

Activities for Youth

(To Raise Awareness of Hunger Issues)

by Katie Cook

Who is My Neighbor?

An Activity for Younger Youth

Before the session, find a large map of the world. (Check it to make sure it shows the continents according to their true relative land masses. Some older maps place North America in the middle and make it appear to be larger than it really is, in comparison to other continents.)

Attach the map to the wall of your meeting room. Also procure push pins or thumb tacks of various bright colors, colored construction paper and scissors. People and places in the news now include the Karen people of Burma, almost all of Sub-Saharan Africa (especially Zimbabwe, Niger and Sudan), the Horn of Africa, Central America (especially Colombia and Guatemala), people along the Gulf Coast of the US, rural Mississippi and the Dakotas. Ask the students to cut small paper dolls out of the construction paper. Then, together with the youth, make a list of places in the world where hunger has been publicized. Ask the students, "What countries have we read about or heard about, who are experiencing the aftermath of a disaster or war? Where are people living in famine or chronic malnutrition?"

Ask the students to pin paper dolls onto the map in countries where they know there is hunger. In almost every case, there will be impoverished people in your own community. If the students do not think of this, you might want to bring it up and pin a doll there.

Then ask, "How are these people related to us?" Help them as they discuss how the lives of these people are connected with their

lives. This activity goes well with the story of the compassionate Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the lesson that people in need are our neighbors, whom we are instructed to love.

Jesus in the News

An Activity for Older and Younger Youth

Before the session, secure a quantity of newspapers, some glue sticks, colorful markers and butcher paper or poster board. Distribute them as your students arrive. Read Matthew 25:31-40. Challenge the youth to look in the newspapers for stories about people whom Jesus might have meant when he said, "If you do it for them, you have done it for me." If they hesitate, prompt them in a subtle way. They may find stories about homeless people, people with AIDS, people on Death Row, refugees— the possibilities are endless.

Once they begin finding appropriate stories, ask them to cut out the stories (if they are fairly short), photographs and headlines. After they have finished, instruct them to glue their findings on the poster board or butcher paper, making a collage. Ask someone with good handwriting to write the following (or ask the students to cut the letters out of construction paper—encourage them to be creative) at the bottom of the collage: "Just as you did it for these, you did it for me."

Keep the collage up for a while in your meeting room, as a reminder of the passage.

Compassion Panel

An Activity for Older Youth

Before the session, collect objects that represent the six ministries described in the Matthew 25:31-40. (For instance, you might bring a can of food or loaf of bread for “I was hungry and you fed me,” a glass or cup for “I was thirsty,” a flower for “I was sick,” and so on.) Also, find six buzzers or bells.

Divide the students into six groups. Give each group one of the objects, and tell them that they are in charge of “feeding the hungry,” “visiting the sick,” and so on, according to the object they hold. Ask the teams to sit together, with their “symbols” and a buzzer or bell in front of each team. (The area should look a little like a game show with six panels.)

Explain that you are going to tell several stories, and they are to hit their buzzers or bells as soon as they think their team’s ministry fits the need of the person in the story. (This may make the stories a little disjointed, but it may also give them a more interesting dimension.)

When the teams are ready to begin, relate this story:

Harry is homeless. He doesn’t remember how long he’s lived on the street. He’s about 50 years old, but he looks like he is 80. He is alcoholic; he says that’s what really caused him to be where he is. He sleeps in a cardboard box on a heating grate. He sits on the sidewalk in Manhattan every day and asks for change so that he can get food—and sometimes alcohol. He smells pretty bad, and sometimes he doesn’t make much sense.

The “feeding” team will (hopefully) hit their buzzer.

The “welcoming the stranger” group and the “visiting the sick” group may also respond. Ask all of the teams to discuss the best things

to do for Harry. Encourage interaction between teams. For instance, the “visiting the sick” group may say he has to have treatment for substance abuse before anyone else can help him very much. Others may disagree. Repeat the above treatment for the following stories:

Martha is serving time in the county jail. She has been selling crack in her neighborhood. Her two children—

Crystal, age eight, and James, age six—are with their grandmother.

Martha hasn’t heard from the children’s father since Jerome was born. She couldn’t find a job, and she got hooked on crack when a friend gave her some. She began selling it to support her habit, and to also help her mother support the children. Now she has gone through rehabilitation; she’s clean, and she wants to go home and start over.

Felicia is Colombian. She came to the United States to get away from the violence in her country, and she is here illegally.

She lives in a run-down apartment house in Houston and lives in fear that the immigration authorities will find her and send her back to Colombia. She is certain that, if she goes back, she will be tortured and killed.

She can’t work, because she doesn’t have a green card.

Jack is HIV-positive. He lives in Los Angeles, and he is too weak now to hold a job. He is afraid that he will lose his apartment, and he doesn’t have enough strength to cook.

By this time, all teams should have had a chance to respond. Remind the students that Jesus said each of these people in the stories represents him. Ask them if thinking in this way makes them want to respond any differently than they have before.

—Katie Cook is editor for *Seeds of Hope Publishers*. These activities are loosely adapted from “Hunger in My World,” a unit of Sunday school lessons she wrote for the *Smyth & Helwys* youth curriculum series, *Intersection*. (For more information about the *Intersection* series, contact *Smyth & Helwys Publishers*, 1400 Coleman Avenue; Macon, GA 31207.)