



Inspirations from Soul of a Citizen July 13, 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.

Our bi-monthly resources will 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 video conferencing. 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. This resource highlights themes found in JustFaith Ministries' *Engaging Spirituality* programs. For more information, click [here](#); scroll down to the square labeled "Spirituality," and click on any of the three options.

If you are doing this resource with a small group, be sure to send out this [link](#) to the compilation of excerpts from Paul Loeb's book, Soul of a Citizen, and ask each participant to choose one or more of the ten short excerpts that they found particularly inspiring and come prepared to share in 3-5 minutes why they found it compelling.

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. Today we'll begin with an opening prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around the article we read, 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. Ask two participants in advance to read.

To Act Justly

Reader 1

"All I ask of you is this: act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God."

—Micah 6:8

Reader 2

"As the seeker prayed, along past him came the crippled and the beggar and the beaten. And seeing them...he cried, 'Great God, how is it that a loving creator can see such things and yet do nothing about them?'...God said, 'I did do something. I made you.'"

— Sufi parable

Reader 1

Lord, as we gather today, we listen to the words of the prophet Micah calling us to action, calling us to justice. We invite you to pierce our hearts with these challenging words and let them ruminate there. For this world is hurting, and it is with our hands that you want to bring comfort. This world is wounded, and it is with our hands that you want to bring healing. This world is divided, and it is with our hands that you want to bring reconciliation. Acting justly is no small task in a world so fractured and polarized. And yet, this is what you ask of us as we come together: to act justly.

And so we pray:

Reader 2

In the conversation we undertake here, Lord...



Reader 1

Show us what it means to act justly.

Reader 2

In our interactions with those we meet today and tomorrow, Lord...

Reader 1

Show us what it means to act justly.

Reader 2

In our work, our play, in our families and with our friends and neighbors, Lord...

Reader 1

Show us what it means to act justly.

Reader 2

Hear our plea, O Lord, and answer it by drawing near to us now. Bless this short gathering - each and every moment of it - that at the end we may say that we leave better people: richer in wisdom, friendship, and understanding. We ask this in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit:

Reader 1

Show us what it means to act justly. Amen.

Prayer adapted from <https://www.chausa.org/prayers/cha-prayer-library/prayer/to-act-justly>

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

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

Note: If you are 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 (25 minutes or so)

Members of your group should have looked over this compilation of excerpts and chosen one or more to focus on: <https://www.paulloeb.org/soul-excerpts/#ten>

Preface your discussion by introducing Paul Loeb's book in these or similar words:

Author Paul Loeb has dedicated his writing career to the task of providing inspiration for action from both religious and political figures, well-known and unknown. His books have been widely applauded. Today's conversation is intended to provide each of us a chance to share where we found inspiration and to share some piece of ourselves that resonates with the author's words.

Then, invite 3- to 5-minute responses (depending on the size of your group) from each member to the questions:

Which of the excerpts did you choose and why? How were you inspired?

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

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- This resource touches on the topic of spirituality and gives just a taste of a much larger exploration that is possible. For a more robust experience, consider one of our three *Engaging Spirituality* programs, found [here](#); scroll down to the square labeled "Spirituality" to get a description of the three offerings.
 - JustFaith Ministries hosts a monthly webinar series called "Acting for Justice," in which an expert on a justice-related topic offers insights and tips for taking action. Join us this Thursday, July 15, at 7:00 p.m. EDT as Dr. Rev. Lewis Brogdon gives a presentation entitled, "**The Fight for the Soul of America**," exploring why many believe America is losing its soul. Dr. Brogdon recently wrote an op ed in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* that is gaining national attention. He will discuss his op ed,



the call he issued to every American, and the role you have to play in the fight for the soul of America.

Dr. Louis Brogdon is Visiting Professor of Preaching and Black Church Studies at the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky. He's also the author of several books, including: *A Companion to Philemon* (Cascade 2018), *The Spirituality of Black Preaching* (Seymour Press 2016), and *No Longer a Slave but a Brother* (Scholars Press 2013). Register [here](#).

- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- 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 (5 minutes)

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. Then share this prayer:

Oh God! Grant me Light in my heart, Light in my grave,
Light in front of me, Light behind me,
Light on my right, Light on my left,
Light above me, Light below me,
Light in my ears, Light in my eyes,
Light on my skin, Light in my hair,
Light within my flesh, Light in my blood, Light in my bones.

O God! Increase my Light everywhere.

O God! Grant me Light in my heart,
Light on my tongues, Light in my eyes, Light in my ears,
Light on my right, Light on my left,
Light above me, Light below me,



**Light in front of me, Light behind me,
And Light within my self.**

Increase my Light.

Muhammad

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.