

College Justice WALKING | Just-FAITH

A Discipleship Journey with College Students

Session ONE: Sacred and Significant 2010-11

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JustFaith Ministries
P. O. Box 221348
Louisville, KY 40252
(502) 429-0865
www.justfaith.org
justicewalking@justfaith.org

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Session One

Sacred and Significant (1 hour)

This session takes place after the first hour at the social service agency.

Overview

After an hour of visiting at the service agency, J-Walkers embrace a spirituality of smallness and vulnerability, extending special care (as God does) for all that is fragile and overlooked.

Aim: J-Walkers affirm that every form of life is sacred and precious to our Creator – especially where life is threatened or neglected.

<i>Supplies for the Session</i>	<i>Brought by...</i>
<i>Prayer cloth</i>	
<i>Pillar candle and matches</i>	
<i>Markers</i>	
<i>Bible</i>	
<i>CD player, and the Companion CD</i>	
<i>A piece of sidewalk chalk</i>	
<i>A copy of <u>A Monk in the Inner City</u></i>	
<i>A packet of mustard seeds</i>	
<i>A roll of scotch tape</i>	
<i>A current newspaper</i>	
<i>A small bowl</i>	
<i>A copy of the co-facilitation schedule</i>	

<i>Co-facilitator Tasks</i>	<i>To be done by...</i>
Review materials and gather supplies	
Delegate facilitation roles	
Set up the room	
Write the session title on the prayer cloth	
Identify a practical challenge to offer the group at closing	

Setup: In a designated meeting spot at the agency, arrange a circle of chairs. Put the prayer cloth, Bible, candle and newspaper in the center. Have the bowl, seeds and CD player available. Make sure the title of the session “*Sacred and Significant*,” is written on the cloth. J-Walkers should bring their journals and pens.

GATHERING

(Before the agency visit)

Overview

J-Walkers gather outside the social service agency for a “Signing” ritual. After an hour with the people at the agency, the group reflects on the seeds of transformation hidden in the smallest of things.

Materials: a piece of sidewalk chalk; the newspaper; a small bowl and a packet of mustard seeds.

Signing

Designate a meeting spot (on the sidewalk or parking lot) outside the agency and form a tight circle. Offer these remarks:

*We are about to cross into other people’s lives.
When we feel out of place and vulnerable, we are treading in holy places.
Let us be open, so God’s love can reach into our lives here.*

With sidewalk chalk, mark a cross on the ground in the center of the circle and continue:

Anywhere God’s people are cared for is holy ground.

Invite everyone to silently make the sign of the cross:

*God of the margins, break us open.
(Touching the forehead) ...Open minds
(Touching the chest) ...Open hearts
(Touching both shoulders) ...Open lives. AMEN.*

Lead people into the agency.

(After the visit at the agency)

Praying the News

Light the candle and pray a news story, inviting J-Walkers to respond with: *Lord have mercy...* or *Lamb of God...*

Symbol

Pour the mustard seeds into the bowl with these words:

Seeds... harvest and hope...promise and potential... small yet significant.

Pass the bowl around, inviting people to reach in and handle the seeds. Offer this reflection:

*It takes a botanist to look at a tiny seed and visualize the plant within.
It takes a prophet to notice small, overlooked people and visualize the potential and promise that God has invested there.*

LISTENING (30 minutes)

Overview

J-Walkers reflect on their encounters at the margins and the experience of the spiritual practice- *Walking into the Web of Life*. Holding a mustard seed, they welcome the Gospel paradox “*Small is Great,*” and the challenge to care for people and things our world considers insignificant.

Materials: the song “Something Beautiful for God” from the companion CD; a small bag of mustard seeds; scotch tape; the Bible marked at Matthew 13:31-32 and Mark 9:33-37.

Life Signs (20 minutes)

(Question for the mind) Taking turns around the circle, J-Walkers respond to this question:

Who are the most influential people in our nation or world today?

(Questions for the heart) Those who wish can respond to one of the following remarks:

When you hear the word “SACRED,” what places, experiences, or people come to mind?

What does “GREATNESS,” mean in our culture?

(Questions for the soul) Keeping in mind the people they have just visited, invite people to respond to either of these questions:

In our world, what types of people are treated as “insignificant?”

(...people who are infirm, elderly, unborn, prisoners, migrants, minorities, mentally or physically disabled, unemployed, impoverished...)

What things are sacred, and what people are significant in your life?

