



## Weekly Resource

### April 27th: Return to Creation

Dear friends,

We humans are built for community. During this time of social distancing, it's crucial that we remain connected, holding one another in love and support. It's for this reason that **each week during the COVID-19 crisis, we'll be sending you a short resource** to use in a virtual meeting held over the phone or via video conferencing. This weekly resource is a great tool to stay connected with your current and past JFM small groups. It is also a great resource to use individually, or with groups of friends or family to stay connected and engaged in a meaningful way. These reflections will provide a time to pray together, check in with one another, and have conversation around a short passage.

We pray that this resource will help you connect with God The Creator and allow you to learn from creation itself. We have also provided suggestions for ways to experience and learn from creation through the week as well as ways to also make these experiences accessible for all.

While we hope that this weekly resource will spiritually sustain your community while in quarantine, [now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs](#). All of our programs are available in a virtual format, and we have resources available for learning how to use Zoom and for adapting to a virtual audience. The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever!

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate today, your gift helps us sustain individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to **forward this resource** to friends and family!

Thank you for continuing to care for one another during this time of heightened anxiety. Know that we are praying for you!

Stay well,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



## Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

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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, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll begin with prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around a short reflection 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 this time when the world is whirling from the Coronavirus and we are filled with anxiety and fear for ourselves, our families and our neighbors, give us courage.

In this time when tending to our physical health means avoiding health care facilities, sustain us.

In this time when health care workers risk becoming patients, embrace them.

In this time when those whose health is compromised have to worry about compromising their health, protect them.

In this time when we are invited to show affection by not showing affection, hold us.

In this time when communal prayer must be done in solitude, comfort us.

In this time when basic needs must be met from a distance, fill the emptiness.

In this time when exercising our civic duty means staying away from the voting booth, unite us.

In this time when strength in numbers means breaking up our large group, embolden us.

In this time when technology is facilitating human connection, link us together.



And, in this time when Easter Sunday feels more like Good Friday, fill us with a boundless sense of hope and the audacity to believe we really do have the power to help bring healing to the world. Amen.

– Susie Tierney  
Executive Director  
JustFaith Ministries

## Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

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

*Note: If you're 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 week's 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 (15 minutes or so)

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Introduce the Scripture (Genesis 1:1-31) and share the below passage to provide a historical understanding of the Biblical creation story. Allow yourself and/or participants to take a reflective approach to the scripture as it is read.



Ancient civilizations and faith traditions young and old all around the world hold dear creation narratives. These stories help(ed) provide communities, families, and individuals with an understanding of their relationship with nature. The Biblical narrative of Genesis expresses that the cosmos was created and organized on behalf of humankind. It is the centerpiece of God’s creation (IVP, 29).<sup>1</sup> Reading the Creation Story can help us reconnect with a creative and loving God – and with creation itself. As we read, let’s ask ourselves: Where we see ourselves in this story? How is God inviting us to action that is celebratory and life-giving?

### Genesis 1:1-31 (New International Version)

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

6 And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

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<sup>1</sup> Walton, John H., Matthews, Victor H. and Chavalas, Mark W., The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Il. 2000. Page 29.



20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,<sup>[a]</sup> and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

**Then say:** The author Wendell Berry once wrote that *“To be creative is only to have health: to keep oneself fully alive in the Creation, to keep the Creation fully alive in oneself, to see the Creation anew, to welcome one’s part in it anew.”*

**Let us pause for silent meditation.**

*Pause for 30 seconds.*

**Then ask:**

- Was there a verse or act of creation that stood out to you in this narrative? If so, why?
- Is there a barrier that keeps you from life-giving gestures of compassion?
- How can experiencing God’s creation during times of isolation help you learn how to live and act in life-giving ways?



**Actions and Adaptations** (if you're with a group, read this next part aloud).

Invite God to teach you how to creatively respond in times of isolation. Be willing to trust that God can show you how to care for the vulnerable and marginalized in a season of isolation.

As you go into the coming days, commit to taking five or ten minutes to observe nature either in person or online. Take time to intentionally watch, listen, or feel the natural elements (and/or animals) around you. Take note of colors, textures, sounds, taste, etc.

If you are at home with family, make it a shared experience. Below are (some) ways that you can adapt the exercise based on accessibility.

Allow yourself or your loved ones to “be” in creation and ask yourself how this “being” will also encourage acts of compassion towards yourself, your loved ones, your community and our planet.

**For those living in a space without access to nature:**

- Search YouTube for nature sounds and meditate on the sounds of waves, birds, or forests.
- For loved ones with a hearing loss, search for visually stunning images.
- For loved ones with hearing loss and visual impairment, find an object such as a textured blanket or raw vegetable or fruit and spend time feeling and experiencing the feel (or taste) of the item. Allow yourself to wonder!

**For those living near and with access to nature:**

- Lie down in your lawn and close your eyes with your family - experience the feel of grass, flowers, or watch clouds. This can also be done from a window, car, or front step.
- Play as a family. Observe how nature responds to itself such as birds in the wind or flowers in the sun.
- For loved ones with visual impairments or hearing loss, touch provides a great way to experience nature.



## Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

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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*

Let's pray.

When our minds race with fear,  
when televisions blare bad news,  
when information and misinformation  
whirl around us,

Speak to us, O God,  
in the sound that is thin and quiet.

*Pause for silence.*

Then say:

May we who are merely inconvenienced,  
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors,  
remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home,  
remember those who must choose between preserving their health or  
making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close,  
remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips,  
remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market,  
remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home,



remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,  
let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,  
let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

**AMEN.**

“Prayer for Pandemic”

By Cameron Belim, Seattle, WA

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.**

Leader: 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.