back on your group's journey together so far, is there anything you would like to do differently as you embark on this new phase of your journey? (For example, groups may wish to convene before or after each session for extended conversation and fellowship, or perhaps there is a group guideline you would like to commit to following more closely).
- What are decisions you have made that you would like to uphold and continue during the next phase of your journey? Or, what are qualities of your group that you really appreciate?

[Click here to return to the Session 8 outline.](#)



Session 8 Attachment C: Cultivate a New Group

Making this program available to a new group of participants can be a particularly effective next step if your current group belongs to the same church or organization, particularly if your institution is experiencing tension due to differing ideas or values. Getting more individuals from your institution on the same page about healthy communication can help you to navigate the tension you are experiencing, as well as deepen your relationships with one another.

To maximize effectiveness, all participants should participate in coordinating and supporting the new group. Below are some questions to discuss with your current group during Session 8.

Note: It will be very important that your current group coordinate a gathering with the new group after they have finished Session 8. The purpose of this gathering will be to determine the action steps you will take together to create effective and sustainable change.

Building a Community: Recruitment and Promotion

- For whom would you like to offer this program? For example, do you seek to offer the program within a particular church, organization, or other institution?
- Including facilitators, you will need 7-14 participants for an in-person group or 7-12 for a virtual group. Who would you like to invite into the group? **List specific names, and assign group members to reach out to them with personal invitations.**

A few notes:

- While making an announcement in a newsletter or from a pulpit can be helpful, personal invitations (face-to-face, over the phone, or through video conferencing) work best.
- If you are hoping to mobilize a church or organization, it might be helpful to include those in positions of influence — such as clergy or committee leaders — who can incorporate the principles they learn into institutional decision-making, as well as motivate others to participate in future program offerings.
- To the best of your abilities, seek out diverse voices, as well as those whose lives are personally affected by any injustices you seek to address. A diversity of backgrounds and perspectives can enrich the group's conversations and result in



more effective action planning. If your group consists of people of color, at least one facilitator should be a person of color, if possible.

- Would your group like to promote the new group through social media, a bulletin announcement, or newsletters? **If so, who are two people from your current group who can take the lead on promotion?**
 - JustFaith Ministries provides a promotion kit, which contains images and sample scripts you can use for social media, newsletters, and other promotional spaces. The promo kit can be found on the program page of the JustFaith Ministries website, justfaith.org.

Facilitation

- Invite current co-facilitators to share about their own facilitation experience. Then discuss: Who in your group has the time and spiritual gifts needed to co-facilitate the new group? **Choose two people to be co-facilitators.**¹²
 - Co-facilitators should have the capacity to invest the following time each week:
 - 1 hour for weekly session preparation, plus additional time for coordinating an immersion experience and optional get-to-know-you session.
 - 1-1.5 hours to complete weekly assignments
 - 2 hours to facilitate each weekly session
 - Facilitator training and support is available from JustFaith Ministries.
- Will the new co-facilitators need assistance in running the technology during each session? If so, who is someone from your current group who can either show the co-facilitators how to use the necessary technology or attend each session to run the technological elements?

Hospitality

¹² Alternatively, you could choose one co-facilitator from your current group and one new co-facilitator from the new group.



Who is someone from your current group who enjoys hospitality? **Choose one or two hospitality coordinators from your current group** to assist in welcoming the new group. This role can be creative: it may include securing a meeting location; setting up the meeting room with comfortable chairs and soft lighting; bringing coffee and refreshments the first or all weeks; or hosting a celebration gathering after the new group has finished Session 8.

Immersion Experience

Choose one to two people to help the facilitators set up the immersion for the new group.

Loose Ends

What other details need to be decided before the group? Write them down, and assign participants to take the lead on coordinating each.

[*Click here to return to the Session 8 outline.*](#)



Session 8 Attachment D: Continuing to Just Action

Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice will walk your group step-by-step through creating and implementing an achievable action plan around a justice concern of your choice. Along the way, *Just Action* will introduce practical grassroots organizing and advocacy tools that can equip you for effective and sustainable action that aligns with your faith.

