

Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life

Small Group Guide: “Transforming the World”

(LifelongFaith Associates)

Advanced Preparation

You will need Bibles for each person in the group.

You will need newsprint and markers. Check the activities that you select to see if other materials are needed.

Copy the following handouts:

- *A World without the Basic Essentials for Life*
- *The Global Situation Today*
- *Ideas for Transforming the World*
- *Transforming the World Action Plan*
- *Transforming Our World Prayer Services* (optional)

During the session, children can use the Transforming the World activities in the *Living Well Children’s Workbook*.

Part 1. Yearning: The Hunger for Transforming the World

This small group session focuses on the Christian practice of Transforming the World. People can make a difference in serving the poor, acting for justice, making peace, and caring for creation.

Begin the session by reading (aloud or silently) the opening stories on pages 12.2–12.5 in *Living Well*. (For more information about Olga Murray and the Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation go to: www.nyof.org.)

After reading or hearing the stories discuss the stories, as a group, using the following questions:

- What inspired this person or group to do something?
- What first step did this person or group take?
- Why did other people get involved?
- What qualities do you think helped this person or group achieve their goal?

Invite members of the group to share their own involvement in serving the poor, acting for justice, making peace, or caring for creation. Have them share what inspired them to get involved and what they are doing.

2. Guided Meditation: Experiencing a World without the Basic Essentials for Life

The meditation, “A World without the Basic Essentials for Life,” (on the handout) helps people enter into the reality of the situation of over 1 billion people who live in poverty in our world today. A guided imagery experience provides an opportunity to open ourselves, in a small way, to what it would be like to lose all of our basic human rights.

Dim the room's lights (if possible), play soft background music, and ask the participants to make themselves as physically comfortable as possible and to close their eyes.

Have one person introduce the meditation and have different readers for each of the seven "take-aways."

When the meditation is finished, remain silent for a minute or two, getting in touch with the thoughts and feelings you had during the meditation. Think about the reflection questions below and share your thoughts with the group.

- How did you feel as you gradually lost all of your "rights?"
- Take a look at the results of your personal and home inventory. What would it be like to gradually lose most or all of these items?
- Is it difficult for you to image this situation happening to you or in your area?
- Is it hard for you to imagine that this situation is the reality for one in six people around the world? (That's over one billion people.)

Part 2. *Reflecting*: Reflection on the Need for Transforming the World

1. The Global Situation Today

Read page 12.6 as a group. Review the six "facts" about injustice in our world. In addition to those six here are several other important facts about our global reality:

- 32 million people are infected with HIV/AIDS; 22 million are in Sub-Sahara Africa. 15 million children have lost a parent to AIDS.
- About 1.6 billion people live in substandard housing.
- About 100 million people are homeless in the world.
- Each year more than 2 million children are exploited in the global commercial sex trade.
- 27 million people are held as slaves in our world today.
- 1 in 6 children in the U.S. lives below the poverty level.

Take a minute to reflect on the following questions and then share your responses with the group:

- What surprised you about the global situation?
- What was most disturbing for you?
- Which need or concern touches your heart most, and has the power to move you to compassion and action like the Good Samaritan who stops to care for the wounds of a fellow human being in Jesus' parable (see Luke 10:25-37)?

2. Why Should We Be Concerned about Transforming the World?

Together read the quote from Rabbi Ron Wolfson about "repairing the world" on page 12.6. in *Living Well*.

Discuss why people of faith need to be concerned about acting to transform the world?

How do the following reasons connect with your own reasons?

1. Our faith calls us to it. The Gospel and church teaching place our service of the poor and vulnerable and our work for justice at the center of Christian witness.

2. Our nation needs it. Too many Americans, especially children, are growing up poor in the richest nation on earth. The blessings and burdens of American life are not being shared fairly.
3. Our world requires it. More than 30,000 children die every day from hunger, deprivation, and their consequences. Disease and debt, corruption and conflict are threatening the lives and dignity of millions in our increasingly globalized world.
4. Our salvation demands it. In Jesus' description of the Last Judgment, the critical question is 'What did you do for the least of these?' Jesus identified himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the imprisoned, and the stranger, insisting that when we serve them we serve him.
5. Our actions can make a difference.

Part 3. Exploring: The Christian Practice of Transforming the World

The Exploring section develops our understanding of the Christian practice of Transforming the World through four themes, each with a focusing Scripture teaching:

- 1) We serve the poor and vulnerable
- 2) We work for justice to ensure the rights of all people
- 3) We work for peace
- 4) We care for creation

1. We Serve the Poor and Vulnerable

a) Scripture Reading #1. The Parable of the Final Judgment

Have someone read aloud the Parable of the Final Judgment (Matthew 25:31-44) and then read the commentary (silently or aloud) about the Christian concern for the poor and vulnerable on page 12.7 in *Living Well*.

Working together as a group identify Jesus' list of the basic essentials for life in Matthew 25 and what Jesus is asking us to do (responsibilities):

- What is Jesus' message to us in this parable?
- What is Jesus' list of the essential as presented in this parable?
- What is Jesus asking us to do in this parable?
- Was the story addressed just to individuals, or is there a message in the story for families, groups, and institutions (church, business, government) as well?

What is so significant in this parable is that in neglecting the poor, the outcast, and the oppressed, people are rejecting Jesus himself.

b) Scripture Reading #2. The Good Samaritan

Have someone read aloud the passage from Luke 16:19-31 to the group.

