

# *Just*Faith

*Purpose. From a  
new perspective.*

## JustFaith Week 15

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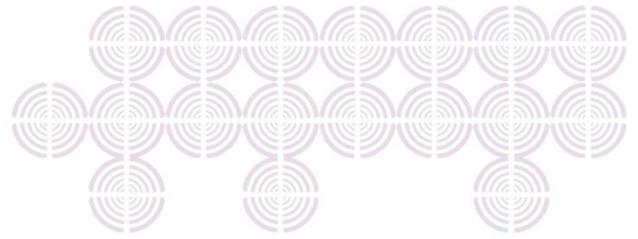


*www.justfaith.org*

(502) 429-0865

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## Note to Co-Facilitators

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Much of the reading from Arthur Simon's book, *How Much Is Enough?*, is directed in a personal way to the reader, essentially asking, "How will you change your life?" And, indeed, much of the JustFaith process is devoted, directly or indirectly, to that very question. So, as a matter of helping your group with this question, be attentive to opportunities to re-focus conversations that might get a bit over-philosophical or far afield. The essential questions are: How does this impact us? And what might God be calling us to?

To press these questions is not to be pushy, but to provide a genuine service to your group. Authentic faith formation must include the question, "What is the Gospel asking of me?" And, as a community of believers, we must keep that question alive by pressing the issue. Our culture typically shies away from commitment and, thus, pursuing questions about responsibility and commitment is generally discouraged. Be bold. Ask the question: How are we going to change? What are we going to do now that our hearts are burning within us?

And, to that end, also be as bold about affirming your group as it struggles with that question. None of us changes easily. And simply to struggle with the question is, in and of itself, important and precious. So, be quick to affirm the struggle. Remind your group members that all holy people go through very difficult periods of discernment, doubt and questioning. It is a sign of spiritual health. Those who aren't struggling might well be asleep.

Thanks again for all your attention to this process and to those in it. May you all be blessed.

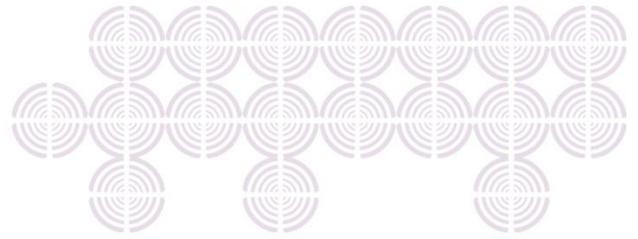
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## Week Fifteen Components

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### Preparation for Week Fifteen

- Review Session Fifteen information.
- Copy Week Fifteen handouts.
- Locate copy of "Keeping the Earth" DVD and assure availability of TV/DVD equipment.
- Assure prayer material has been given to the participant prayer leader if appropriate.
- Gather prayer items.



## Timing of the Session

| Activity                               | Minutes |
|--|---------|
| Prayer                                 | 10      |
| View and discuss video                 | 60      |
| Break                                  | 15      |
| Business                               | 5       |
| Discuss spiritual practice and reading | 45      |
| Assign Spiritual Practice              | 5       |
| Closing prayer                         | 10      |
| Total                                  | 150     |

## Welcome

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Welcome participants warmly, then begin with prayer.

## Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

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- You will need:* A small wooden cross and a Bible
- Symbol:* Cross – a sign of faith, which is all we need
- Environment:* Silence as people gather

Distribute one copy of **Week 15: Participant Handout A** to the designated reader. Assign a Scripture reader and have the Bible marked at Mark 8:34-36.

## Introducing the Symbol

Hold up the cross in the center of the circle. Briefly introduce the symbol with these words:

**The cross – a sign of faith...a sign of and love and commitment...a sign of community and devotion...a sign of God’s activity in history...a sign that calls to us.**



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## Call to Prayer

The leader sits in the circle holding the cross and shares slowly:

**Oh gracious God. How do we know you? How can we seek you? Except in the draw of love toward each other.**

**How will we know who we are or what is worth living for? Except in the embrace of compassion and justice.**

**How will we find our lives and even discover life in abundance? Except in the beauty of silence and prayer.**

**In your cross, we find our way. Not in money, not in position, not in prestige. In your cross. In your cross, we recognize a great love, a complete love, a forgiving love. And it is such love that makes life real, gives direction and light, provides an anchor and a rudder for our way in this world.**

