



Happy Are the Persecuted May 17, 2022

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/or equip you to work for justice.

Our monthly small group resource is sent on the third Tuesday of each month; you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current/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 resources will inspire and nourish your community, for a more robust experience, consider one of our longer programs. Click [here](#) for more information.

This week's small group experience relies on participants having read a short article; click [here](#). Please share the link in advance so that all participants can come prepared to discuss; you can find the full link in the "Reflection" section that follows.

Last but not least, JustFaith Ministries is a nonprofit organization. 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! In fact, we urge you to do so. We want this resource to reach as many people as possible.

Thanks for all you do in the name of love and justice,
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 about the video and article, before closing in prayer. This a time to care for one another and to be inspired to grow and act.

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

Opening Prayer

Reader 1: May we praise you, O Lord, with heart and hand and voice. And since life itself is your gift to us, then may all that we are be yours.

Reader 2: Our spirituality is our way of living our relationship with God and our relationship with God's people. It is a transforming relationship that responds to the love of God, calling us to a new way of being, and a new way of living.

Reader 1: Any prophet is, first of all, a disciple who has been touched by God. To speak for God, for Jesus, we must listen to the Spirit of God.

Reader 2: We now pause and reflect upon the power of prayer and of the Word of God in our lives. . . Let us respond in prayer.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the word, who hear God's word and keep it.

Reader 1: One thing alone does God require and do we seek to accomplish: to do justice, to love tenderly, to walk humbly with our God.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the word, who hear God's word and keep it.

Reader 2: Who heals the brokenhearted and binds the wounds of the oppressed, feeds the hungry, shelters the homeless, sets the imprisoned free: These are God's disciples, God's family, God's friends.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the word, who hear God's word and keep it.



Reader 1: The word of God is a two-edged sword that cuts through all hypocrisy, prunes the unsuspecting, strikes at the root of evil, pierces to the heart.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the word, who hear God's word and keep it.

Reader 2: The word of God is a lamp to our feet, a lantern to our path, the light of the world crying out for a sign of hope and illumination.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the word, who hear God's word and keep it.

Reader 1: The word of God is a spark of life living among the rubble, igniting a global consciousness to ways we are one world only, a beacon burning deep in the hearts of those who seek justice and peace.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the word, who hear God's word and keep it.

Reader 2: The word of God is the Word made flesh in every generation, in the outcasts of the system, on the margins of prestige and power, on the downside of tradition, in every face and every place where God's own Spirit dwells.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the word, who hear God's word and keep it.

Reader 1: Happy are all who love God's word and live it to the full, for they are like trees by rippling streams, birds that soar high singing, prophets of a new age bringing the Good News to all.

All: Happy are we who are doers of the word, who hear God's word and keep it. 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 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: 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)

Participants should have read the article below:

Article: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/happy-are-those-who-are-willing-be-persecuted-themselves-justice-0>

Discussion questions

1. What did you find most helpful in the article?
2. The author writes, "it's not simply personal perfection that counts where the Beatitudes are concerned. It is the standing up together in the face of evil that is the real task." What expressions of "standing up together in the face of evil" have you witnessed or been a part of?
3. What beatitude do you find most helpful in your life? What beatitude do you find most relevant to our world?

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- This resource is a small sample of the kinds of conversations had in our 8-session programs. For a more intensive experience, see a description of our programs; click [here](#).
- On Thursday, April 21, 7:00 p.m. ET, JustFaith Ministries' "Acting for Justice" Series will continue with Alecia Brewster and Michael Brown addressing the topic "**Racial Equity in the Clean Energy Transition.**" For more information or to register, click [here](#).
- 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; click [here](#).

- 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 advocating for peace, working for justice or caring 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 share the reflection below.

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end war,

For we know that You have made the world in a way that people must find their own path to peace within themselves and with their neighbors.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end starvation,

For You have already given us the resources with which to feed the entire world, if we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to root out prejudice,

For You have already given us eyes with which to see the good in all people, if we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end despair,

For You have already given us the power to clear away slums and to give hope, if we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease,

For You have already given us great minds with which to search out cures and healing, if we would only use them constructively.

Therefore, we pray to You instead, O God, for strength, determination and will power,

To do instead of just pray,

To become instead of merely to wish. Amen.

Jack Riemer

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.