How does this parable apply to us today. Together as a group imagine that Jesus was telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan today. Use the three questions to imagine what the parable would sound like today. Develop 2 or 3 versions of the parable using the three questions below.

1. Who is the person, group or nation in the ditch?
Identify and describe a contemporary situation where a person, group of people, or entire nation is being injured or oppressed (the man in the ditch). You can use a situation you learned about in this session or situation you learned about at school or a current news story. The story can be local, national, or global.
2. Who passes them by and why?
Identify and describe two people, groups, organizations, or nations that see the injured or oppressed and choose to do nothing (walk past the man in the ditch). Describe why you think they did not stop and address the situation on injustice?
3. Who stops and what do they do?
Identify and describe the person, group, organization, or nation that does see the injured or oppressed and act. Describe what they do and why they are doing it?

Together as a group discuss the parable using the following reflection questions:

- What is Jesus' message to us in this parable?
- What is Jesus asking us to do in this parable?
- Was the story addressed just to individuals, or is there a message in the story for families, groups, and institutions (church, business, government) as well?

Conclude this section by reading and sharing your reflections on these insights by theologian Albert Nolan from his book *Jesus Before Christianity*.

"...the basis of this solidarity or love is compassion – that emotion which wells up from the pit of one's stomach at the sight of another's need. The parable of the Good Samaritan is recorded by Luke (10:29-37) as an answer to the question, Who is my neighbor? The answer is not every person and any person, true as that may be in itself. The answer is a parable which is told in such a way that it leads us on to identify ourselves emotionally with a man who had the misfortune of falling among thieves. We feel his disappointment when those who are supposed to live in solidarity with him, a priest and a levite, pass by on the other side. We share his relief and his joy when an enemy Samaritan is moved with compassion to break through the barriers of group solidarity to help him in his need. If we allow the parable to move us, if we allow the parable to release those deeper emotions which we have been taught to fear, we shall never again have to ask you our neighbor might be or what our love might mean. We shall go and do likewise in the teeth of whatever barriers. Only compassion can teach a person what solidarity with other human beings means....Of such is the 'kingdom' of God."

(Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001, 82)

2. We Work for Justice to Ensure the Rights of All People

a) Scripture Reading #1. Isaiah 58:6-12

Read aloud the passage from Isaiah 58:6-12 on page 12.8 in *Living Well*.

Together as a group describe God's vision of justice (such as setting free the oppressed) and what God is asking us to do (responsibilities) using the following two questions.

- What is God's vision of justice in Isaiah 58?
- What is God asking us to do in Isaiah 58?

Read the commentary (silently or aloud) about the Christian concern for justice on page 12.8 in *Living Well*.

b) Scripture Reading #2. The Rich Man and Lazarus

Read Luke 16:19-31, using four readers: a narrator, Lazarus, Rich Man, and Abraham.

Together as a group discuss the following questions:

- How does this parable apply to life today?
- What is Jesus asking us to do in this parable?
- Was the story addressed just to individuals, or is there a message in the story for families, groups, and institutions (church, business, government) as well?

3. We Work for Peace

Read the commentary (silently or aloud) about the Christian concern for peace on page 12.9 in *Living Well*.

a) A Biblical Vision of Peace: Micah 4:2-4

Our focusing Scripture reading is from the prophet Micah and his vision of peace. It includes the well-known image of turning swords into ploughshares. Have someone read aloud Micah 4:2-4 on page 12.9 in *Living Well*.

Reflect on the Micah passage by reading and reflection upon these insights by Scripture scholar Walter Brueggemann.

“...Micah proposes a radical alternative for the ordering of society... This is a remarkable scenario, which envisions a complete reordering of international power. Micah offers a vision of the nations submitting to the torah of Yahweh. And when that submission has been made, there can be disarmament, some will not have what rightly belongs to another. Disarmament is not a commitment in a vacuum, but is part of the justice-making process. The other side of the issue, in this poem, is the willingness to settle for a peasant standard of living, content with vine and fig tree. So peace envisioned here requires of a shift of economic priorities, which permits the end of greed, the end of rapacious taxes, the end of exploitation either by strong parties or by ruthless governments.

“The poem envisions a changed system. But it also presumes a changed set of social priorities and social appetites. It anticipates nothing less than the dismantling of the presently known world for the sake of an alternative world not yet embodied.

“The poem is a part of Micah’s vision of justice. The justice of which Micah speaks requires two elements:

- a) A firm and clear critique of what is going on. Micah sees clearly that what is going on is the rapaciousness of the strong against the weak, all in the name of the war system. Micah does not flinch. But we may also be sure that in his time, or in ours, such a massive critique will be mightily resisted.
- b) A poetic scenario of an alternative way to order society around the gifts of God... It is this act of liberated hope that gives credibility to the critique. For unless there is an alternative around which to rally, then one should not knock the only game in town. But

the poetry of 4:1-4 asserts that the present way is not the only game in town. Prophetic faith invites Israel to an alternative.”

(Walter Brueggemann, “Voices of the Night – Against Justice,” in *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly* by Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Parks, and Thomas Groome. New York: Paulist Press, 1986, 9-11)

Together as a group describe God’s vision of peace and what God is asking us to do (responsibilities) using the following two questions.

- What is God’s vision of peace in Micah 4?
- What is God asking us to do in Micah 4?

b) What Would Jesus Say?