Just Action is especially great for groups who are serious about creating systemic change, and who can dedicate about four to six months to participating in *Just Action* and implementing their action plan.

If your group has chosen this option, follow the steps below.

Step 1: Ensure your group is on the same page about what *Just Action* is and what it requires of participants.

Review the information about *Just Action* found on JustFaith Ministries' website. Note especially that *Just Action* is for groups that can commit to carrying out a 1-3 month action plan after the program is finished.

Step 2: Decide the following logistical details:

- When will you begin *Just Action*?
 - Note: In addition to the eight regular sessions, *Just Action* contains a 3-hour discernment retreat and an immersion experience.
- If your group is meeting in-person, decide where your meetings will take place.

Step 3: Decide who will co-facilitate.

- While current co-facilitators can certainly continue in their roles, choosing new co-facilitators can prevent facilitator burnout and create opportunities for shared leadership. You will need two co-facilitators.
- Co-facilitators should have the capacity to invest the following time each week:



- 1 hour for weekly session preparation, plus additional time for coordinating a guest speaker and immersion experience
- 1-1.5 hours to complete weekly assignments
- 2 hours to facilitate each weekly session
- Facilitator training and support is available from JustFaith Ministries.

Step 4: Reflect on the following questions:

- Thinking back on your group's journey together so far, is there anything you would like to do differently as you embark on this new phase of your journey? (For example, groups may wish to convene before or after each session for extended conversation and fellowship, or perhaps there is a group guideline you would like to follow more closely)
- What are decisions you have made that you would like to continue in the next phase of your journey? Or, what are qualities of your group that you really appreciate?

[Click here to return to the Session 8 outline.](#)



Session 8 Attachment E: Group Action Plan

If your group feels ready to jump into action without further guidance from JustFaith Ministries, or if your group cannot commit to continuing with the racial justice series or taking *Just Action*, follow the steps below.

1. Decide on one action step you would like to take together. You can either come up with your own action step or take one of the actions listed below:
 - a. Action Idea 1: Organize a community dialogue in your church, organization, or community to build connections among people of diverse perspectives.
 - First step: As a group, sign up for an online forum¹³ with My Neighbor's Voice, a nonprofit that brings people together to listen to one another's views, in order to remove barriers of distrust and disrespect across all ideological lines. Through this forum, you will participate in a community dialogue that you could adapt for use in your own community. My Neighbor's Voice's model is simple to use, and founders (and JustFaith facilitators) Mary Anne Inglis and Victoria Chance have graciously offered to share their materials with *Want to Talk* graduates wishing to set up a community dialogue in their own communities.
<https://www.myneighborsvoice.org/events>
 - b. Action Idea 2: Set up a meeting with your elected officials. Use your communication skills to advocate for laws and policies to end hunger and food insecurity (or another justice topic of your choice) in your community or across the world.
 - First step: Contact a Bread for the World regional organizer, who can provide you with training and help you set up a meeting with your elected representative or their staff (If your group lives in multiple regions, choose an organizer whose region aligns with the most members of your group): <https://www.bread.org/all-staff/organizers/>

Bread for the World addresses hunger and food insecurity, as well as systemic issues that perpetuate hunger, including environmental degradation, racial injustice, a broken immigration system, and the racial wealth gap.

¹³ If you happen to live near Greenville, SC, you could choose to attend a My Neighbor's Voice event in person!



2. Turn your action step into a SMART goal and write it at the top of the Group Action Plan chart below.

A SMART goal takes the form of a single, short sentence that everyone can understand. It has the following qualities:

- Specific: Narrow it down as much as possible. For example, can your goal be refined to one particular geographic location, policy, or institution?
- Measurable: You should be able to measure your progress toward meeting your goal.
- Achievable: Choose a goal that is realistic for your group. Do not be afraid to start with a relatively easy win!¹⁴ (If the group seems overwhelmed by the proposed goal, this may be a sign that your goal is not achievable enough).
- Relevant: Your goal should be relevant to everyone in your group.
- Time-bound: This goal should not be ongoing. Ideally, your group should be able to achieve your goal within 1-3 months after Session 8.

