

2024–2025 Presbyterian Women/*Horizons* Bible Study

Workshop for Leaders

By Sarah Leer

Let Justice Roll Down

God's Call to Care for Neighbors and All Creation

What is this?

A lesson plan for leaders who introduce this Bible study to any group.

Who will find it helpful and why?

The Workshop for Leaders is written for PW Bible study leaders who are preparing to lead study groups, pastors and educators who will encourage and prepare others to lead, and presbyteries introducing the study to their congregations. It provides

- a foundational background for the study's content,
- a description of the design of the Suggestions for Leaders,
- activities for getting to know the lessons and building enthusiasm for *Let Justice Roll Down*.

What can you expect participants to learn?

Depending on the activities selected, participants will

- articulate what it means to be committed to care for creation, and to be involved in care for our world,
- have a deeper understanding of the complexity and intersectionality of what it means to “do justice” through the lens of Biblical texts,
- understand the structure of the study lessons and of the Suggestions for Leaders.
- find resources provided to support leaders and Bible study participants and
- state their discoveries about the study and articulate how they can advocate for environmental justice locally and globally.

Room Set-up

The most helpful set-up will be tables with six to eight chairs. Participants at these tables will have their study materials and notebook in front of them; these groups can naturally serve as small groups during discussion and activities.

Consider the time you have available, your context, and the particular resources you want to highlight, and choose the activities you will use from this workshop.

Materials Needed

Optional: Before the workshop, contact participants and ask them to bring a snack for the group to share. (Ask about dietary restrictions and allergies.) This is a model for the potluck-style snacks of Lesson Three.

- A copy of the study for each participant
- Strips of multi-colored construction paper
- Pens, markers
- Stapler
- Bibles
- Individual internet-connected devices, or a way to show videos to the group
- An easel pad, newsprint, and a marker (or something similar)
- Equipment to play the song, “For Everyone Born” (video w/lyrics: [youtube.com/watch?v=hmUlJvzRal4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmUlJvzRal4))
- Lyrics to “For Everyone Born.” Hymn 769 in *Glory to God* or online at hopepublishing.com/find-hymns-hw/hw9008_37.aspx.
- Equipment to show the online images at kellylatimoreicons.com/pages/gallery or print them prior to the workshop.

Workshop Lesson Plan

Welcome and Introductions

Welcome participants, introduce yourself, and thank them for preparing themselves or other leaders to explore this year's Bible study that examines environmental justice and injustice in our world. Let them know you will be discussing topics that are often politicized, however, in reality, they are issues of survival for everyone, particularly the marginalized in our world, are deeply relevant in our society, and are grounded in Scripture.

Opening Prayer

(adapted from Lesson Nine)

Creator God, you form us, shape us, teach us and challenge us. Help us to aim for the greatest wholeness for the greatest number of people, to aim for a world in which the interests of a few are not allowed to harm the safety and livelihood of the many. Help us to see your presence in every part of creation and to honor, protect, and restore it. Amen.

Main Idea

In the Bible, the word "justice" is used throughout—in the Hebrew Scriptures, the works of the prophets, in the Gospels, and in epistles. In recent decades in the U.S., "social justice" has become politicized and used as a badge of honor for some, and a derogatory term for others. However, justice and restoration with the marginalized are at the heart of God's call to serve all nations.

As the prophet Micah names, our call to "do justice" is a call for global justice. Exploring environmental justice reminds us of that fact. We all share global resources of food, air, water, and land. The care (or lack of care) for creation and climate in one corner of the world affects all others. The call to examine ourselves and our impact on this planet is crucial to our lives as followers of Christ. If we claim to love God and love neighbor, then we must exhibit that care and love through sustainable action. If we are to care for creation, then we must first acknowledge the impact unjust practices have had on Indigenous peoples and other marginalized and oppressed peoples.

We are called to follow Christ's example to be in solidarity with those on the margins; therefore, we must change our behavior so that our actions reflect our

intent. If we participate in restorative action and follow Christ's example that is found throughout Scripture, justice will be at the heart of our life and work together as Christians.

Justice in Art and Song (20 minutes)

Distribute the lyrics of "For Everyone Born." As your opening activity, focus everyone by playing the hymn.

After the song concludes, introduce a modified version of the breath prayer from Lesson Five.