If Jesus was teaching today, what would he say about the violence in our world today. Imagine him giving a “Sermon on Peace” to people today.

Take a few minutes for each person in the group to read the following Bible passages:

1. Greatest Commandment: Matthew 22:34-40
2. Love Your Enemies: Matthew 5:43-45
3. Love Your Enemies: Luke 6:32, 35-36
4. Do Not Judge: Luke 6:37-39, 41-42
5. Forgiveness: Matthew 18:21-22
6. Genuine Love: Romans 12:9-21

How would you apply Jesus’ message of peace to the world today? Together as a group apply Jesus’ message to different situations of violence in our world today (local, national, and international) by completing one of the following sentences. Start with one person naming a situation and then everyone sharing what Jesus would say.

“In this situation of violence (*name the situation*), Jesus would say...”

OR

“The world chooses violence (*name the situation*), but I say...”

4. We Care for Creation

To study our call to care for God’s creation work together as a group to create a “Top Ten Reasons for Caring for God’s Creation.” Use the following process:

- Read Psalm 24:1-2, Psalm 104 and Psalm 148 and the commentary on pages 12.10 in *Living Well*.
- Recall the ways human beings abuse God’s creation.
- Develop a top ten list of reasons for caring for God’s creation. Brainstorm a list of reasons, then select ten reasons.

Conclude by reflecting on and discussing the following two questions.

- What is God’s vision of creation?
- What is God asking us to do?

Part 4. *Living*: Application of the Christian Practice to Daily Life

The “Living” section in “Transforming the World” serves as a guide for discerning what actions people can take to develop or strengthen the ways they serve, work for justice and peace, and care for creation.

1. What Are We Currently Doing to Transform the World

Together as a group develop a list of the ways you are transforming the world: serving, working for justice and peace, and caring for creation. Develop the list on a sheet of newsprint.

1. What are you doing personally and what do you see others around you doing to transform the world?
2. What is our church doing to transform the world?
3. What are leaders and organizations in the community doing to transform the world?
4. What are people, leaders, and organizations doing globally to transform the world?

2. What Others Are Doing: Film Presentations of Service, Justice, Peace, and Care for Creation (Optional)

Most national justice organizations have developed video presentations of their work. Try to select an organization for each of the four elements: service to the poor, work for justice and advocacy, work for peace, and care for creation. Contact the organizations to obtain a short video presentation (several are listed below, more are included on page 12.15 in *Living Well*). Many organizations have short videos online at their websites. If you have an internet connection for your presentation, you can show a video from their website. Here are several organizations with video resources:

- Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org
- Church World Service: www.churchworldservice.org
- Habitat for Humanity: www.habitat.org
- Heifer Project: www.heifer.org
- International Justice Mission: www.ijm.org
- World Vision: www.worldvision.org

3. What You Can Do

Review the variety of ideas for transforming the world on pages 12.11 – 12.4 in *Living Well*. These ideas are also on the handout, *Ideas for Transforming the World* so that you can use the ideas as a “checklist” to identify the types of actions in which you would like to be involved.

Review the list of action ideas that you already identified in #1 above.

Take time as an individual to think about the issues and ideas that move your hearts.

Share with the group the things you are thinking about. Perhaps there are some common issues and/or ideas that the group can work on together.

Use the worksheet, *Transforming the World Action Plan*, to move from an idea into action. Confirm your commitment to transforming the world through a plan of action—as an individual and/or as a family or household. Consider the following questions as you formulate your plan:

- What is the need or issue you are addressing?
- How have you studied the need or issue?
- What type of action or project are you going to be involved in? Will it be a local project or a national/international project?
- How will you implement your action or project? What steps will you take? What resources will you need? How much time will be involved?
- Will you work alone, with others, with your church community, and/or with an organization?

After you have created a plan for living the practice in your daily life, share you plans for one idea with the group.

Part 5. *Praying*: Prayer for the Practice

Close the session by praying together as a group using the prayers on page 12.16 OR use one of the two prayer services (included).

“A World without the Basic Essentials for Life” A Meditation

What would a world without the basic essentials for human life look like? I would like to take every one of you on an imaginary journey. I want you to imagine what I am describing is happening to you and your family (or household).

I want you to close your eyes, Please do so now. Imagine your life and your home today.

The first thing I'm going to take away from you and your family is an easy one: **Clothing**. I'll let you keep the clothes you're wearing right now, and you'll be able to wash them as often as needed. But all of the closets in your house are now empty. It's a bit embarrassing to wear the same clothes every day – people look at you strangely. Although you're somewhat discouraged and suffer from low self-esteem, all things considered, your life is still reasonably good. And you manage to cope.

But I'm afraid I'm going to have to take away item number two: **Energy**: heat, light, and power.

This, as you can imagine, is more of a problem. Now your house is always dark and usually too hot, which you can live with, or too cold, which is a bit more difficult. And you can now only wash and dry your clothes by hand, which is awkward because you have nothing to wear while they're being washed. Showers are cold, too. And you have to do the dishes by hand. There's no TV, no computer, no radio, no telephone, and no stove for cooking...you must now build a fire. And of course, you don't have a car, either. Now you have to walk to the store for food. Life is pretty miserable, and you're starting to feel desperate in many ways. You're depressed and feeling alone and singled out...a victim of a system that doesn't treat everyone fairly. But as they say, you still have your health...and so your family adapts the best it can.

