



Simplicity and Care for the Earth June 22, 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' three programs on eco-justice. For more information, click [here](#); scroll down to the square labeled "Eco-Justice," and click on one of the two (soon to be three) options.

If you are doing this resource with a small group, be sure to send out this [link](#) to the article discussed in this resource and invite members of your group to read the article before you come together.

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.

Reader One: Luke 12:15-21

Then Jesus said to the crowd, "Avoid greed in all its forms. A person may be wealthy, but possessions do not guarantee life." He told them a parable in these words: "There was a rich man who had a good harvest. "What shall I do?" he asked himself, "I have no place to store all this. Oh, I know!" he said, "I will pull down my grain bins and build bigger ones. All my grain and my goods will go there. Then, I will say to myself: you have blessings in reserve for years to come. Retire! Eat heartily, drink well. Enjoy yourself."

But God said to him, "You fool! This very night you shall die. To whom will all this piled-up wealth of yours go? That is the way it goes for those who grow rich for themselves instead of growing rich in the sight of God."

Reader Two: If only

If only I had been thinking of others,
If only I had known generosity,
If only I hadn't been consumed with keeping and collecting
If only I had thought to share, to look for someone who needed
If only I had imagined the experience of sharing
If only I had been liberated from wanting to hoard
If only I had considered a different way to live
If only I had dreamed of a world shared by all
If only I had remembered what love asks of us
If only I had shared
I might have grown rich in the sight of God. If only.

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 read this article.

https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/may/30/should-we-all-stop-shopping-how-to-end-overconsumption?utm_source=pocket-newtab

Invite responses to these questions:

1. What surprised you in the article?
2. The dominant message of American culture is to buy stuff. How have you managed to keep that message at bay? How has it ensnared you?
3. The author quotes McKinnon: "Talking to somebody working in corporate America versus somebody who's been practising voluntary simplicity for three decades is night and day, in terms of the kind of human being they are. It makes you want to



be the voluntary simplicity person very much,' he says. 'They make time for people and have more depth and generosity of spirit. At times, it did feel like I was talking to a more evolved being.'” Share your reaction.

4. Consuming less must be framed as a more promising option than consuming more. How would you describe the possibilities of simplicity with a positive narrative?
5. What benefits have you experienced in your experiments with reducing consumerism?

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- This resource touches on the topic of eco-justice and gives just a taste of a much larger exploration that is possible. For a more robust experience, consider one of our Eco-Justice programs, found [here](#); scroll down to the square labeled “Eco-Justice.”
- 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, June 24, at 7:00 p.m. EDT as Joe Mitchell, Passionist priest and founder of the Earth & Spirit Center, speaks to the topic, “**Seeds of Hope for Our Planet: Thomas Berry and the Great Work.**” The presentation will focus on how we can respond to Pope Francis’ call to “Care for Our Common Home.” Inspired by the wisdom of Thomas Berry, known as one of the great religious ecological thinkers of the 20th century, this presentation will explore the Great Work of our time: how to make a transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would recognize the sacredness of all creation and find their place within the web of life. 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:

Gracious God,
In the name of honoring your holy presence and a future for humans,
I declare:
I will dance more
I will invite my neighbors to the porch
I will plant and garden
I will write a poem, or a story, or a play
I will read books
I will visit friends
I will play cards
I will shop at the farmer's market
I will walk
I will watch the moon
I will tell stories to children
I will learn a new craft
I will cook
I will sing or hum or whistle
I will call a buddy
I will ride a bike
I will volunteer
I will weed someone else's garden
I will make a new friend
I will repair something
I will make a gift with my hands
I will fast from Amazon
I will learn the names of the flowers in my yard
I will bake a pie and give it away
I will meditate
I will exercise and stretch
I will be silent and think
I will pray
I will gather for worship
I will practice gratitude.
Amen.

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.