



At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."

2 Corinthians 8:14-15

The Biblical Call

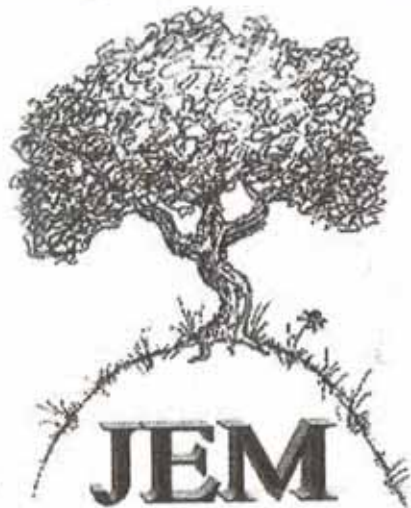
to the

Paradigm of Abundance

THE WORKS OF MERCY
FEED THE HUNGRY.
CLOTHE THE NAKED.
GIVE DRINK TO THE
THIRSTY. VISIT THE
IMPRISONED.
CARE FOR THE SICK.
BURY THE DEAD



by Heather Hollingsworth



Jubilee Economics Ministries (JEM) is a faith-based non-profit organization that was formed in 1999, planning for a new paradigm in a new century. The mission of JEM is to provide eye-opening education that facilitates real change toward a sustainable world with enough for all. JEM's vision is for another world that we believe is possible where we share resources fairly, reclaim the planet for future generations, hold sacred the interrelatedness of life, and live intentionally in peace and community in order that those with more will not have too much and those with less will not have too little – not someday, but now.



PREFACE

The Biblical Call to the Paradigm of Abundance

comes after I have spent the last months working with Jubilee Economics Ministries as an intern, learning what it is to make a small non-profit happen, searching for the truth about the situation in the world, even if it means finding out bad news, and discovering more hopeful ways to live and find joy in the world. The booklet came out of a request to rework a piece about the core of what JEM is about, as well as my own dwellings on the Bible's call for justice, a discovery of this paradigm of abundance, and the teachings of the Biblical Sabbath-Jubilee. Much of it came out of what I have learned in the past months of working with JEM, and the discoveries I have made about the world and about myself, though a lot of it has simply come out of who I am. I have continued to find more hopeful ways to live that do not simply fear the overwhelming capacities of the powers to create injustice in the world.

As I grow, I continue to ask myself, "What does it mean to truly live out my identity as a child of the Creator, for my whole lifestyle to be guided by my faith? What does it mean to love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength- with all my whole way of life, not just a compartmentalized "sacred" section of it?" I find some of these answers in understanding a paradigm of abundance.

I N T R O

What does it mean to **live abundantly**? As I read and reread the stories and poems and letters within the Christian Bible, the call to live according to a paradigm of abundance becomes more and more evident to me. The struggle of the Hebrew people to find release from their enslavement and form a just society among wealth-seeking empires, the honest and bare prayers of the psalters, the laments and protests of the prophets crying out for justice, the words and examples of Christ as incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, and the fumbling attempts of the early church to live out the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus among the Roman empire all reveal the ways in which God's people have been seeking abundant life, dependant on their Creator and responsible for one another.

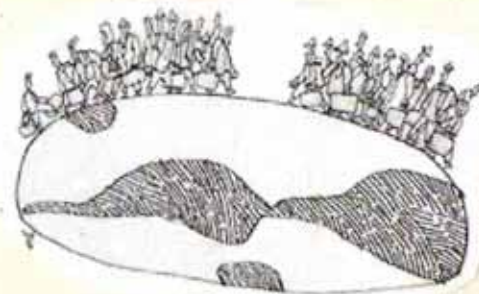
Living out a paradigm of abundance means trusting in God's enough, seeking peace and justice, living together in community in order that there is enough for all, restoring and living in harmony with the earth, and acting nonviolently to break the chains of oppression. This booklet is about looking at our future with hope and joy, seeking out another way to live that brings new life and love, and believing truly that another world is possible. This, I believe, is life abundant.