**In your cross, we recognize that it is love that is all powerful, even over the threat of death. For it is love that binds us to You, O Eternal One.**

Pass the cross to the person seated on the left. Invite participants to hold it for a brief moment of silent prayer before passing it on. Offer this call to prayer while the symbol moves round the circle:

**Jesus, in your name we gather. You are here in our midst.**

**In the presence of your Spirit, we become your body.**

**To listen . . . to share . . . to learn . . . to care . . .**

**and to pray for one another.**

**Move within us. Move among us.**

**Spirit of Compassion, bind us to one another.**

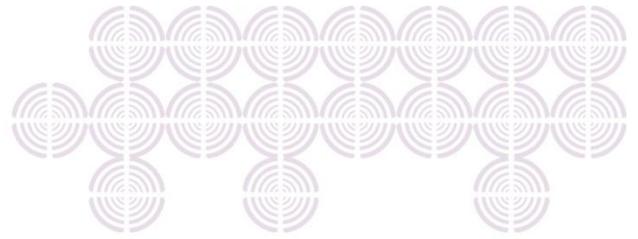
**Propel us out into your world to be your compassionate justice.**

## Scripture Reading

**Read Mark 8:34-36.** Pause for a minute of silent reflection.

Offer this reflection:

**Following Jesus implies a deep friendship and communion with him. It also calls us to a complete sharing in his mission, of which the cross is central.**



The cross represents Jesus' complete surrender and unconditional service to all, especially the poor. It is opposite to a life that is a mere earthly self-centered existence, which will end in destruction. It is this "life" that must be lost in following Christ as a disciple; not a call to self mutilation and negation, but to the discovery of a full and authentic life in the One who died and rose again.

In spite of our earthly death, this life of loyalty to Christ, expressed in love for the least, will not end in destruction, but will allow us to share in the fullness of life everlasting.

Pause for a minute of silence before beginning the meditation on **Participant Handout A**.

Allow for short period of silence.

Invite participants to echo a word or phrase from the prayer that resonated in them.

## Prayer of the Heart

After a couple of minutes introduce the mantra prayer in this way:

Leader: **Let us take prayer to heart. Echo this simple prayer, line by line. Then echo the whole prayer.**

Leader:

**Take, Lord, receive all my liberty.**

**Take my entire will.**

**Give me only your love and your grace.**

**That's enough for me.**

**Take, Lord, receive.**

Leader: **Let this prayer echo in our hearts.**

Participants:

Take, Lord, receive all my liberty.

Take my entire will.

Give me only your love and your grace.

That's enough for me.

Take, Lord, receive.

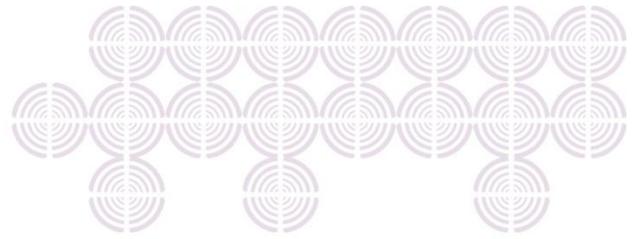
## Rite of Blessing

Leader: **Holy Spirit, inspire our thoughts.**

**May we speak your truth.**

**May our hearts be opened.**

**Let us say "Amen."**



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## First Half (60 minutes)

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### View and Discuss DVD, “Keeping the Earth”

Watch the video, “Keeping the Earth.” (27 minutes) Introduce the video using these comments: This inspirational video calls on all of us to be good stewards of the natural world. It offers a biblical vision of humanity's role in the world stressing that caring for creation is a fundamental call by God to us all. Religious leaders and scientists discuss the concept of "dominion over" and keeping the earth.

Discuss the video using these discussion questions. (33 minutes)

Consider the visual images in the opening section of the video. Which touched you and why? What do they say to you?

1. Do you do or see anything in your community that has the character of Sabbath practice as it is described in the video?
2. E.O. Wilson says that our descendants will see us as a “ship of fools” if we destroy what matters most to them. Do you think they will view us in this way? What must we do differently to avoid destroying those things our descendants will care about?
3. Think about what it would mean to be a missionary for the planet. Where would you feel welcomed? Where would you feel in hostile territory? What would you take as supplies? What would you preach? What is the minimum change you would have to make in your life to feel qualified to take on the role of advocate, if not fully missionary, for the planet?

