



Tools for the Conversation October 12, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

Our bi-monthly resources are sent the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month; you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page – [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these twice-monthly resources will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs. This resource highlights themes to be found in JustFaith Ministries' upcoming program on civil dialogue to be released soon; join the JustFaith Network (click [here](#)) to get upcoming information about the launch of the program.

Note: If you are doing this resource with a small group, be sure to send out this [link](#) to the article to be discussed in this resource and invite members of your group to read the article before you come together. The article is easily read in a few minutes.

Last but not least, all of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#) Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you. Today we'll begin with an opening prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around the article we read, before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer. In advance, assign someone to read aloud the following prayer:

Prayer for The Gift of Tongues

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.

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

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.

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.



**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.**

**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.**

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

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you are with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this our reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you're struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?



Reflection (25 minutes or so)

Members of your group should have read this short article: [“Why Don’t They Get It?”](#)

Invite responses to a few (not all) of these questions:

1. Drawing from the first paragraph of the article, share an experience you’ve had that echoes the author’s observation.
2. Share an experience in which you simply did not understand another person’s perspective at first, and then gained comprehension as the conversation unfolded.
3. The first tool the author outlines is empathy. Share an experience where you were the agent or the recipient of “just empathizing.”
4. The second tool the author describes is curiosity. Share how you have/have not relied on curiosity in a difficult conversation.
5. The third tool the author offers is “acknowledge impact over intention.” Share your response to this advice.
6. The author is encouraging us to think of ourselves in conversation as agents of healing instead of warriors or defendants. Does this resonate with you?

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- This resource touches on the topics of racial justice and nonviolence and gives just a taste of a much larger exploration that is possible. For a more robust experience, consider our racial justice and nonviolence programs, found [here](#). Also, very soon we will be releasing a new program on civil dialogue entitled “Want to Talk?” Watch for details.
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through [justfaith.org](#).
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice or care for the environment.



Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Then say: Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds. Then offer the reflection below. The reflection is drawn from the lyrics of Peter Mayer's song by the same title. If you like, you can purchase the song at <https://www.petermayer.net/third-street> for \$1.00 and play the track instead of reading the lyrics. (It's a lovely song.)

It's Not Far

It's not far to another heart.
It's not far to another heart.
You can hear it if you listen hard.
It's not far, it's not far.

It's not far to another's eyes.
It's not far to another's eyes.
You can see through them if you try.
It's not far, it's not far.

It's not far to another land.
It's not far to another land.
If you walk there, then you may understand.
It's not far, it's not far.

It's not far to the other side.
It's not far to the other side.
You can build a bridge.
Or you can swim there if you like.
It's not far, it's not far.

It's not far to another heart.
It's not far to another heart.
You just reach out from where you are.
It's not far, it's not far.
It's not far, it's not far.

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

**We are disciples on a journey.
We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.**



We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.
If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Pause

We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world.

Amen.