*I came that they may have
life, and have it abundantly.*

John 10:10

The abundance worldview disputes the predominant assumption of natural and economic scarcity, the belief that there are not enough resources in the world to provide for the needs of all people... and therefore some must have less while others have more.

Life is seen as a scramble to gather and horde more of the limited resources for one's self, family, community, or nation. The paradigm of abundance, in contrast, trusts in God's continuing creation and providence and recognizes the amazing productivity and abundance that come from the earth and the people within it. This worldview understands our call as that to be responsible for equality in distribution of the earth's resources in order to bring life to all people. Often, this means confrontation with the systems and institutions who unjustly allocate more to the few with power, while condemning the many to a life of poverty.



As we begin this journey, seeking to discover how the Christian Bible understands this paradigm of abundance, this living out of the Kingdom of God in today's society, we remember to read Scripture in its context, within the narrative of God's unimaginable love for

humanity. Every word tells the story of how our Mother God continues to draw the children she birthed back into her loving arms. It tells how God continues to gather the Hebrew people back time after time even after repeated unfaithfulness, pursuing them with kings and prophets; it describes God becoming incarnate so as to bring all nations to wholeness and unity in Himself.

And this is the same love we are called to - this unconditional, vibrant, dirty, sweaty, beautiful, real, honest, demanding love- a love that gives dignity and respect and that recognizes the image of God in each person. It is a love that comes from the example of God's love- which is incomprehensible, of unfathomable depths, a forever love that knows all of our weaknesses, insecurities, brokenness, sin - as well as all of our passions, dreams, and desires. So as we read within each book, chapter, or verse, let us keep in mind this greater context that shapes and enfolds it all... Divine love.

The outcome of pursuing a lifestyle of abundance within this story of Divine love is that there truly is enough for all. As the Deuteronomical law outlines a pattern of society for the people of Israel, and especially within the appeals for equality and redistribution within the Sabbath-Jubilee texts, the Hebrew people are given a way of life in which it is possible, and even natural, that "there should be no poor among you." And it is just as true today that when we live lifestyles of enough, following patterns of redistribution to direct our resources to those with less, sharing and living together communally, and seeking justice for our brothers and sisters in the third world with whom our lives are inextricably bound, we are able to live into the rich blessing God has promised us.



SAYING

“Enough”

At the root of living out the paradigm of abundance is learning to say “enough” in our lives instead of constantly accumulating more. When Jesus asks the rich young man to “sell everything you have and give to the poor,” he challenges the assumption that having more of the material is inherently good. When we seek only enough for today, we show that we believe that what God has provided is enough for all of us and that we trust in God to provide for us tomorrow, disputing the myth of scarcity, in which storing up goods for later is the only assurance that one will be taken care of in the future. Living in abundance means, like the Israelites in the story of the manna in the wilderness, gathering as much as we can, and truly desiring for God to give us only “this day our daily bread” rather than piling up “treasures on earth.” Because of greed, fear, and overconsumption, we have this great divide in wealth and so much poverty in the world: because some have taken more than they need, others do not have enough. Therefore, we are called to live in resistance to this culture of unending accumulation, to live simply, to share what we have and be generous when we have more than enough, remembering that the extra, perhaps, is not truly ours anyway.

16 They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. ¹ And the whole congregation of the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, ² and said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” ³ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or not. ⁴ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” ⁵ So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Is-

came up and covered the camp; and in the morning dew lay round about the camp. ¹⁴ And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather of it, every man of you, as much as he can eat; you shall take an omer apiece, according to the number of the persons whom each of you has in his tent.’” ¹⁷ And the people of Israel did so; they gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; each gathered according to what he could eat. ¹⁹ And Moses said to them, “Let no man leave any of it till the morning.”

Changing our paradigm to see the world in abundance also means redefining the way we understand blessing and wealth and “the good life.” Instead of finding value and understanding blessing as material and monetary wealth, we can take joy in the little things that truly bless our lives: in people and the earth, in each breath, in learning and enjoying one another. Instead of keeping busy with work and activities to buy the good life of the American dream, we can slow down to enjoy the beauty and vibrancy of a life that truly is good, filled with laughter and hugs, feeling the growth within us as we watch the earth produce growth or that of little children. As we invest in relationships and enjoy a beautiful day, we resist the lies of the popular media and advertising industries, who try to make us believe we won’t be happy unless we buy just one more trinket. Here, we find true wealth in caring for and being present to one another and finding wholeness in people and experiences.