But just as you're starting to adjust to all of this. I have to come along and take away something else. This is only the third takeaway...but it is a big one: **Water**.

This is a real problem. Just for drinking water, you now have to walk over a mile to a muddy stream with a couple of old milk jugs and lug them all the way back home. It's not just hard work, but also time-consuming. And the dirty water often makes you sick. That brings fever, discomfort, nausea, and diarrhea. And of course, the toilets don't work either. Now you have to go outside in the yard behind your house. This creates obvious sanitation problems, not to mention the inconvenience. It's also kind of degrading, and how you and your family get sick even more often. You don't really care anymore about the little things. Forget washing your clothes, doing the dishes or trying to cook a decent meal. No showers at all now. You're always dirty, and you feel even dirtier and ashamed. It seems like you're always at the doctor's office. But at least the health care is good in your area. And you're thankful for the fact that you're still eating well. It's quite a walk to the grocery store, but that seems like a pretty small thing at this point.

I'm afraid it's time for another takeaway. Now number four: **Your House**.

Don't worry, though. I won't leave you totally without shelter. I'm just going to trade in your home for a three-room shack of corrugated tin...about 300 square feet (that's 15 feet by 20 feet). Oh, and it has no windows, beds or couches. It does have a couple of wooden benches and chairs, though. The floor is dirt, and of course it gets muddy when it rains, which is a bit of a problem. You and your family all sleep on the floor – two or three to a room. Rats and bugs are also nuisances. The worst part now is

seeing your family like this. The children don't laugh anymore; they only cry and whimper. Their faces are often blank, their eyes vacant. Their spirits are crushed. The adults are tired and worried.

Takeaway number five is devastating: **Food**.

No more grocery store. This is the biggest challenge so far. You can grow a few things in the yard – but not for all 12 months of the year. You and your family have become pretty resourceful at picking through your neighbors' garbage. It's amazing what people throw away: half-eaten apples, chicken bones with half the meat still on them, week-old casseroles. Your neighbors' trash is not your treasure! Forget about any sense of nutrition. And now just when you think you've sunk as low as you can sink, sickness and disease strike with a vengeance. Now your weakened immune system can't cope with even ordinary colds, viruses, and bacterial infections. You're also dealing with things like head lice, rickets, hepatitis, parasites and an incredible number of ailments you didn't know existed.

I'm terribly sorry but now I'm going to take away item number six: **Health Care**.

Incredibly before your very eyes, your brother dies from – of all things – diarrhea. How could that happen in your area? This seems like an unbelievably bad dream. Maybe now you're wondering what else could possibly be taken from you. You've already lost everything. Not quite.

The seventh and last thing has already been taken away from you: **Hope**.

Hope for the future, hope for your family, hope that tomorrow might be better than today.

You may now open your eyes. I wanted each of you to feel what it is like to live in a world without the basic essential for life. I know that this story sounds unimaginable, especially in the United States. But this is the reality of one in six people on our planet today!

(Originally developed by Heather MacLeod and World Vision, USA.)

Ideas for Transforming the World

Action to Serve the Poor and Vulnerable

- Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- Donate goods such as food for the local food bank, clothing, school kits for children, personal essentials for those at a homeless shelter, a toy collection at Christmas, packages for prisoners.
- Care for the elderly by visiting them at a convalescent home or senior citizen facility or doing chores and shopping.
- Tutor children or become a Big Brother or Sister.
- Build or repair homes.
- Support efforts to provide vaccines and medical care to the world's poor, such as mosquito nets for malaria prevention, immunizations against childhood disease, and HIV/AIDS treatment.
- Work with people who have disabling conditions.
- Give generously to those in need at home and abroad by making a financial donation to support the efforts of groups who work with the poor.
- Adopt a community in another country by supporting them financially and learning about their culture and community life.
- Sponsor a child or family through a international sponsorship program such as World Vision.
- Support organizations that are building schools and libraries for children in the poorest countries of the world; provide books and/or our money to purchase books for children.

Action for Justice

- Be an advocate for just policies and priorities that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God's creation, and build peace; become familiar with pending legislation or proposals that affect people's basic needs; write advocacy letters or emails.
- Work with groups to change legislation or budget priorities the ensure the human rights of people.
- Support organizations working for justice—locally, nationally, and internationally by promoting the purpose and activities of organizations, providing financial support, and volunteering time to work with the organization.

- Develop a program or campaign to educate people in your church or community about a particular justice issue.
- Loan money, through organizations involved in microlending, to an individual entrepreneur in the developing world so they can start a business and help to alleviate poverty in their community.
- Use your purchasing power to buy fair trade products, such as coffee, chocolate, and crafts, that benefit local producers in the developing world. Look for the Fair Trade label.

Work for Peace

- Work to end the violence against women and children; work with programs.
- Work to end the violence of human trafficking of children by working with organizations seek to shut down trafficking rings and providing support for the victims.
- Address violence in the media through nonsupport of products by not purchasing and/or abstaining or limiting exposure to violent TV shows, movies, video games, and toys.
- Work with organizations that seek to build bridges of understanding among people who have been hostile toward each other.
- Be an advocate for government policies that promote peace and diplomacy; engage in letter/email writing around peace issues.