Place one hand on your belly and the other on your heart, breathe in and out normally and feel the importance of breath. Breathe in and think to yourself "thank you" and breathe out and think "help us" as a prayer of gratitude to God for our breath and for God's spirit that resides in us. Breathe in and think "thank you for this time to learn more about ourselves and our call in this world" and breathe out and think "help us to guide and serve others." Do this for two breath cycles. Close the prayer with two more rounds of the "thank you" and "help us" breath cycle and then invite the group to come back together, eyes open.

Ask participants to introduce themselves and share at their tables if anything about "For Everyone Born" made them think differently, and what it means for everyone born truly to be free and experience equity and justice. Give time for people to share with the large group.

To introduce the theme of this study, ask participants to get into groups of two or three and ask each other the following questions. Make sure each participant has a chance to share in their pair/triad. Give these groups adequate time for discussion.

Questions:

Share two social justice issues/unjust situations in the world today you are passionate about and why.

What Biblical and scriptural images come to mind when you hear the words justice or injustice?

Justice Makers (15 minutes)

Ask participants: *What does a person need to do to become a saint? If you had the authority, which activists,*

peacemakers, and agents of justice would you bestow sainthood upon?

Invite everyone to use their internet-connected device (or share with a neighbor) to look up the website, kellylatimoreicons.com/pages/gallery. Then ask them to choose three or four icons and discuss the following in small groups at their tables:

- What do you know about this person?
- How does this image make you feel?
- Why do you believe this person is depicted as a modern-day icon?

Ask the group to share the qualities of agents of justice. (They can refer to the iconography activity or cite qualities of others.) Summarize the qualities on newsprint and tell participants to keep these qualities in mind when they are exploring the study.

Justice in Scripture (30 minutes)

Direct participants to the Introduction to the study and encourage them to read it carefully before they lead the study.

The author begins with an important point. Ask the participants: *Why has the PC(USA) been committed so strongly to other areas of social justice, but environmental justice remains, in the author's words, "overlooked"?*

Next, invite participants to move around the room and form new pairs/triads. Have each pair/triad take two passages of Scripture and rewrite them as it pertains to social issues of today.

Suggested passages:

- Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (Lesson 6)
- Ecclesiastes 3:9–15 (Lesson 6)
- Luke 12:16–21 (Lesson 6)
- Deuteronomy 15:7–11 (Lesson 7)
- Isaiah 2:15 (Lesson 9)
- Psalms 104 (Lesson 9)

After rewriting the passage to reflect today's social issues, ask them to direct the message to one audience from each group below.

Group 1:

- Interfaith leaders gathering
- Session meeting

- Children's ministry event
- Youth retreat

Group 2:

- Prison ministry
- Majority refugee or immigrant audience
- Multi-ethnic, multi-racial ecumenical leaders meeting
- Meeting of faith leaders to discuss the lack of affordable housing and gentrification
- Gathering with indigenous leaders to discuss land and water rights

Ask the pairs/triads to share their passages with the entire group. Then, discuss these follow-up questions.

- Did you rewrite the Scriptures differently depending on your audience? Why or why not?
- How did it feel to direct the meaning of the text to different audiences? What tensions or discomfort did this bring up for you?

It is important for the leaders of this study to understand their context in order to dive deeply into how environmental injustice intersects with the attitudes, ethos, and cultures of the people in their communities. Invite participants to turn to the Table of Contents in the Bible study. Divide the lessons and assign one or two for each pair/triad. Ask them to read through the lesson and prepare the following:

- The main idea
- Meaningful insights from the lesson
- A scripture passage to highlight

Ask the participants to present this lesson in the format of a social media post intended for their own contexts. Encourage them to think about:

- How would you promote this lesson on Instagram/ TikTok/Facebook? What would you highlight?
- What do you know about your context that would help people understand environmental justice as the author has outlined it?

Invite the participants to present their social media "post" to the larger group.

Suggestions for Leaders (10 Minutes)

Ask participants to find a Suggestions for Leaders page for any session. Note that the format for each suggestions page will make a leader's planning easier. List the six sections and their purpose, as follows:

Welcome and Prayer—the welcome and prayer gathers the group as well as acclimates them to the main theme of the lesson

Centering Activity on Main Theme—this activity grounds the group, giving them time to focus and relate the main theme to their own lives

Engaging the Text—connects the main theme to particular scripture passages

Engaging the World—asks participants to focus on the larger systemic connections we have to environmental justice

Commitment— specific calls to action related to each lesson

Closing Prayer—the closing prayer from each lesson of the study is used

Resources in the Study

Find the About pages for an introduction to the writers of the study and Suggestions for Leaders, and the artist.