Examples of SMART goals include:

- We will conduct a listening cafe at our church/organization by January 1st.
- By April 31st, we will set up a meeting with a city council member to discuss how we can work together to address a local food desert.
- By March 22nd, we will set up a meeting with a member of Congress to discuss the upcoming farm bill.

3. Fill in the chart below:
 - Write your SMART goal at the top of your chart.
 - List each step you will need to take in order to reach your goal.
4. Plan a celebration and next steps: Once you have achieved your goal, plan to reconvene to celebrate your accomplishments!

At this gathering, you can also discuss whether your group would like to: 1. take on another action step, 2. participate in another JustFaith Ministries program, 3. offer this

¹⁴ An “easy win” can fuel energy for setting more ambitious goals in the future.



program for a new group, or 4. participate in *Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice*.



Session 8 Attachment F: Resources for Practice and Action

Resources for Practice and Continued Learning:

- Re-read *Crucial Conversations*, finish *The Compassion Book*
- Continue training with Roxy Manning (highly recommended by JustFaith Ministries!) — <https://www.roxannemanning.com/>
 - Additional articles and videos by Dr. Manning: <https://www.roxannemanning.com/articles-media/>
- Cory Lockhart, one of the consultants for this program, offers courses and workshops on NVC, communication, and compassion: <https://www.corylockhart.com/about-cory>
- *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem: On both a personal and community level, trauma greatly impacts our relationships and communication. We heavily considered this book for Want to Talk and highly recommend it at follow-up reading!
- NYCnvc: Thom Bond is the founder and director of this organization which provides courses and donation-based workshops: <https://www.nycnvc.org/>
- Nonviolent Communication Training: Articles, recorded workshops, and other resources (many of them are free!): https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/resources/?doing_wp_cron=1640032873.3591570854187011718750
- Read Marshall Rosenberg's book: *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Love and Life*— this book is the foundation of Nonviolent Communication. It is practical and easy-to-read.
 - Note: As with *Crucial Conversations*, this book provides important and helpful wisdom, yet it does not address important topics such as power dynamics, equity, and the impact of social location. We recommend reading Rosenberg's book alongside Roxy Manning's articles.



Resources for Building the Beloved Community:

- My Neighbor's Voice: <https://www.myneighborsvoice.org/>
- Bread for the World
 - Tools for advocacy — <https://bread.org/information-for-activists>
 - Contact your regional organizer — <https://bread.org/regional-organizers>
- Civilize It: <https://www.usccb.org/civilizeit>
- Pace e Bene (Paceebene.org)— leads nonviolence trainings, publishes books on nonviolence, and mobilizes people across the nation to take action for nonviolent change.
 - Campaign Nonviolence is a project of Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service that works to end war, poverty, racism, and environmental destruction while building a nonviolent culture.
- Nonviolent News (<https://nonviolencenews.org/>): weekly news illuminating the scale and scope of how nonviolence is actively shaping our world.



Session 8 Attachment G: Closing Meditation

**All: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.**

**O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.**

All: I PLEDGE:

To affirm through my words and actions the dignity of every person, each made in God's image. Even those with whom I disagree are made in [God's] image. *Pause.*

To respectfully listen in order to understand experiences different from my own. *Pause.*

To engage in critical examination to ensure that my perspectives are rooted in truth, that my sources of information are unbiased, and that I do not open myself to manipulation by partisan interests. *Pause.*

To form my conscience through prayerful reflection, study of scripture and Church teaching, and guidance from reputable experts. *Pause.*

To reflect on my own values and seek, with others, to identify shared values.



Pause.

To be open to the process of dialogue that can require change of perspective—my own and others’—in service to the inviolable dignity of all and the common good. *Pause.*

To be a bridge-builder who participates in constructive dialogue based in shared values, a mutual exchange of gifts, and the humility to together seek the good. *Pause.*

To see differences in perspective as opportunities for creative tension which can yield solutions for the common good. *Pause.*

To work with others in order to identify creative solutions rooted in our shared values.

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

<https://www.usccb.org/civilizeit>