Caring for Creation

- Take basic, doable actions, personally and with your household, to reduce your "environmental footprint" and save our habitat (water, trees) and prevent climate-warming emissions.
- Adopt a piece of the planet through the Nature Conservatory's "Adopt an Acre" and "Rescue the Reef" programs, and the Rainforest Alliance's "Adopt-a-Rainforest" program.
- Protect endangered species and their habitats through the World Wildlife Fund's projects.
- Care for the environment by planting trees in your community or organizing a clean-up the community day.
- Recycle all your paper, glass, aluminum, and plastic, as well electronics.
- Be an advocate for government policies and programs that support the environment and encourage alternative energy.

Transforming the World Action Plan

Now it's time to act. Confirm your commitment to transforming the world through a plan of action—as an individual and/or as a family or household. Be sure to consider the following questions as you formulate your plan:

- ✓ **What is the need or issue you are addressing?**

- ✓ **How have you studied the need or issue?**

- ✓ **What type of action or project are you going to be involved in? Will it be a local project or a national/international project?**

- ✓ **How will you implement your action or project? What steps will you take? What resources will you need? How much time will be involved?**

**Pray for the courage, patience, and compassion
to transform the world through your actions.**

Pledge of Nonviolence

Institute for Peace and Justice

Making peace must start within ourselves, in our family, and in our relationships with people and the world. We commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceable people.

Respect Self and Others.

To respect myself, to affirm others and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks and self-destructive behavior.

I/we commit to...

Communicate Better.

To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

I/we commit to...

Listen Carefully.

To listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with me, and to consider others' feelings and needs rather than insist on having my own way.

I/we commit to...

Forgive.

To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another, to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

I/we commit to...

Respect Nature.

To treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.

I/we commit to...

Play Creatively.

To select entertainment and toys that support our family's values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny or acceptable.

I/we commit to...

Be Courageous,

To challenge violence in all its forms whenever I encounter it, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

I/we commit to...

How Environmentally-Friendly Are You?

How environmentally-friendly are you today? Use the following nineteen items to determine several of the ways you and your home have an impact on the environment. Place a check-mark next to each item that is true about your practices or about your home.

- I recycle cans.
- I recycle bottles.
- I recycle magazines and newspapers.
- My car averages at least 27.5 miles per gallon (federal car fuel economy average) or at least 22.2 for SUVs and light trucks.
- I use public transportation, walk, bicycle, or carpool to work or school.
- I take short showers.
- I have installed water saving devices in my home, e.g., a low-flow shower head or a low-flow toilet (or toilet dam to reduce the amount of water in every flush).
- I have purchased energy-efficient appliances.
- I have replaced standard light bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights (CFLs).
- I eat meat at dinner time less than three times per week.
- I have insulated our house to conserve energy.
- I turn down the thermostat in winter (68 degrees or lower) in the winter time (heating).
- I set the air conditioner to use less energy in the summer (setting the thermostat above 76 degrees).
- I turn off the lights and other appliances when out of the room or house.
- I turn off water while brushing teeth, shaving, washing dishes, and so forth.
- I have reduced the amount of unwanted junk mail (e.g., catalogs) by calling the companies and removing our names from their mailing lists.
- I have reduced or eliminated the use of pesticides in our garden and on our lawn.
- I purchase organic grown fruits, vegetables, and other foods which do not use pesticides.
- I purchase products that are made from recycled materials and from companies that produce environment-friendly products.

How did you do?

- ✓ If you checked 16-19 items, you are in the environment-friendly hall of fame.
- ✓ If you checked 11-15 items, you are making progress in becoming environment-friendly, so identify what areas you need to improve next.
- ✓ If you checked 6-10 items, you have begun to become environment-friendly, but there are lots of improvements you can make.
- ✓ If you check under 5 items, you haven't begun to think about the environmental impact just you and your home has on the environment. There's lots of work to do.

Reflection

- How are you living environment-friendly practices? Which practices are strengths?
- What more could you do? Where do you see improvement?

Transforming Our World Prayer Service

Opening Prayer

God of justice, defender of the poor, open our eyes and ears to the suffering of our neighbors around the world.

Move us to have compassion for those who lack the basic necessities of life.

Strengthen us to act for justice and serve the needs of your people.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Listen

The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.

If you put an end to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word; if you give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need, then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon. And I will always guide you and satisfy you with good things. I will keep you strong and well.

(Isaiah 58:6-7, 9-11)

Respond

Today, O God, you bring before us the poor of our world. You remind us that we are called to serve them as we would care for ourselves. We offer to you now these special needs...

For all the peoples of our world, especially the young, who are hungry and poor, and for those who die each day from lack of food and water, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

For all those families in our world who do not have a house to live in or adequate shelter to protect them, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

For all those children who are unable to attend school and obtain an education that will prepare them to work and support their families when they are adults, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

For all those mothers and fathers around the world, who cannot find a job and who work at wages too low to support their family with food and shelter, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

For all the peoples of our world, especially children, who are suffering from preventable illness and do not access to medical care, we pray...

All: Lord hear our prayer for justice

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, friend of the poor,

We believe that every person has a right to life and to the conditions for living a decent life: food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing.

We recognize that we have a special responsibility to assist people in need.

Help us to see that in serving the needs of the poorest in our world, we are serving you.

Amen!

Transforming Our World Prayer Service

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus,
Open my eyes that they may see the needs of the poor;
move my hands that they may feed the hungry;
touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing;
teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers;
let me share my possessions to clothe the naked;
give me the care that strengthens the sick;
make me share in the quest to set the prisoner free.
In serving the needs of the poor may we grow closer to you.
Amen.

