

*Just*Faith

*Purpose. From a
new perspective.*

JustFaith Week 16

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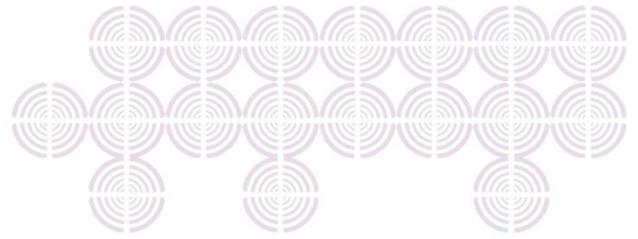


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In partnership with





Note to Co-Facilitators

For the second half of the JustFaith program, we are introducing a new text - Prayers for the New Social Awakening. Each JustFaith group was asked to purchase one copy of the book, and we ask you to bring it to each JustFaith session. We chose to use this text for a number of reasons. First, it is a powerful collection of ecumenical voices, praying out of the gospel call and sharing the rich social witness from many denominational traditions. Second, the inspiration behind these prayers and this book was the Social Creed of 1908, written by the Federal Council of Churches (a predecessor to the National Council of Churches). The Social Creed of 1908 represented a coming together of various denominational bodies in order to prophetically cry out against unjust labor conditions, including child labor. The Social Creed of 1908 represents the strong witness of Protestant communities in resisting injustices throughout society. The New Social Creed for the Twenty-first Century represents a similar sentiment of ecumenical, prophetic energy. “A Social Creed for the Twenty-first Century,” which can be found on page 16 of Prayers for the New Social Awakening, represents an ecumenical interpretation of how Jesus’ teaching of the reign of God speaks to our current social situation. The prayers are drawn from this vision, and we believe that many of their sentiments fit nicely with the topics discussed throughout the JustFaith program.

As you use these prayers in the JustFaith program, feel free to discern how best to read the prayers for your group. One option may be to choose a different group member to read the assigned prayer each week. Another method you may wish try is to pass the book around your circle, asking each member to read a stanza of the prayer before passing the book to the next reader. If choosing this option, it is sometimes helpful to mark the prayer ahead of time with pencil, indicating where you want readings to begin and end before passing the book. Whatever method you choose will be best informed by the particular prayer for the week and what you believe will work best for your JustFaith group. You know the character of your group best, so do whatever will be most prayerful and powerful for them.

May this start to the second half of your JustFaith journey be life-giving to you and your group.



Week Sixteen Components

Preparation for Week Sixteen

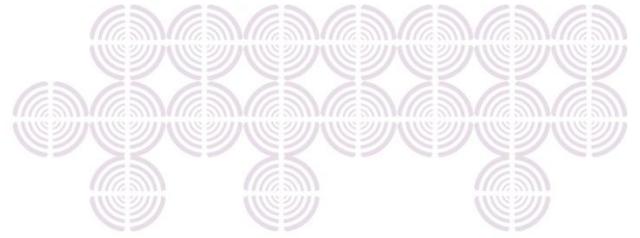
- Review Week Sixteen session information.
- Copy Week 16 Handouts (Participant Handout A and Note to Participants)
- Bring your group's copy of Prayers for The New Social Awakening and find "That We May Be a More Faithful People," page 74. Assure that this week's prayer has been assigned a prayer reader or that it has been divided for the group members to read in segments.
- Gather prayer items: A Bible and other items of your choice
- Assign a Scripture Reader for Luke 12: 16-21.

Timing of the Session

| Activity | Minutes |
|--|---------|
| Prayer | 10 |
| Discuss reading and spiritual practice | 55 |
| Break | 10 |
| Business | 10 |
| Voluntary Simplicity Assessment | 60 |
| Closing prayer | 5 |
| Total | 150 |

Welcome

Welcome participants warmly, then begin with prayer.



Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Scripture Reading

Read **Luke 12:16-21**. Pause for a minute of silence before offering this reflection:

This parable is not only about “greed,” but challenges the would-be security of wealth and material possessions; certainly a fitting lesson given our current economic uncertainties. What is worse is not only that the man in the parable puts his absolute trust in his possessions, but that his intent is to use them exclusively for his own benefit. “Relax, eat, drink, and be merry!” The reign that Jesus proclaims is one where bounty and abundance are to be shared, especially with those lacking life’s basic necessities.

God’s intervention makes the man see how foolish both his plans and values are. What is most at stake in what Jesus teaches here has to do with priorities and the meaning of life. “Stuff” is not what our lives are to be about. Stuff does not provide true satisfaction. Stuff, as our current economic situation is teaching us the hard way, is no real guarantee of security. And stuff is not stock we can invest in the life of the world to come; it will not make us “rich in what matters to God.”

Pause for a moment before continuing with the meditation.

Prayer: **“That We May Be a More Faithful People,”** *Prayers for The New Social Awakening* (page 74.)

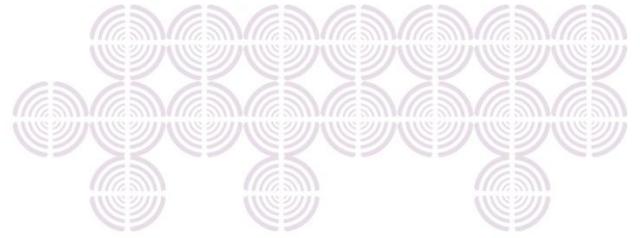
First Half (55 minutes)

Discuss Spiritual Practice & Reading

- Spiritual Practice
- [How Much Is Enough?](#), pages 129-186

Select from the questions below. Include question #1. Do not be concerned to cover them all.

