



THE CONTENTMENT PROJECT

UTILITIES

Globally, more than 883 million people live in water poverty, while the average American uses up to 150 gallons a day to cook, clean, drink, and bathe. In contrast, the average person in water poverty uses around 5 gallons per day. Without reliable access to clean water, nearly 1 in 7 humans are forced to collect water from open sources like streams or ponds, causing them to sicken or die. At any given moment, 80 percent of the world's hospital beds are filled with people suffering from waterborne illnesses. .
-U.S. Catholic (Vol. 79, No. 4, pages 32-34).



This week we will be limiting our access to water and electricity to see what impact it has on our sense of gratitude, compassion, and contentment.

JOHN 4:13-14 (NIV)

"Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

As we feel the effect of a limited utilities this week, let it remind us that the human soul thirsts for a relationship with God. The objects we reach for to satisfy this void often leave us with a parched soul. In addition to this week's challenge's, let's learn to find contentment and strength that can only be found in God.

...IN PLENTY OR IN WANT

SOMETHING TO PONDER...

More than 900,000 homes went dark in Texas last summer because of unpaid bills, almost triple the number 10 years ago. In California last year, it was 714,000, the most on record. The tally across the country is in the millions, a sign of the economic stress that lingers after the Great Recession.

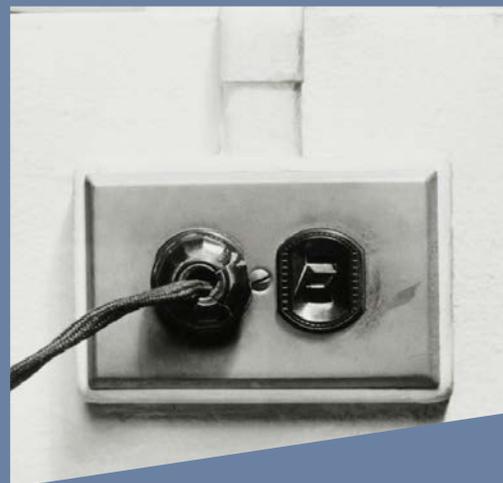
"It's indicative of an economy that's still recovering," said Katrina Metzler, executive director of the National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition in Washington. "Underemployment is still common, and many families live paycheck to paycheck." Most customers aren't denied electricity for long. Utilities commonly work out payment plans or help customers get financial aid within a few days. About 10 to 15 percent of people who are disconnected never get reconnected.

While the U.S. jobless rate fell to a 16-year low of 4.2 percent last month—compared with 10 percent in 2009—many Americans are struggling. Forty-four percent of adults told the Federal Reserve Board of Governors last year that they wouldn't be able to cover a surprise \$400 expense or would have to sell something or borrow to raise the money.

-By Jim Polson October 13, 2017 Bloomberg.com

-DISCUSS-

- What parts of this article impacted you the most? Why?
- As we prepare to limit our access to utilities, how do you think your experience will be the similar to or different from the people in the article?
- If you fell on hard times and your utilities were shut off, what would be the biggest challenges?
- We tend to think of clean water or a lack of electricity as a third-world problem. In what ways is this a challenge for people in our city?



"Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."
~ St. Augustine ~

"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." Philippians 4:12

CHALLENGES



Limitations (Pick 1 or more)

- Limit yourself to 10 gallons of water per person/ per day for wash and consumption
- All water must be boiled before consumption (simulate poor conditions)
- Turn off water for 1-2 days (simulate having your water shut off)
- Turn off water for 2-3 hours at the end of the day (if all day is too much)
- Simulate sporadic electrical access by shutting off all power at the breaker box at 5pm each night
- Charge phones and other devices with your vehicle only

GENEROSITY (Pick 1 or more)

- Contact the city and ask to pay someone's delinquent water bill
- Donate money to a clean water charity
- Donate money to FISH to be used as a utility scholarship. (Please note on the memo that this is a donation specifically for utilities)
- Invite a neighbor over for a flashlight dinner or board games with headlamps
- Contact the power company and ask to pay someone's delinquent electric bill



UTILITIES DEBRIEF

Spend the first 40 minutes of your group time debriefing the previous week's experiences. Below are questions to help you facilitate discussion. Don't feel pressured to discuss all the questions. Handpick a few that you think will create a meaningful discussion.

- How did limiting your access to utilities effect your household's rhythms, moods, and social interactions (positively or negatively)?
- In what ways did this week produce appreciation and gratitude within you?
- What new perspectives did you gain?
- What would be gained or lost if you lived with these limitations permanently?
- In what ways, does living with less free you up to be more generous?
- What did this experiment reveal about yourself, your household, and the ways you seek happiness?