Living in Community

As the early church struggled to live out the Kingdom of God on earth, it is clear that they expressed the worldview of abundance through life in community. Communal living, in all its myriad of different configurations, it is built on a mindset of interdependence instead of independence and on shared lives, patterns, and possessions. Living in community gives us the opportunity to find abundance by taking care of one another, sharing in daily life, helping to raise one another's children, sharing meals, and celebrating together. It means that we "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15), that we encourage one another to continue on, and that we constantly learn from and grow with one another as we communicate in ways that are honest, open, and vulnerable.

When we live with shared possessions, holding "all things in common," we again resist the society's cries for consumerism and accumulation of wealth.

Understanding our assets and possessions as belonging to the group rather than to the individual thwarts the system of concentration of wealth into the hands of only a few. In order for the communal life to result in a redistribution of wealth, though, it is important that our communities include those of all economic classes, and specifically to be in community with the poor. In each of the feasts and festivals of the Pentateuch, the Israelites are reminded to celebrate with "your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst..." (Deut 16:11), and Jesus was repeatedly chastised for "eating with the tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 9:11). As we follow these examples, we begin to see humanity through God's eyes, valuing all people as equal children of God, of infinite worth, deserving of dignity and respect. It is not charity, but love and community that we need, caring for one another as for our own family, because we all belong to the family of God. We are called to live with an open hand and a loose hold on our possessions, lending without asking in return and sharing our abundance.

When we redefine blessing and wealth and learn to see the abundance in our lives, we are often moved to celebrate the experiences, milestones, and relationships that bring us joy and growth, rejoice in the Creator's providence for our lives and in the land, and remember the ways in which God has been faithful in the past. Rejoicing and celebration are essential to the paradigm of abundance both because of their ability to remind us of the ways we are already blessed and because they give us the chance to release our grasp on the material things we have come to possess. As we take time for creativity and nature, prayer and meditation, music and ritual, integrating these practices into our daily lives, we rejoice in the wholeness of life, reflecting on its fullness and finding joy in recognizing the small blessings. Deuteronomy 14 describes the tithe as a celebration of the sacred earth and its bounty honoring God's faithfulness, a time of joy, dancing, feasting, laughter, and love, rather than of solemn duty while passing the offering plate. The tithe is a party to which all are invited that recognizes the abundance of what God has created and provided for us.



As we take time to slow down and celebrate and use our resources for feasts and tithe-parties to rejoice in God's providence, we resist the accumulation of wealth and learn to hold loosely the things of this world. Instead of hoarding the material possessions we come to own, we release their hold on us by trusting God to provide for tomorrow and today sharing what we have with our friends and family, remembering always to include "the Levites... and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns..." (Deut. 14:29)

his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. ²⁴But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), ²⁵then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. ²⁶Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. ²⁷And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own.

²⁸At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, ²⁹so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.



REJOICING
AND
CELEBRATION



The feasts and festivals in the Pentateuch gave the Israelites cause to remember who they were, where they'd come from, the blessings they'd received, and the miracles of God in their past. Through rituals, traditions, feasts, stories, and songs, we remember milestones that have marked times of growth or coming of age, the ways in which God has acted on our behalf in the past, and the true source of the abundance that feeds and sustains us. When we celebrate, we pass down these stories, values, and pieces of wisdom to future generations, teaching them to trust in God's goodness and providence daily.

equality

In a worldview of enough for all, God's love calls for equality and cooperation rather than domination in power and wealth. The prevailing concentration of wealth in society and the rich-poor gap that has resulted from it lead to imbalanced, power-driven relationships. These broken relations cannot stand in God's love, and are addressed in the Sabbath-Jubilee texts of the Pentateuch. Equality in wealth and possessions, so that none is in poverty and all have the basic needs of a home, food, a just wage, and healthcare, is the only economic system in which we can really say with confidence and integrity that we love our neighbor. God's commands are for systems put into society that continually balance the power structures and bring wealth back to equilibrium, especially through the canceling of debts, release of captives, and redistribution of land.