Listen

“At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done.

We will be judged by
‘I was hungry and you gave me food to eat,
I was naked and you clothed me
I was homeless and you took me in.’

Hungry not only for bread – but for love
Naked not only for clothing – but naked of human dignity and respect
Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks – but homeless because of rejection.

This is Christ in distressing disguise.”

Mother Teresa (*Words To Love By...*)

Respond

Jesus challenges us to serve those in need. In fact we will be judged by how well we have served others. Let us now pray that God will give us the eyes to see those in need and to act.

Leader: I was hungry and you gave me food....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was thirsty and you gave me drink....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was a stranger and you welcomed me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was naked and you clothed me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was ill and you comforted me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Closing Prayer

God, true light and source of all light, may we recognize you in oppressed people and poor people, in homeless people and hungry people. May we be open to your Spirit that we may be a means of healing, strength and peace for all your people. We ask this through Jesus, your son and our brother. Amen.

Resources for the Christian Practice of Transforming the World

Study Bibles

Faith in Action Study Bible: Living God's Word in a Changing World. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
World Vision and Zondervan have produced the *Faith in Action Study Bible*, a tool intended to help Christians better understand God's heart for the world – and how they can participate in God's work. The *Faith in Action Study Bible* is designed to deepen readers' understanding of God's Word and cultivate a thoughtful, Christian lifestyle in a world challenged by violence, injustice, poverty, and conflict. The 2,336-page study Bible features the NIV translation and is supplemented by material based on World Vision's experience and passion for following Christ in word and deed. Study material includes essays by Mother Teresa, C.S. Lewis, John Calvin, Philip Yancey, Ron Sider, Max Lucado, Bill Hybels, Tony Campolo and Joni Eareckson Tada. More than 75 full-page articles and essays share practical advice, inspiring profiles, and insightful commentary on Bible passages. Over 175 individually designed in-text charts and graphs comment on the passages or provide current information and/or statistics on issues directly related to a particular verse or text. Teaching tools include informative graphics that show the impact of AIDS, poverty, health needs, and food crises in the world. There are extensive study guides on themes covered in various features and approximately 30 sets of reading tracks.

The Poverty and Justice Bible. New York: American Bible Society, 2008.
Almost every page of the Bible speaks of God's heart for the poor. His concern for the marginalized. His compassion for the oppressed. His call for justice. The *Poverty and Justice Bible* megaphones his voice as never before. The *Poverty and Justice Bible* (Contemporary English Version, CEV) highlight almost 3,000 verses in the scriptures to show that God has something to say about injustice and oppression. With bright orange highlighting, a quick glance is all you need to see that God cares about the poor – a lot. And at the core of the groundbreaking *Poverty and Justice Bible* are in-depth studies and practical suggestions on what we can do to tackle poverty and injustice in our world today. Includes a 32-page study guide.

Resources for Exploring Issues and Biblical Teaching for Transforming the World

Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth. Ilia Delio, O.S.F., Keith Douglass Warner, O.F.M., and Pamela Wood. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009.

Three Franciscan authors combine good science with solid theology and practical applications to develop a Franciscan spirituality of the earth following in the footsteps of Jesus with the guidance of St. Francis of Assisi. Four sections present 1) the relationship between the earth as God's creation and Jesus as the Incarnation of God, 2) the implication of Francis' Cantic of Creation for our time, 3) the role of contemplative prayer as a key to discovering Francis' awe and respect for creation, and 4) conversion in the Franciscan tradition. The authors propose ways in which we can all understand our own roles in relationship to the earth and ways in which we can make it better.

Hope Lives: A Journey of Restoration. Amber Van Schooneveld. Loveland, CO: Group Books, 2008.

Compassion changes everything: how you view the world...yourself...even Jesus. Produced in partnership with Compassion International, this five-week exploration of compassion touches

both the head and heart. And helps people discover and share God's heart for the poor. The book contains 25 daily readings, divided into five one-week segments. Each of the 25 daily readings includes Scriptural support for the author's arguments, a page for journaling responses to challenging questions about the day's reading, and a prayer asking God for guidance through the issue at hand. The five weeks include: Week 1: The Poverty of the Heart, Week 2: God is Not Silent, Week 3: Understanding Poverty, Week 4: Prayer, and Week 5: Be the Change.

[Also available from Group Books are a Children's Ministry Kit, a Youth Ministry Kit, and a Small Group Kit.]

Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope. Brian McLaren. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

How do the life and teachings of Jesus address the most critical global problems in our world today? In *Everything Must Change*, you will accompany Brian around the world on a search for answers. Along the way you'll experience intrigue, alarm, challenge, insight, and hope. You'll get a fresh and provocative vision of Jesus and his teachings. And you'll see how his core message can infuse us with purpose and passion to address the economic, environmental, military, political, and social dysfunctions that have overtaken our world. Jesus' message is more than a ticket to heaven or a formula for personal prosperity. It is an invitation to personal and global transformation. It is a radical challenge to the underlying stories that drive our suicidal systems-social, economic, and political. It invites us to imagine what would happen if people of faith moved beyond political polarization and a few hot-button issues to the deeper questions nobody is asking; if the world's leading nations spent less on weapons and more on peace-making, poverty-alleviation, and creation-care; if a renewed understanding of Jesus and his message sparked a profound spiritual awakening in a global movement of faith, hope, and love; if we believed that God's will really could be done on earth and not just in heaven. If you are hungry for a fresh vision of what it means to be a person of faith, *Everything Must Change* applies the good news of Jesus to a world in need, igniting a revolution of hope that can change everything.