Read Matthew 13:31-32 – *The Reign of God is like a mustard seed.*

Play the song “*Something Beautiful for God.*”

Widen the dialogue by inviting people to share their experiences of the agency visit.

Presenting the Theme (10 minutes)

Lead the group in this echo prayer (Psalm 145:8):

Co-facilitator prays

God is kind and full of compassion...

Slow to anger, abounding in love...

J-Walkers repeat

God is kind and full of compassion

Slow to anger, abounding in love

Pause and repeat the prayer.

Ask everyone to extend a hand in order to receive a miracle. Place one mustard seed in the center of each palm and offer this reflection:

From the nearest planet, the earth appears smaller than this seed.

Not long ago we were all smaller than this grain of life.

You are handling a miracle— a tiny seed that holds a plant inside!

The outward appearance is deceiving; it's smallness an illusion.

(Pause)

This seed is a parable that turns the world of domination on its head...

In the Reign of God “small is GREAT!”

Read Mark 9:33-37 – *Servants of all, like children, are first in the Reign of God.*

Offer this meditation, alternating voices:

In the dominant world we are defined by our achievements.

In God's world it is what we care about, who we care for that defines us.

Prophets live under God's rule, caring for those who are frail, outcast, or abandoned.

(Pause)

In God's Realm ALL life is sacred, no life-form is insignificant, and greatness means great compassion.

God's Reign is for small people with great capacity for love.

Are we small enough to step down into the Reign of God?

(Pause)

Since all life belongs to God, it ALL deserves reverence and care.

Christ invites us to love what is small and fragile, but we cannot love what we do not know!

Following Jesus means touching lives that are broken and crushed.

(Pause)

*The God of love is close to those who suffer.
When suffering people are at the heart of our lives, in the palm of our hands,
we are set free to care deeply.
Imagine how our lives would change if no one was considered unimportant!*

With these words, challenge J-Walkers to make space for the mustard seed in their lives:

*Put your seed in a place where you can keep track of it, perhaps taped into your journal book or in your prayer space at home.
Let it teach you about the humble path that turns greed to giving, exploitation to trust, dominance to service.*

(Offer J-Walkers a piece of scotch tape to place their seed in their journal, if desired.)

SHARING (20 minutes)

Overview

J-Walkers share their reflections on their reading and the practice.

Materials: journals and pens; a copy of A Monk in the Inner City; markers.

Journal Reflection

Invite J-Walkers to open their journals. With these words, challenge everyone to spend ten minutes each day with their journals:

“The poverty of billions of men and women is the one issue that most challenges our human and Christian consciences.” (John Paul II, World Day of Peace 2000)

How do you care about this critical fact?

What does it mean for you (your family, your school and your church) to be in “right relationship” with the places and people our world treats as less significant?

To plant this Gospel message of “great smallness” in our lives, we will need to open our journals every day. Use these reflections as guideposts for your inner J-Walking journey.

Dialogue

You may begin the dialogue with questions like these:

At the social service agency:

Who met you today?

What was significant about your experience today?

Where did you find sacredness in your experience at the social service agency?

Continue with an open request for thoughts and comments on the Introduction and sections A-D of *A Monk in the Inner City*, and encourage people to share something from their journal.

Ask someone to write (on the cloth) a word or phrase that summarizes the group's experience. Challenge J-Walkers to call to mind the names of some people they encountered at the agency, and add those names to the cloth.

SENDING (5 Minutes)

Overview

J-Walkers are challenged to live out the message, and reminded of upcoming tasks.

Materials: a copy of the co-facilitation schedule.

Solidarity Challenge – Try This

Challenge the group to stay faithful to the spiritual practice and offer a practical action everyone can take to notice and connect with the people that others overlook. (Co-facilitators determine this challenge beforehand. See “Try This!” in the section titled *Sacred and Significant*.)

Announcements

Remind the group of the following:

- *Date, time, co-facilitators and location for the second session (at the home site).*
- *Reading assignment: Read Preface, Introduction: With Clenched Fists, and Prayer and Silence of With Open Hands (through page 45). Encourage daily reading of this book incorporated in prayer and journaling time.*

Closing

J-Walkers stand, linking hands to form a complete circle.

Use this format to invite people to share in the prayer:

God of the small and weak we turn to you... (Someone shares an insight)
We ask your assistance... (Someone speaks of a situation of need)
We hold in our hearts... (Name people)
We ask our guides to bless us...
AMEN.

End the session with a sign of peace and remind everyone to hold the people at the agency in prayer.