

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The article *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community* brings forth the major themes in David Korten's new book of the same name. In order to explore these ideas further we encourage you to read the book in its entirety and form a study group if possible. A five-session discussion guide for the book can be downloaded at www.greatturning.org.

You can also use this article and the questions below for one-session discussion of the main themes of the book. Our hope is that your discussions not only plumb the intellectual understanding of the ideas in *The Great Turning* but also contribute to a global awakening by connecting the influences of Empire to your personal experiences.

Several questions are offered but it is unlikely your group will be able to address each one. We encourage you to decide, with the help of your group, which of the questions provided will produce the most stimulating discussion or, if you prefer, create your own questions.

SUGGESTED FORMAT

The format below is for a two-hour session. It includes questions for "whole group" discussion of the large issues "and dyad" questions stimulate reflection at a more personal level.

Welcome (5 minutes): A simple ritual at the beginning of the session can help to set a welcome tone and center participants. It could be a several minutes of silence, asking each participant to share an opening question from the heart, and/or a candle lighting ceremony.

Whole Group Discussion (45 minutes): Set a tone by going over the guidelines for conducting a successful discussion (below) Having the guidelines written on a large piece of paper or white board is recommended. Your discussions can be conducted as a back and forth dialogue or by going around the circle clockwise and having each person express their ideas while others listen. You can also go "popcorn" style, which allows people to speak when they are ready.

Dyad Discussions (45 minutes): Ask the group to break up in groups of two, and to choose someone new each session. We suggest that this time not be for dialogue, but instead as a time of focused listening. Allow at least 5 minutes per person, per question, depending on which questions you choose. This should give you enough time for 3 to 4 questions and requires some good timekeeping on behalf of the facilitator. We suggest giving participants 30 seconds notice when it is time to switch speakers.

Debrief (20 minutes): As a whole group, use this time to cull the learning that has come from the evening's exploration of both whole group discussions and dyads.

Closing (5 minutes): End much the way you started with some silent time, words of appreciation, or blowing out the candles.

Guidelines for conducting a successful discussion:

- Listen compassionately.
- Honor and respect each person's contribution.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Avoid criticism and persuasion and agree to disagree.
- Be aware of how often and long you speak.
- Seek to understand and learn.
- Make sure everyone has a chance to talk.

QUESTIONS

Whole Group Discussion

- How does the framework of Empire and Earth Community help us understand the world we live in?

- What is your reaction to Korten's premise that Empire has reached the limits of the exploitation that people and Earth can handle? How can individuals and communities respond to this potential crisis?
- Share examples from recent mass media stories and commentary that reinforce the prosperity, security, and meaning stories of Empire. Have you ever called in or written to the editor to challenge these stories?
- As a nation, how do we deny the reality and consequences of our country's history?
- What evidence do you see of a global awakening in your community, region, nation and world?
- What are the new stories of prosperity, security and meaning grounded in Earth Community principles that speak to you?

Dyads

- What are the stresses on your family and how can you trace the difficulties to imperial institutions?
- What fears do you have about the "perfect economic storm" and how do you deal with them?
- How do you nurture your connection to Earth and how does this connection act as a moral compass for the choices you make in your life?
- How do your life choices contribute to tipping the cultural balance in favor of either Earth Community or Empire?
- Describe your own journey of cultural and/or spiritual awakening? How has it affected your relationships with those around you?
- What have you learned about how to reach out to people with different political views to discuss common values and build consensus?