

# Engaging the World Together

What Now...? DISCERNMENT

What Next...? COMMUNITY



JustFaith Ministries | P.O. Box 221348 | Louisville, KY 40252 | 502.429.0865 | [www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org)

This document is intended for people who have completed a JustFaith Ministries' process.

All materials are copyrighted and JustFaith® is trademarked.

All scriptural references are New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

# Engaging the World Together



## Continuing Your Journey

Congratulations on completing a JustFaith Ministries (JFM) process. As you have discovered along the way, the transformation of mind, heart, lifestyle and community does not begin or end within an eight-week, twenty-one week or even a thirty-week time frame. Individually, as families and communities, we are always on the continuum of lifelong pilgrimage toward ongoing conversion, growth and renewal. While one stage is now over, another door, pathway or invitation beckons.

## How to Use this Resource

This document invites you and your companions to respond to the Gospel call to continue together toward God's horizon – a world made new. You are encouraged to use this document for personal reflection as well as a discernment tool with your JustFaith Ministries group. Whether it is built into your JFM experience or not, it is strongly recommended that your group reconvene three to six weeks after the completion of the program to use this resource.

The following individual and group discernment outlines and the Internet links to resources will be helpful as you plan your group reunion and attend to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your life.



## A Message from JustFaith Ministries

---

*“The Reign of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once the farmer goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”* Mark 4:26-29

---

The essence of Gospel justice is aptly described as entering into right-relationship with all of life. While this invites our collaboration, the parable above reminds us that the source of creativity and productivity is the Holy Spirit, present and active in our lives.

The Gospel clearly suggests organic images that measure and honor the many seasons of growth and allow for the mystery of the Holy Spirit’s transformative interaction. All of these seasons reflect some kind of growth, even though that growth may not always be easy to measure.

We invite you to pause, reflect and discern how you might describe the season of your own personal journey and the season of your heart at this time.

### **Consider these Seasons...**

breaking the ground,  
tilling the soil,  
planting the seeds,  
sprouting new life,  
tending to the tender new sprouts,  
harvesting,  
gleaning,  
clearing the ground,  
cutting back,  
time for lying fallow.

As you juggle the demands on your life with your desire to live your faith by addressing the needs of this wounded world, hold the following questions in your heart:

- What needs and hopes do I hold for myself at this season in my life?
- What spiritual gifts are evident or lacking in this season?
- How might I, together with others, engage in the work of the Gospel?

**Blessings on your journey – wherever it takes you!**

## Engaging the World Together

---

“Were not our hearts burning within us...?” Luke 24: 32

---

After their JustFaith Ministries (JFM) experience, many people are more eager to help transform this blessed-broken world by personally connecting with our brothers and sisters, especially those who are oppressed or marginalized. Engaging the world together can take many and varied shapes: with family, with colleagues, within the church, congregation or parish, and with those who are interested in a shared ministry. Becoming leaven for change, especially systemic change, is a long-term commitment. Working with a small group of passionate people is vital to sustaining us in this work of the Gospel.

As you explore next steps beyond this JFM experience, consider making a deeper commitment to one another. The following pages offer tools to help discern the next steps toward a more authentic Christian life, becoming a small faith community that is committed to compassionately engaging this world together.

## What Now...? DISCERNMENT

---

*“We are called to transform our hearts and our social structures to renew the face of the earth. We cannot celebrate a faith we do not practice. We cannot proclaim a Gospel we do not live.”* [A Century of Catholic Social Teaching](#), U.S. Catholic Bishops

*“Inspired by Isaiah’s vision of a ‘peaceable kingdom,’ we honor the dignity of every person and the intrinsic value of every creature, and pray and work for the day when none labor in vain or bear children for calamity.”* Isaiah 65:23

[A Social Creed for the Twenty-first Century](#), National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

---

Hopefully your experience of journeying together as a small faith community has stretched your hearts and perhaps even left you all wrestling with some additional and enduring questions.

- What is God’s desire for this world and our lives?
- Where do we find support to embrace the changes we need to implement in our lives?
- How do we stay connected to the realities we have investigated?
- To whom are we committed and where are we called to go?

