



Habits of Grace

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.

In the meantime, **we are excited to share that we have launched a new youth social justice program called, *Youth for Justice: Our Faith in Action***. The JustFaith Ministries *Youth for Justice* program invites youth groups to explore contemporary social issues through the lens of the Christian faith. Youth ministers/leaders can put together their own programming to fit their group's needs by choosing from multiple topics including: racial justice, immigration, care of creation, Fair Trade, human trafficking, and many other topics. Please share our [Youth for Justice](#) webpage with your youth leaders!

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

Note: You will need to show videos during this session. If you are not comfortable sharing the videos on your screen during your meeting, you can copy and paste the video links into the chat box and have everyone click on the link, mute themselves, minimum the Zoom meeting and watch the video on their own computers. Then, rejoin the meeting when the video is finished.



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, 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 "Kindness During COVID." 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. (If you are using this resource by yourself, simply read the opening prayer to yourself.)

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer.

God, 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. Be with those who are ill, and be with families who have lost loved ones. Sustain health care workers and all other essential workers. Feed those who are hungry and comfort those who are troubled by job losses, isolation, poverty and racial injustice. In the words of Matthew 11:28-30:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Play the video ["Good Job"](#) by Alicia Keys. Then close the prayer with these words.

Lighten our burden, God, and fill us with gratitude for our lives and for all those around us who are making a difference. Amen

Prayer from "Kindness During COVID"
JustFaith Ministries *Youth for Justice: Our Faith in Action* program

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

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)

Introduce the video and reflection time with these words:

JustFaith Ministries, the creator of this weekly resource, has launched a new social justice program for youth called, [Youth for Justice: Our Faith in Action](#). Today, the reflection we'll be doing is taken from "Kindness During COVID," one of the sessions in the *Youth for Justice* program. (A free sample of the youth version of "Kindness During COVID is available for download on the [Youth for Justice](#) program page of the JustFaith Ministries website.) We'll begin with a video featuring the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, Bishop Michael Curry, on "Habits of Grace."

Play the [video](#).

Pause for 30 seconds.

Then ask:

- **Given the recent resurgence of the coronavirus in the U.S., ask the following:**
 - How are you or how can you love God today?
 - How are you or how can you love your neighbor today?
 - How are you or can you love yourself today?



- Bishop Curry refers to this reflection as a “habit of grace.” What “habits of grace” do you have in your life?

After everyone has had a chance to share show the video, “[Acts of Kindness: Teen starts Zoom Food Delivery to Help People at High Risk of COVID-19.](#)”

Then ask:

- In the video, the teen came up with a very simple way to be a lifeline for others during COVID distancing. What idea(s) did the video inspire in you for yourself or for you to share with your children/grandchildren about how to support others in this COVID resurgence?

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Thank everyone for sharing. Then say:

Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause for a moment and bring to mind a one prayer for ourselves and one prayer for our neighbors.

Pause for 30 seconds. Then invite members of the group to share their prayers aloud.

Close the time of prayer by playing the video “[COVID-19 Prayer of Solidarity](#)” from the U.S. Catholic Bishops or “[A Prayer for the World Facing the Coronavirus](#)” by the United Methodist Church.

Pause for silence.

Then, share these words:

We are disciples on a journey.

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

We hold one another as we carry each other’s prayers for ourselves and for our neighbors.

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.