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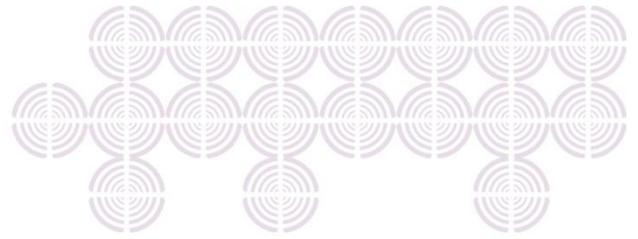
## Break (15 minutes)

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### Business Items (5 minutes)

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1. Assign reading for next week: How Much is Enough?, pages 129-186 and “Note to Participants for Week Sixteen.”
2. Distribute “Note to Participants for Week Sixteen.”



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## Second Half (50 minutes)

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### Discuss Reading & Spiritual Practice (45 minutes)

Typically the spiritual practice of fasting from food inspires thoughtful discussion. Allow adequate time for everyone to respond to the first question below. Do not be concerned to cover all of the other questions.

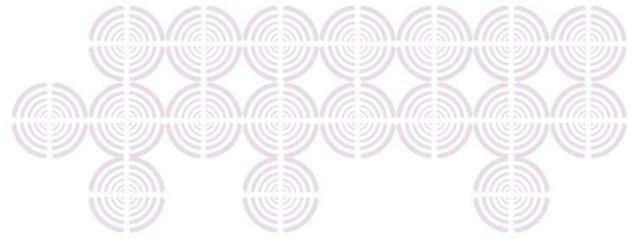
### Spiritual Practice on Fasting

#### How Much Is Enough, pages 77-128

1. Ask the group to share their experiences of fasting from food this past week. What were the benefits of the fast? What spiritual insights or connections did you make? What was the challenge of this fast for you?
2. In the discussion on weakness on page 95, Simon states in the middle of the first paragraph: “Rejecting opportunities to lead can be immoral, because power is also abused by neglect. To pretend to be powerless – to have power at our disposal and fail to use it when the well-being of others is at stake – is no less an abuse than is the bending of power to achieve our wayward aims.” In what areas of your life do you use powerlessness as an excuse to not take action?
3. In chapter eight, Simon discusses the good and the potential harm that capitalism can do. He states in the middle of page 105, “Ironically, the success of free enterprise capitalism depends upon moral values, such as honesty and compassion, that are borrowed from elsewhere. Without such supporting values, free enterprise (or any other economic system) would eventually self-destruct through its own excess.” How would you apply this statement to current U.S. economic practices and policies?
4. On the top of page 108, Simon states that “the factors that contribute to the world’s improvement (such as hard work, efficiency, complex organizations, and the desire to make the most out of life) often lead to distortions in our personal lives that leave insufficient room for prayer, play, love, and generosity.” What does Simon mean here? How does it apply to your life? What amount of your day/week do you have for prayer, play, love and generosity?

### Assign Spiritual Practice (5 minutes)

For the next spiritual practice, ask everyone to fast from electronic media—computers, cell phones, television, radio, etc.—for an entire day within this next week. Many people may quickly say that this spiritual practice is impossible. Gently encourage everyone to find a



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ways to reflect on the role of electronic media in our society and to find ways to “unplug” for a day. Affirm that it will be a challenge and that the spiritual insights from this challenging practice may prove fruitful. Ask everyone to come prepared next week to share their experiences.

## **Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

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### **A Circle of Prayer**

Invite the group to form a tight circle and link hands:

**We are disciples on a journey.**

**We are the body of Christ, broken for this world.**

**Let us quietly pray for one another and for our brothers and sisters in need.**

(Pause)

**If someone has a concern, a word of encouragement, or a short prayer to offer, please do so.**

### **Words to Live By**

Leader: **Let us take prayer to heart. Repeat this prayer from Psalm 27: 4:**

**One thing I asked of the Lord...**

All: One thing I asked of the Lord;

Leader: **To live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.**

All: To live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

Leader: **May this prayer echo in our hearts throughout the week, as we walk, while we work, as we rest and when we pray for one another. Call to mind those who are suffering, in despair or fear.**

### **A Sign of God's Peace**

Leader: **Now we share in the peace for which our world hungers.**

**With a sign of peace we affirm one another for the journey ahead.**

**May we extend God's peace to all!**