You are strongly encouraged to enter a period of discernment, of deep listening – alone and with one another.

Discernment – or holy listening – is not the same as deciding, selecting or choosing. More than weighing costs and benefits, discernment is an ancient prayer practice that involves opening our hearts and minds to embrace questions, invoking the Holy Spirit and attending to the deeper tugs, nudges and counsel of others. Discernment takes time. It is a deliberate process that involves two distinct stages:

- **Prayerful Listening**
- **Consultation with Others.**



## STEP ONE: Personal Discernment

There are many ways to walk the holy ground of personal discernment. The following process is to be done alone. It invites you to practice *Lectio Divina*, sacred reading on the Gospel passage outlined below.

### Directions

- Go to a quiet, prayerful space and light a candle.
- Center yourself in the present moment.
- Be aware of your breathing as you rest in God's presence.
- Invoke (call upon) the Holy Spirit.
- Slowly, line by line, pray the words of the Gospel story below.
- Pause and reflect on a word or phrase that strikes you.
- Let this word or phrase echo in your heart.
- Pause before re-reading the passage.
- This time, be attentive to any images that arise from the story.
- Pause before a third prayerful reading of the text.
- Listen for a question that surfaces or stirs within you.

### Reading

*When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."*

*When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"*

*For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.*

*Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch people."*

*So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him." Luke 5:4-11*

### Questions to Consider

- Where do you find yourself in this story?
- How does it reflect your recent experience and the world in which we live?
- What does this story say about Christ's invitation to work together as "catchers of people"?

### Soundings

- Make a note of your responses to this Gospel.
- Consider its challenge to live more deeply and love more broadly.
- Reflect on its implications about being a community that does justice together.
- Share your insights and questions with a close friend and invite their feedback and counsel.
- After your personal discernment, invite the friends in your JFM group into Step Two.

## STEP TWO: Discerning Together

At a follow-up meeting or reunion of your JFM group, take time to practice sacred reading together using the Gospel passage below. Following the directions for Lectio Divina from Step One, prayerfully read the following passage aloud three times, then allow people to share a word, an image or a question that resonates.

In order to move from discernment to community engagement, discuss and reflect upon the questions below in conjunction with “**What Next?**” (Pages 6-8).

### Reading

---

*Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.”*

*They said to him, “We also will come with you.”*

*When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.*

*Jesus said to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?”*

*They answered him, “No.” So he said to them,*

*“Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.”*

*So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.*

*So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.”*

*When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea.*

*The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. John 21: 3-8*

---

### Questions to Consider Together

- Where do we find ourselves in this story?
- How does it reflect our recent experience and the world in which we live?
- What does it teach us about going deeper and responding enthusiastically to the work of the Gospel?
- What other questions or suggestions come to light?

### Soundings

Share your responses to this Gospel.

Consider the invitation to work together.

Listen to one another as you share insights and challenges.

Keep in mind that transforming systems in the light of Gospel justice takes a significant commitment of time and energy. It is also frustrating when our efforts seem to yield so little. Such difficult work is not to be done alone. Participation in community – with people who are supportive, understanding and committed – helps keep passion burning and hope alive.



## What Next...? Mission Based Community?

Deep within us God has planted a yearning to be together. Community is integral to our humanity. It is the locus of our faith. The way Christianity is meant to be expressed. We engage the world together as community. We call this faithful, focused group a mission based community (MBC), and it includes the following four touchstones.

### 1. Commitment to Intentional Community

In community we learn to love and care for each other and the world. Throughout his life, Jesus brought people together to learn, to pray, to care for each other and especially the most vulnerable. Community is our gateway into the Reign of God.

***Mission Based Communities are not circumstantial groups, formed for convenience. They are deliberate, intentional communities, formed around caring relationships characterized by a deep commitment to each other.***

In your JFM group, you have already established trusting relationships with one another. Forming an MBC with your group is a powerful way to continue the journey together.

