



Lent & the Spiritual Practice of Being Unafraid March 9, 2021

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 equip you to work for justice.

In 2021, our bi-monthly resources will typically appear in your inbox on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, and you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via videoconferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page. [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these twice-monthly resources will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our [regular programs](#). Today's resource speaks to the spiritual underpinnings of the work for justice, which is highlighted in our "Engaging Spirituality" programs. We offer tips and tools for facilitating all our current programs virtually.

Last but not least, 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!

With gratitude,

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, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll begin with a reflection and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around a short article 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.

Lord, hear our prayer:

Today we face the season of our redemption during a time of global crisis.

During this season teach us to understand the love that drove you to give up everything to save us all.

Give us the strength that only comes in weakness;

The renewal that only comes through death and resurrection.

Today many of us feel weakened, burdened, and overwhelmed by the challenges and uncertainties that lie ahead.

We ask that your strength be made perfect in our time of weakness.

While each of us is hurt by hard times, it is the people around the world living on less than \$1/day, facing hunger, thirst, and illness, who bear the greatest burden of this crisis.

Just as your weakest hour proved to be the most generous, most life-giving moment in history,

We pray that out of our own weakness comes a generosity of justice, mercy, and humility for those who bear burdens greater than our own.

Help us to remember that you are the God who, out of nothing, made everything.



The God who still has the power today to remake us.

So let us be remade, not overcome, by our global crisis; let us be purified, and not laid low, by injustice, greed, and inequality.

Let us commit ourselves to: Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, and with all those who suffer or want.

This is our moment to change the world.

Because it is at our moment of crisis where your strength and your light, revealed to the world by our faith, become a force that is stronger than fear or death.

Today, move us to become the answer to our prayers.

Give us the strength to respond, in our own time of need, to the needs of those who have the least in our world.

Lead us to be your agents of hope and renewal during this season of redemption.

For it is only in You that we have the power to change things; it is only because of You that we have the promise of renewal; and yet is through us that You seek to do all these things.

Amen.

From *Sojourners* online <https://sojo.net/articles/lenten-prayer-justice-mercy-and-humility>

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are 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)

Today's conversation is crafted around a short excerpt from Walter Brueggemann's collection of Lenten devotions, entitled [A Way Other Than Our Own](#). Have someone read aloud the excerpt:

"The truth is that frightened people will never turn the world, because they use too much energy on protection of self. It is the vocation of the baptized, the known and named and unafraid, to make the world whole: •The unafraid are open to the neighbor, while the frightened are defending themselves from the neighbor. •The unafraid are generous in the community, while the frightened, in their anxiety, must keep and store and accumulate, to make themselves safe. •The unafraid commit acts of compassion and mercy, while the frightened do not notice those in need. •The unafraid are committed to justice for the weak and the poor, while the frightened see them only as threats. •The unafraid pray in the morning, care through the day, and rejoice at night in thanks and praise, while the frightened are endlessly restless and dissatisfied. So dear people, each of you: Do not fear! I have called you by name; you are mine!"¹

Then invite responses to one or more of the questions below:

1. Where are the places in the world and in your life that you experience fear, where love feels blocked? Why do you think you harbor this fear?
2. Where have you experienced some kind of liberation from fear? How did it happen?
3. In response to the question, "How do I move beyond fear?" a reliable suggestion is "community." In other words, "Go together." Have you had the experience of doing something with others that you never could have done on your own?
4. What favorite Scripture texts or spiritual sources have been a help to you?

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *A Way Other Than Our Own: Devotions for Lent* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 60-61.



5. Share any other insights or wisdom you have about overcoming fear.

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- Remind participants that today's conversation offered only a brief insight into a huge topic. If they would like to take a deeper dive into this subject matter, they should consider one of the three 8-week programs that compose the *Engaging Spirituality* series.
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff in order to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. In order to support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- JustFaith Ministries is currently hosting a monthly webinar series called "Acting for Justice While Sheltering in Place," in which an expert on a justice-related topic will offer tips for taking action during COVID-19. On Thursday, March 18, at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Jill Rauh, Director of Education and Outreach for the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development of the USCCB, joins us to give an overview of the call to justice and universal love in Pope Francis' new encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*.
- 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 working for justice or care for the environment.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

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

**Be not afraid.
Be not afraid to smile.
Be not afraid to laugh.
Be not afraid to dance.
Be not afraid to chuckle at your mistakes.**

**Be not afraid to celebrate.
Be not afraid to rejoice at another's good fortune.**



**Be not afraid to congratulate the other for big and little things.
Be not afraid to apologize.
Be not afraid to forgive.**

**Be not afraid to give away.
Be not afraid to be generous.
Be not afraid to make reparations.
Be not afraid to take the next step.
Be not afraid to change your life (you will still be breathing).**

**Be not afraid to remember what hurts.
Be not afraid to talk about something hard.
Be not afraid to put your toe in the water of the painful.
Be not afraid to ask someone to listen to a wound you're carrying.
Be not afraid to listen to someone's wounds.**

**Be not afraid to fast, to feel hungry, to do without.
Be not afraid to feed the hungry who are not voluntarily fasting.
Be not afraid to stand up for what's right.
Be not afraid to write a love letter or carry a protest sign.
Be not afraid to pray.**

**Be not afraid.
Be everything you want to be.
Be full of life and love.
Be faithful and big-hearted.
Whatever you do, BE NOT AFRAID.**

“Be Not Afraid” by Jack Jezreel

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.