The Hole in Our Gospel: The Answer that Changed My Life and Might Just Change the World. Richard Stearns. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009.

Two thousand years ago, twelve people changed the world. Rich Stearns, president of World Vision, believes it can happen again. "Imagine a world in which two billion Christians embrace the whole gospel – each doing a part to complete God's stunning vision of a reclaimed and redeemed the world, the kingdom of God among us. Picture armies of compassion stationed in every corner of our world, doing small things with great love. Can you imagine this different vision for our world?" *The Hole in Our Gospel*, Stearns urges readers to ask the question. What if? What if all followers of Jesus looked beyond the walls of their churches and worked together in reclaiming the world for Christ's kingdom? What if we actually demonstrated God's love for the world instead of just talking about it? What if we embraced the whole gospel of loving God and loving our neighbor. Stearns shares compelling stories of the revolutionary power of the gospel – the gospel without a hole – that is truly good news for a world broken by poverty, disease, and injustice. This fresh look at the gospel will take you to a deeper understanding of your own faith and inspire you to do your part to demonstrate God's love for a hurting world.

Just Courage: God's Great Expedition for the Restless Christian. Gary A. Haugen. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008.

"There must be more to the Christian life than this – more than church each Sunday and waving to my neighbors and giving some clothes to Goodwill when I go through my closet each spring." These aren't bad things, of course. But they're safe and comfortable and easy. And

there's a reason they're not satisfying your desire for something more significant and meaningful--we're created by God for adventure. International Justice Mission president Gary Haugen has found that engaging in the fight for justice is the most deeply satisfying way of life. This book shows how we too can be a part of God's great expedition.

Living Peace: A Spirituality of Contemplation and Action. John Dear. New York: Image/Doubleday, 2004. John Dear calls us to become peacemakers "within our own broken hearts and broken families, in our bloody city streets and corrupt government offices, in the war zones and refugee camps." The first section of the book, "The Depths of Peace," covers ways to nurture peace in our hearts through solitude, silence, listening, letting go, and intimate prayer. In "The Heights of Peace: The Public Journey," Dear makes clear the high cost of speaking the truth, resisting evil, disarming the world, and working for justice. The life of peace excludes no one and will not abide reason, sexism, hate, and exclusionary actions. In "The Horizons of Peace," Dear challenges us to take seriously Jesus' call to love our enemies, build community, forgive seventy times seven, practice reconciliation, and live in hope. Throughout the book, the author pays tribute to the great peacemakers who have gone before us including St. Francis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, and Dorothy Day. Gandhi, one of the great souls and leaders of peace, once said: "When the practice of nonviolence becomes universal, God will reign on earth as God does in heaven."

Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action. J. Matthew Sleeth. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. Not long ago, J. Matthew Sleeth had a fantastic life and a great job as chief of the medical staff at a large hospital. He was living the American dream – until he saw an increasing number of his patients suffering from cancer, asthma, and other chronic diseases. He began to suspect that the Earth and its inhabitants were in deep trouble. Turning to Jesus for guidance, Sleeth discovered how the scriptural lessons of personal responsibility, simplicity, and stewardship could be applied to modern life. The Sleeths have since sold their big home and given away more than half of what they once owned. In *Serve God, Save the Planet*, Sleeth shares the joy of adopting a less materialistic, healthier lifestyle, stronger relationships, and richer spiritual lives. With the storytelling ease of James Herriot and the logical clarity of C. S. Lewis, Sleeth lays out the rationale for environmentally responsible life changes and a how-to guide for making those changes. *Serve God, Save the Planet* addresses the questions: How can I live a more godly, equitable, and meaningful life? How can I help people today and in the future? How can I be less materialistic? How can I live a more charitable life? What would happen if I led a slower-paced existence?

The Skeptic's Guide to Global Poverty by Dale Hanson Bourke. Colorado Springs: Authentic Books, 2007. Why are so many people still poor, and what – if anything – can be done to help them? Ranging from how poor people feel to ways governments keep their people poor, the book discusses various aspects of poverty and its affects. It also considers various approaches to solving issues relating to poverty, including child labor, malnutrition, sex trafficking, refugees, and national debt. It redefines current events such as the minimum wage, immigration issues, health insurance, and debt forgiveness. It helps explain many of the issues humanitarian organizations are seeking to address, such as infant mortality, food security, and child development, and will be a useful tool for donor education. Chapters include: The Basics, The Big Picture, Nature Versus Man, Unnatural Causes, The Players, US Poverty, and What Works.

Resources for Action

The Busy Family's Guide to Volunteering. Jenny Friedman. Beltsville, MD: Robins Lane Press, 2003.

Volunteering is an important way to cultivate compassion, gratitude, and empathy in children and to bring families together in meaningful ways. For busy parents who want to spend time with their kids while still contributing to their community, family volunteering is an opportunity to combine two commitments into one. This book is -perfect for every family because it offers flexibility – volunteer for long-term projects or one-time events. Whether you have a two-year-old or an eighteen-year-old, you'll find everything you need to know to have a fulfilling and fun volunteer experience, from finding the right opportunity for your family to answering hesitations you may have. The perfect book for families who want to do good things for their community, spend quality time together, and have fun!