### 2. Discerning a Mission Focused with Those Who Are Poor

Being “good news to the poor,” (Luke 4:18) committing ourselves to living for and with poor, oppressed and marginalized people, is how Christians restore God’s world together. When people are exposed to poverty, racism, solidarity and nonviolence, they often ask, “So what can I do about these things?” An MBC responds to this question by engaging in focused outreach, community-building and mutual support.

In an MBC, people discern together a particular focus area or unique mission. The JFM document, [Ten Opportunities for Involvement in Social Ministry](#), offers ideas for further exploration. It is available on the “[Graduates](#)” page of the JFM website (under Resources/Form Community).

### 3. Spiritual Deepening

Personal and shared prayer sustains and empowers us for the work of justice, especially in tough times. Spirituality exposes us to God’s heart-felt intention for our world. A disciplined commitment to focused listening – attending to the Spirit in prayer – is life-breath to a community of faith.

#### Some Guiding questions for shared prayer in an MBC

- Who are afflicted in my town, in this nation, in our world?
- What local, national and international agencies can we hold in the light of prayer?
- What efforts great or small can we lift up?

## Some Guiding questions for spiritual deepening in an MBC

- How is God's Spirit present and active in our lives?
- What is God calling out of us at this present moment?
- How do we integrate the Gospel message into our lives?

### 4. Ongoing Formation

We are a pilgrim people on a journey into the heart of God. Deliberate, ongoing formation keeps our hearts and minds open to emerging opportunities for personal and social transformation.

Ongoing formation leads us into life-giving activities within and beyond the walls of our church. Grounded spiritual formation inevitably leads to engagement – to the work of social ministry, to the transformation of unjust structures, to legislative activity, to the lives of oppressed and marginalized people, and to organizing for social change.

Integrated spiritual formation includes these components:

- dialogue
- guest speakers
- book discussion
- prayer vigils
- community organizing
- immersion experiences
- spiritual reading
- reflection on church teaching
- public presentations
- partnerships with those who are poor, marginalized and oppressed.

For specific formation ideas and resources, read the [JFM Taking Action Resource Guide](#) on the "Graduates" page of the JFM website (under Resources).

An MBC might also choose to register for a JustMatters module. These six-to eight-week programs focus on specific topics of social concern and include: prayer, study, reflection, immersion experiences, and action steps. A listing of currently available [JustMatters](#) modules is available on the JFM web page. The module entitled [New Wineskins](#) guides groups through an extended discernment about forming an intentional small faith community. Sample materials, flyer and a registration form for this module are available on the JFM website.

JustFaith Ministries has provided additional information and suggestions for forming community on the "[Graduates](#)" page of the JFM website (under Resources).



## What Next...? Additional Approaches

What if...

...You are not ready to form a Mission Based Community?

...Some in your JFM group are not planning to continue meeting regularly?

### 1. Other Forms of Community

Two or three or more might choose to meet together, along with kindred souls and church members, for the purpose of prayer, mutual support and deepening friendship.

Whatever you decide, consider making these ongoing commitments:

- *standing in solidarity and working together with those who are poor and marginalized*
- *a regular rhythm of personal and shared prayer*
- *informing and reforming the scope of your life through relationships, outreach and education.*

### 2. Being Involved

The Gospel invites all of us to expand our commitment to social ministry within a faith community. This is how we become agents of God's compassion in our wounded world. The culminating message of JFM is that Christians are called to love our neighbors. Not merely to give our money, but also to give ourselves, our time and presence in community and our energy, to work alongside those who are poor and vulnerable. You will find many opportunities in the JFM [Taking Action Resource Guide](#).

### 3. Other JustFaith Ministries Activities

You are invited to consider promoting and/ or facilitating other JFM groups. Use the JFM website, [www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org), to explore our program offerings:

- Engaging Spirituality\*
- JustFaith\*
- JustMatters Modules focused on:  
*Climate Change, Prison Reform, Immigration, Economic Reform\**, *Small Christian Community, Conflict Resolution, Torture Abolition, Ecological Crisis, Christian Muslim, Abolition of the Death Penalty...*
- JusticeWalking (*High School or College*)
- Good News People

*\*(Catholic and Protestant Versions Available )*