The Year for Canceling Debts

15 At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. ²This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the LORD's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. ³You may require

According to the law given to the Hebrews in Deuteronomy, the brokenness that stems from a debtor-debtee relationship cannot be upheld for more than seven years. Forgiveness of debts reminds us to lend without seeking anything in return, challenges us to hold loosely our possessions, and brings reconciliation to our relationships and restoration to equality in our communities and society. Instead of charging exorbitant interest rates thereby furthering the wealth divide, canceling debts brings equality and abundance.

Freeing Servants

¹²If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, is sold to you and he serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. ¹³And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. ¹⁴Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. ¹⁵Remember that



The master-servant relationship, too, brings an inequality that must end after seven years. Instead of continuing on in this broken and disparate state indefinitely, the Hebrew people are called to release their slaves and servants and "supply him liberally..." There, the playing field is leveled, and the Israelites get another chance for equality in resources and to live in abundance for all.



Just as in the Sabbath (seventh) year with the release of debts and captives, the focus of the year of Jubilee is to bring equality among the people of God. The hierarchical relationship of class division brings competition and dysfunction between the people of God. The Jubilee year, every 50th year, was a time of redeeming and redistributing land back to the tribe or family of original ownership. If in only 50 years, wealth can become so concentrated as to require a reset for justice and right relationships to be in reality, you can better understand the vastness of the rich-poor gap that exists in our world. Finding a way to redistribute wealth brought another chance of life for those who had been cheated and oppressed.



Sabbath

Finding joy in the Sabbath reveals the paradigm of abundance by providing an opportunity for rest, restoration, and rejoicing, and by resisting the urge to constantly be making money in order to get ahead, instead allowing for time to go by that is not economically productive. In honoring the Sabbath each week, we give our workers and ourselves a chance to rest and be refreshed. We move away from the hectic and busy way of life so prevalent in our society and take time to simply be- in solitude, with God, and with others. Sabbath gives us a chance to heal from the greed of society, reflect on and remember the beauty and sacredness of life, give praise to God for the abundant providence She has birthed, and express our experience of the world in art, music, prayer, and ritual.

In honoring the Sabbath year, the Hebrew people gave the land a chance to rest, honored the sacredness of the earth to provide what they needed, and were given a way in which to provide for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. During the Sabbath year, the people honored the sacred interrelatedness of life by allowing the land to heal itself, not sowing or pruning, but letting it grow free.