Find the Lesson Scope and Sequence. This list of the lessons with their scriptures and main ideas can be a helpful tool for giving an overview of the whole Bible study.

Discussion Questions are a part of each lesson. Spend time becoming familiar with the questions so you can help guide your leaders if they need additional prompts.

An Action Item is included at the end of each lesson and several lessons include a map as a resource. Action Items are also listed in the Suggestions for Leaders, so encourage participants to take the action items seriously, but also offer encouragement to tackle them piece by piece. Acknowledge that many people are

overscheduled in their daily lives and these action items are intended to aid in reducing harm and avert apathy. Large, systemic injustices can sometimes overwhelm participants, so focus on the hope we encounter when we take any action, even if it seems small.

Partners in the Work of Justice (10 minutes)

Ask the group:

- What barriers do you anticipate in leading this study?
- What is exciting about leading this study?

This Bible study challenges us to dig deeply into our own complicity around apathy or inaction connected to environmental justice. Readers will need to face atrocities and tragedies committed against Indigenous people, the earth, and the natural resources we share. This study helps us face difficult realities through the lens of Scripture, but frustration, denial, or shame may arise. Encourage everyone to read for the hope embedded within each of the lessons.

As this study is grounded in action, encourage participants to form pairs and exchange contact information so they can be support systems for each other. This study reminds us that environmental justice is a group project. Encourage the pairs to reach out to each other for sharing their thoughts and feelings, suggesting resources they've come across and leaning on each other when and if this work becomes challenging.

Working to Bring About Justice (15 minutes)

Remind the participants that we all are part of systems of injustice, and though we are complicit, we can personally pledge to work to reduce harm every day.* Ask the participants to make commitments in their everyday lives, remembering that they don't have to be perfect and that they can be small, consistent acts. Allow time for reflection and invite them to share at their tables if they wish.

Note *This idea is inspired by my doctoral work at Columbia Seminary with Dr. Christine J. Hong.

I will work to protect the created world we share by _____

 _____.

I will work to honor the land we live on and its Indigenous inhabitants by _____

 _____.

I will work to honor the food I provide to others and to myself by _____

 _____.

I will work to honor water by _____

 _____.

I will work to honor the air we breathe by _____

 _____.

I will share the warnings of climate change by _____

 _____.

I will work to reduce suffering by _____

 _____.

I will work to reduce harm for future generations by _____

 _____.

I will commit to this sustainable practice to care for the earth and others: _____

 _____.

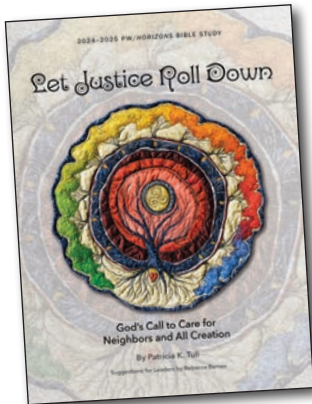
Give each participant a strip of construction paper and ask them to write down at least one of their commitments on it. Staple the strips of paper into interlocking rings until you have made a chain of commitments. Display the chain.

Closing Prayer

End your time with the closing prayer from Lesson Nine. It is a beautiful summation of the study in its entirety:

God who creates and recreates, renew our vision and invigorate our souls, that we may both see and seek the world you desire for all. Help us translate hope into daily actions in the corner of the earth that we call home. Amen.

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Let Justice Roll Down
God's Call to Care for Neighbors and All Creation

by Patricia K. Tull

with Suggestions for Leaders
 by Rebecca Barnes

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- *Let Justice Roll Down* Companion DVD; choose disc set; item HZN24103; \$20; or download, item HZN24104, \$20 (visit presbyterianwomen.org/shop to purchase and download). Invite the author to your study with this video series! Patricia Tull introduces the study and each of the nine lessons (about 7–11 minutes per lesson).
- Workshop for Leaders; item HZN24101; download only; presbyterianwomen.org/bible-study/justice
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Summer 2024	Lessons 1 and 2
September/October 2024	Lessons 3 and 4
November/December 2024	Lessons 5 and 6
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March/April 2025	Lesson 9

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