

Discovering a Sense of Place

An 8- or 9-Session Discussion Circle for the Home, Faith Center or Workplace

Purpose

∞ To understand the meaning of a bioregional perspective, and what it would mean to develop one.

∞ To consider the benefits of consciously developing an intimate relationship with your place.

∞ To explore what it might mean to protect the place we live.

"I am amazed at the connections – internal and external – I am making as a result of taking this course... connecting with the land, with people and with myself."

- Discovering a Sense of Place participant



Session Themes

1. A Sense of Place: Wendell Berry, America's best-known bioregionalist, says *if you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are*. With a sense of place, your identity is defined— to a significant extent— by the natural features of the place you live. Without a sense of place, what will fill the void?

2. Responsibility to Place: There is a difference between living *on* the land and dwelling *in* it—understanding its rhythms, its potential, and its limits. Those who develop intimacy with a place over time tend to accept responsibility for it.

3. Knowing Your Bioregion: Your bioregion is a unique place with its own watershed, soils, climate, plants, animals, and history. How much do you know about it?

4. Living in Place: Living in place means consciously trying to satisfy your needs and find your pleasures in your local bioregion and working to assure the long-term health of the bioregion.

5. Mapping Your Place: Mapping can be learned by local groups and individuals to give a new sense of place. A typical map shows political subdivisions and transportation routes. A bioregional map delineates regions based on watersheds, climate, and plant types—and helps people relate to their natural surroundings.

6. Building Local Community: A bioregionalist assumes responsibility for the health and continuity of a place, not only its natural features, but also the social bonds of its people.

7. Empowerment: Knowing a place can inspire and empower one to take action to preserve it or take part in its restoration. How important is individual and group action in modern society?

8. Wrap-up

For information on how to join or start a Discovering a Sense of Place discussion circle in MD or DC, please visit www.simplicity-matters.org/info



Simplicity Matters Earth Institute

Simple living for a sustainable future

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Readings and Excerpts

1. A SENSE OF PLACE

“Living Where You Live” by Hannah Holmes ♦
“The Sense of Place” by Wallace Stegner ♦
“Everybody’s Ditch” by Robert Pyle ♦ “The
Spirit of Place” by Wade Davis ♦ “Earth
Stories” by Joseph Meeker ♦ “My Empty Lot”
by Joseph Kastner

2. RESPONSIBILITY TO PLACE

“The Land Ethic” by Aldo Leopold ♦
“Rediscovery of North America” by Barry Lopez
♦ “Homeplace” by Scott Russell Sanders
♦ “Notes on Living Simply in the City” by
Marilyn Welker

3. KNOWING YOUR BIOREGION [Use “Watching the River Flow” Local Supplement.]

“Initiation” by Tom Jay ♦ “Where Currents
Merge” by Steve Johnson ♦ “Valley of Long
Grasses” by Peter Boag ♦ “Sauvie Island” by
Florence Riddle ♦ “Geology of Portland” by
Marshall Gannett

4. LIVING IN PLACE

“The Politics of Place” by Daniel Coleman ♦
“Reinhabiting California” by Peter Berg and
Raymond Dasmann ♦ “Speaking for Douglas
Fir” by Gary Snyder ♦ “Green Cities” by Peter
Berg ♦ “Gardening at the Seam” by Judith

Larner Lowry ♦ “There’s No Specialization like
Home” by John Bullard ♦ “Place-Centered
Economics” by Chris van Daalen ♦ “Reweaving
Our Soul Connection with Food” by Paul
Conrad

5. MAPPING YOUR BIOREGION

“Mapping the Biosphere” by Gene Marshall ♦
“Mapping the Sacred Places” by Jan DeBlieu ♦
“Raise the Grates” by Sabrina Merlo

6. BUILDING LOCAL COMMUNITY

“The Web of Life” by Scott Russell Sanders ♦
“Back to We” by Amitai Etzioni ♦ “To Learn the
Things We Need to Know” by Freeman House
♦ “Community-Based Restoration” by Christine
Schneider ♦ “Cohousing” by Diane
Meisenhelter ♦ “Help Groups” by Steve
Whitson ♦ Neighborhood connections
worksheet

7. EMPOWERMENT

“Making a Difference” by Katrina Shields
♦ “The Power of One” by Sharif Abdullah ♦
“Church Creek” by Steve Yates ♦ “Push for
Change” by Ann Sihler ♦ “Leatherbacks “ by
The Giraffe Project ♦ “Facts About Geese” by
Angeles Arrien

8. WRAP-UP. Evaluation and Next Steps

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