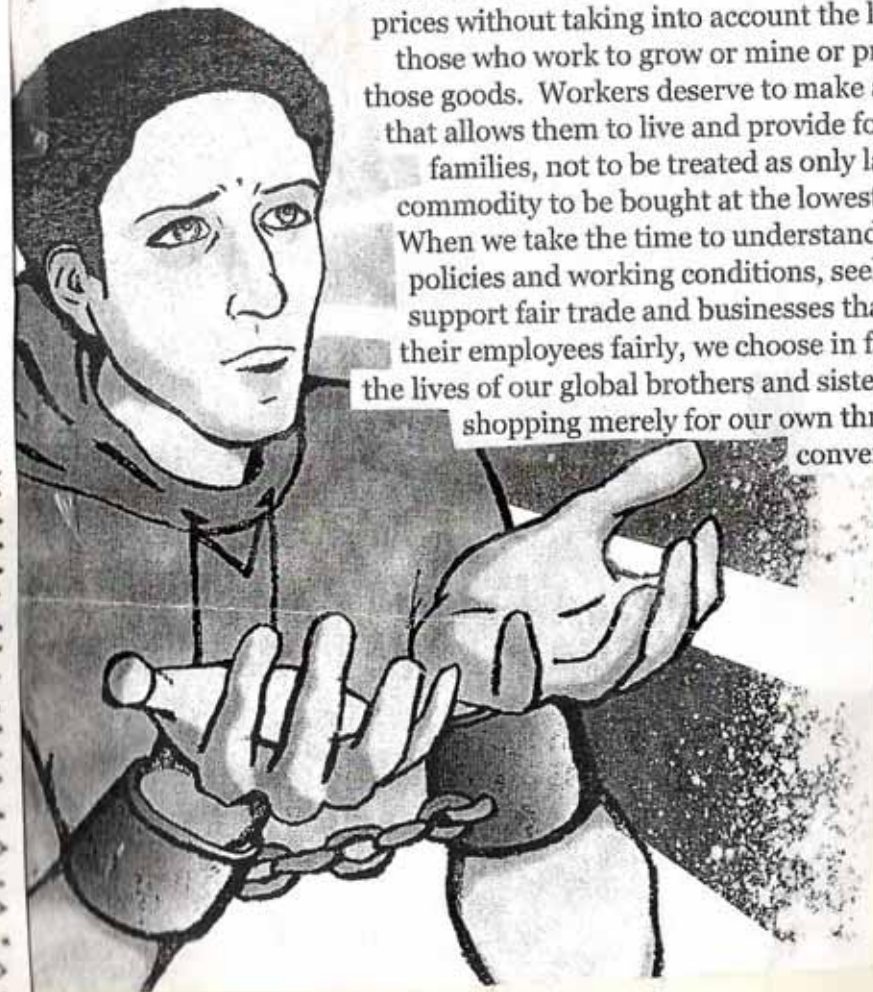
Our call to live in harmony with the earth, recognize our connection to it and dependence upon it, and live up to our responsibility to it begins in Genesis, when God says of the earth He has created, "It is good." Our unbreakable connection to the earth begins at our inception, when "the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." (Gen. 2:7) We learn to see God's image as Creator in all that is around us when we recognize that the things of nature have existed outside humanity's touch for many generations and have grown only to be alive and give perfect worship to God. Instead of viewing these natural wonders as dead commodities of value only in our human use, we find life and abundance in changing our perspective to that of awe, respect, and joy for the natural world and finding a commitment to care for it.

Care for the Orphan, Widow, and Stranger

In order to create a world where abundance and enough for all are a reality, we are called to act as advocates for the trampled-upon ones in society who are often alone and voiceless. Those who are left without a caretaker, without a home, or without a community are often oppressed because of their vulnerability. Rather than taking advantage of their weaknesses with low wages, unequal education, and insufficient healthcare, in order to direct more wealth to ourselves, we have an opportunity to treat all people as equal and beautiful creations of a Divine Artist, worthy of dignity and respect. We are called to take in those left without a provider and care for them as our own family.

Care for the orphan, widow, and stranger is a theme that weaves throughout Scripture. Hebrew law intentionally created provisions for those especially vulnerable, asking the Israelites to provide for them through their tithes and celebrations, as part of the Sabbath year, in the release of captives (sold into slavery because of poverty), and by leaving the gleanings of their crops for those in need or traveling. The prophets cry out for justice, freedom from oppression, and advocates for the vulnerable ones in society. The Christian New Testament carries these themes in Jesus' preferential treatment of the poor and in the early church's provision for widows. We are called to act without partiality, to treat all with love, to show hospitality and comfort for those with fewer advantages, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and housing the homeless, both as direct acts of mercy and by acting to change systems and institutions.

JUSTICE for the Worker



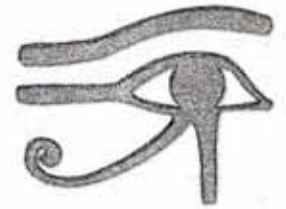
A life committed to a worldview of abundance is lived in resistance to the exploitation of the worker. In order for there to be enough for all, we must be sure that workers, in our own community and globally, are given a just wage and access to affordable housing and healthcare. How can we hope for our neighbors to rise out of poverty if we continue to demand their goods and resources, yet pay them only poverty wages? Western society demands the products of third-world nations for the most "competitive" prices without taking into account the lives of those who work to grow or mine or produce those goods. Workers deserve to make a wage that allows them to live and provide for their families, not to be treated as only labor, a commodity to be bought at the lowest price. When we take the time to understand social policies and working conditions, seeking to support fair trade and businesses that treat their employees fairly, we choose in favor of the lives of our global brothers and sisters over shopping merely for our own thrift and convenience.