Everybody Wants to Change the World: Practical Ideas for Social Justice. Tony Campolo and Gordon Aeschliman. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006,

All over the world – and in your community – people are lonely, hungry, sick, struggling to make ends meet, bitter, imprisoned, dying. Do you feel powerless to make a difference? You don't have to be helpless! From the simplest acts of kindness to more complex works of mercy, you'll find more than 100 practical ideas for compassionately responding to the needs of others. It's all here, from suggestions about working with the poor to honoring and assisting the elderly; helping immigrants assimilate and supporting the sick; respecting and serving the disabled, showing compassion to those in prison, and caring for the environment. You'll discover practical ways to begin making a difference in your community today, and helping others catch a vision for changing the world! A leader's guide makes this adaptable for group study, as well as individual reading. Jesus calls us to creatively and courageously share the good news by loving our neighbor. It's time to begin!

Growing Compassionate Kids: Helping Kids See Beyond Their Backyard. Jan Johnson. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2001.

Open a new world of possibilities for your kids, where making a difference for others becomes a way of life! *Growing Compassionate Kids* illustrates practical everyday ways for parents to help children develop empathy and seek justice in the world. As one reviewer says, "This book is a wonderful antidote to both 'compassion fatigue' and the frustrations of Christian parenting in a selfish society." Jan Johnson, a well-known author who deals with Christian spirituality, helps moms and dads and grandparents learn to incorporate social outreach and mission into the often-hecktic everyday realities of family life. When children see these living examples, they'll grow to be disciples of Christ and learn to consider others above self. "Teaching kids to care for people is one more way to teach our children to love God," writes the author. "A child growing in empathy is moving from isolation to connection, from self-centeredness to others-awareness, from hostility to hospitality." Couldn't the world use more people like that? There's no greater legacy we could leave to our kids and to humankind. Questions for reflection plus personal and family devotions are included in each chapter.

Our Day to End Poverty: 24 Ways You Can Make a Difference. Shannon Daley-Harris, Jeffrey Keenan, Karen Speerstra. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2007.

This book is organized around the typical activities of an ordinary 24-hour day and then showing how to see them as part of the path out of poverty. For example, making breakfast, taking the kids to school, and checking email are connected to addressing world hunger, making education available to all, and ensuring access to appropriate technology. The authors presents hundreds of steps we can take to combat poverty and all its attendant evils. The

chapters are designed to animate our ethical action behind the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which all deal with poverty-related problems. Our Day to End Poverty is divided into sections on morning, afternoon, and evening. Here are the topics covered in evening: Extend Hospitality and Create Community, Spread Literacy, Improve Transportation Options, Travel with a Purpose, Save the Lives of Mothers and Newborns, Improve Access to Clean Water, Increase International Development Aid, and Speak Up for Justice: More Thoughts on Advocacy.

Raising Kids Who Will Make a Difference – Helping Your Family Live with Integrity, Value Simplicity, and Care for Others. Susan V. Vogt. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002.

Raising kids to be socially conscious and embrace strong values can be difficult in today's world. In *Raising Kids Who Will Make a Difference*, mother, counselor, and family-life educator Susan Vogt sets out to inspire, equip, and comfort parents in the awesome task of raising Catholic kids who will make positive contributions to our world. Using a delightful blend of honesty and humor, Vogt offers successful parenting strategies and straightforward discussions on important issues such as sexuality, substance abuse, materialism, racism, global awareness, and death; and insights and tips for raising children to make a positive impact in our world. A unique aspect of this book are the contributions not only of parents but also the reflections of young adults on what influenced them to make decisions to serve others.

Teaching Kids to Care and Share: 300+ Mission and Service Ideas for Children. Jolene L. Roehlkepartain. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

This volume provides over 300 inventive, hands-on activities that involve children in service to one another, their churches and local communities, and the world. Within these pages, children's workers and leaders will find short and long-term active service/learning opportunities that encourage the youngest members of their congregation to follow Jesus' example of living their faith by caring for others. The book features: lively, age-appropriate projects and activities for 3- to 5-year-olds, 6- to 9-year-olds, and 10- to 12-year-olds; guidance for working with children of different ages and abilities; ready-to-use reproducible pages and a Scripture and topic index; and contact information for numerous national and international service organizations and programs that work with and relate to children

To Love Tenderly: Teaching Compassion and Justice Through Stories and Activities for Ages Five through Nine. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2005.

When people reach out to others whose lives are very different from theirs, understanding and appreciation begin. This child-and-adult book is designed to begin this process. Forty-four stories of children from all over the world (Pakistan, Guatemala, Latvia, Germany, Sudan, the United States, Brazil, China, and others) help readers come to feel a bond of friendship and care with their peers in faraway places. Some are based on real-life situations, others on folk tales. But they all introduce children to realities of poverty, injustice, and abuse of natural resources to help them develop a strong sense of identification with children all over the world.

To Walk Humbly: Teaching Compassion and Justice through Stories and Activities for Ages Ten through Thirteen. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007.

Anne Neuberger offers fifty-five wonderful stories from around the world to help young Catholics connect with the social, environmental, and economic problems of children around the globe. It encourages them to accept and think of these children as family, as sisters and brothers. Story topics include school life, child labor, cultural and religious celebrations, hunger, racism, poverty, sharing, generosity, and lifestyles.