1. Ask the group to share their experiences of fasting from electronics this week. What were the benefits of the fast? What spiritual insights or connections did anyone make? What was the challenge of this fast for each person?
2. On the bottom of page 129, Simon states, “from 1990 to 1996, almost 20% of adult Americans chose lifestyle changes that involved earning less; and of those who did, 85%

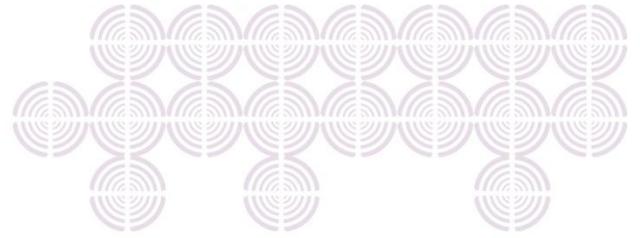


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- expressed satisfaction with the changes.” Does this surprise you? Do you know of anyone who has done this? If so, what is their response to these changes?
3. On page 130 in the second paragraph, Simon states, “living more simply may enable people who are barely surviving to live. Simpler living does that, however, only if you take the steps to transfer resources to people whose lives are at risk.” In what ways would you be willing to transfer some of your resources to people at risk?
 4. On page 146, Simon asks: “What use is it to live a simplified life, volunteer at a food bank, and contribute money, while doing nothing about public policies that lock people deeply into hunger? Is it sinful to waste money but okay to waste influence that could bring a greater benefit to the poor?” How do you respond to his challenge?
 5. Have someone read aloud the second paragraph under “**Prayer and Solitude**” on page 165. How do you make time to pray and “unclutter your heart”?
 6. In discussing a community of faith in the middle of page 170, Simon notes, “our journey with God should never be taken alone or the culture of mammon is sure to overwhelm us. We are not lone rangers. We are made for life in community and we need to walk the way with others.” We saw this same theme in the book Compassion. What do you see as the advantages of doing social ministry work together?
 7. Review the items listed #1-19 on pages 183-186. Identify two items that you think you can commit to and share these with the group.

Break (10 minutes)

Business Items (5 minutes)

1. Assign reading for next session: Compassion, pages 87 – 137; Cloud of Witnesses, “Howard Thurman,” pages 202-206; and “Note to Participants for Week Seventeen.”
2. Distribute Week 16: Participant Handout A and Note to Participants.
3. Review plans for upcoming immersion experience, if needed.
4. Have participants sign-up for bringing snacks for Weeks 16-30, if needed.



Second Half (60 minutes)

Voluntary Simplicity Assessment (55 minutes)

The purpose of this exercise is for each participant to identify ways to live more simply. Some of the items may be new suggestions for participants. Introduce the exercise:

This exercise will help us look at seven areas of our lives in an effort for us to identify ways we could live more simply. The interest to “live simply” is linked not just with a rejection of consumerism but with the concern that “others may simply live.” We must make the link between a life of simplicity and a life of compassion.

God calls us to a life that is integrated and whole. A fascination with possessions is but a stumbling block on the road to compassion and integrity. Living the Gospel means living more simply so that we can free up resources and share with others who have much less. In addition to freeing more resources for the poor, living more simply helps us to care for God’s creation and be good stewards of the earth’s resources.

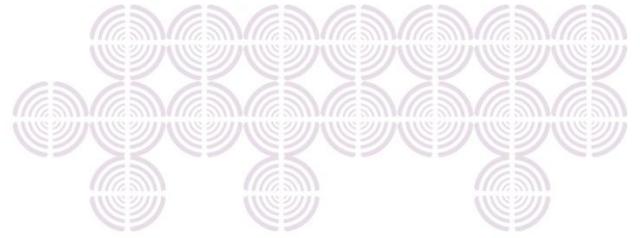
Distribute **Week 16: Participant Handout A**. Instruct the group to review Category 1 and place a check next to all the items that pertain to his or her **current** practice. Participants may add to the items if they wish. Then, each participant is to make a judgment as to where he/she falls on the continuum, from few practices to many practices for that category and mark the continuum with an X. Give the participants three minutes to complete this category. Then have the group discuss this category for about five minutes.

Move on to Category 2, continuing this pattern for each of the remaining categories. This should be a lively and rather fast exercise. Encourage participants to add their own ideas to each list. If there are questions about why an item is included in this survey, have a member of the group do some research prior to next week’s meeting and report back to the group.

At the end of the seven sections, have each participant identify three practices that they would like to implement over the next few months.

Assign Spiritual Practice (5 minutes)

Over this next week, plan an outing in which you can spend an hour in some kind of natural setting—away from buildings and roads—to enjoy the quiet and beauty of nature and to pray. If the weather does not permit an outing, select a place that has a window where you can reflect on the wonder and wisdom of nature. Come prepared to share your experiences next week.



Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

A Circle of Prayer

Leader: Direct the group to form a tight circle linking hands.

In these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it with the group.

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, given 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 the prayer after me.**

Leader:

All:

All praise is yours, all glory, and blessing.

All praise is yours, all glory, and blessing.

To You alone, Most high, do they belong.

To You alone, Most high, do they belong.

All praise be yours, my Lord,

All praise be yours, my Lord,

through all that you have made.

through all that you have made.

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!