OPENING

The fullness of an abundant life leads us to a calling, like Jesus, "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind." (Luke 4:18) As we encourage others to see the world through a paradigm of abundance, we have a chance to offer sight to those who are blind to the realities of injustice ingrained in our society today and to bring release to those who are imprisoned by predominant systems and ideologies.

In order to open the eyes of others, we first seek to see the world through God's eyes – to understand the Truth in what is going on around us, truly seeing the misery and oppression of our global brothers and sisters and understanding the injustices behind it. God promises time and again that He sees the suffering and affliction and oppression of His people and hears their cries. Our God knows us, in our weaknesses and brokenness, in our addictions and hurt, in our subjugation and humiliation, and loves us, desiring a life for us that is full and vibrant and abundant. Seeing through God's eyes also means that we see this beauty and the brokenness in all people—instead of seeing "good" people and "bad" people, we see God's creations, who despite hurt, weaknesses, and insecurities, have hope and potential for great things.

EYES



Jeremiah rebukes the false prophets that had they warned the people, they would have been turned "from their evil ways and from their evil deeds," (Jer. 23:22) but instead the false prophets supported the status quo and the people continued in their unjust ways. Now, too, if we know the unjust ways of our selves, neighbors, nation, and world, we must use our prophetic voices to open eyes and bring hope of a new way of living that is not built on oppression and injustice. It is our call as the church, living as the Kingdom of God, to be "a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind," (Is. 42:6-7) to tell the Truth and open eyes to God's call to justice and the reality of the grave injustices that surround us in our daily life as well as the hope for another way of living.



We cannot help but open eyes when we live out our values as a people of vision and action, daring to seek more hopeful ways to live, act nonviolently to end oppression and injustice, and resist accumulation of wealth. We can see that there is hope and possibility for the future and believe that another world is possible, seeing a wider vision of what the world could look like. We live with eyes open, knowing that our actions do matter, that we can be a part of change, and that another way of life is possible that seeks hope, love, and justice.

RESOURCES

Additional Bible Passages by Section:

Saying Enough:

Exodus 16, Matthew 6:9-13

Living in Community:

Acts 2:43-47, Acts 4:32-37

Rejoicing and Celebration:

Exodus 13:3-10, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 8:11-20, Deuteronomy 14:22-28

Equality:

Exodus 21:1-7, Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15, Jeremiah 34:8-22

Sabbath:

Genesis 1-2, Exodus 23:10-12, Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Justice for the Worker:

Leviticus 19:13

Care for the Orphan, Widow, and Stranger:

Exodus 10:9-10, Exodus 18:8-12, Leviticus 19:9-10, Isaiah 58

Opening Eyes:

Exodus 3:7-10, 17; Exodus 6:2-8, Isaiah 61, Luke 4:16-20

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Global Exchange: <http://www.globalexchange.org/>
Intentional Communities Website: <http://www.ic.org/>
Interfaith Worker Justice: <http://www.iwj.org/>
Jubilee USA Network: <http://www.jubileeusa.org/>

Even as I have written this piece and reflected on the ways I have been transformed into the person I am and how I have come to look at the world through another worldview, I have realized that there are very few concrete sources that have shaped my thinking. Instead, my journey has taken me where it has because of the people who have spoken into my life and the experiences that have taught me along the way. I have learned so much from simply being in community with wise and diverse people, from many exciting conversations about what life could be like, and from jumping in with both feet and trying to live out what I believe. Although I don't know what all it entails, I know that the life I want to seek is one that follows Christ, imitates an ever-loving God, and seeks hopeful and vibrant ways of being in the world. Although it is scary and risky, and there is always sacrifice, the gain has always been so much greater, and the experience is entirely life-giving. So more than anything, I encourage you to jump in wherever you can, take the risk, and love people. They will change you just by being around them- and you will change them as well.



Jubilee Economics Ministries (JEM) is a faith-based non-profit organization that exists to provide eye-opening education that facilitates real change toward a sustainable world with enough for all. You can receive copies of these booklets, inquire about other resources, and learn about the popular education experiences offered by contacting one of JEM's centers of coordination:

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