

# Three Responses to Hunger

## *A Mini-Drama for Children and Youth*

by Katie Cook

**T**his trio of monologues was first used with youth and children in a small church in Shamrock, Texas. The three readers were teenagers. While they read, a pantomime was performed in the center of the worship platform by older children (ages 8-12). These children, part of a small mime group called the Parable Players, wore black t-shirts and jeans. Older teenage girls had skillfully applied mime make-up on the actors' faces. One of them, whose attire was inspired by the character of Jesus in *Godspell*, also wore clown-like pants and a Superman shirt. Below is an adaptation of the Parable Players' mini-drama.

Before the readers begin, the Jesus-like player (PP1) comes onto the stage with an empty bowl and sits dejectedly on the floor. The readers are in the congregation, near the front but not sitting together.

### **First Monologue**

This reader evokes cynicism and perhaps some angry defensiveness. As he/she begins to read, the second player (PP2) begins walking down the aisle to the stage. He/she is wearing a stereo with headphones, moving a little to the music. When PP2 sees PP1, he/she makes a wide arc around him/her, visibly agitated—perhaps fearful—but pretending not to see anything. As the first reader finishes, PP2 leaves the sanctuary.

I see it on television all the time—pictures of kids in Burma and Central America, and food riots in Somalia, and they're supposed

to be starving, and I'm supposed to do something about it. And all of these bleeding-heart people come to me and say, "If you are a Christian, you have to do something." And they say, "If you are really a Christian, you will care about all of these hungry people."

Well, this is my answer to all of them—the ones who try to lay a guilt trip on me, just because I happen to be more fortunate than other people:

It is my right and privilege to have good things, because I am an American and because I am a Christian. Didn't God say in the Old Testament, "If you obey me, you will become rich"? I hear preachers on television say it all the time. God wants me to have good things.

So why should I feel guilty because there are starving people somewhere? It isn't my fault that they are poor. They ought to get out and find a job. They ought to stop having so many babies.

And besides, I have heard that the money we send to Africa and other places doesn't get to the starving people at all. It just goes into the pockets of the government over there. And most of those governments are Marxist, anyway.

So why should we help them? They are our enemies.

No, I am not responsible for those people. It is not my problem.

If they're going to die, let them do it. The world is getting too crowded with people anyway.

### **Second Monologue**

*As this reader begins, a third player (PP3) comes down the aisle, notices PP1, and stops a short distance from PP1, looking toward him/her. As the reader continues, PP3 continues looking at PP1, who holds out his/her arms to PP3. As the reader says, "and so I do nothing" PP3 goes back up the aisle and out of the sanctuary.*

I came to talk to you about the problem of hunger in this world. I don't agree with the person who just spoke to you. I can't watch reports about earthquakes and cyclones on the news or see a picture of a hungry child in a magazine without breaking down and crying. It is such a dreadful problem. It is such a terrible thing to have people in our world, even people in our own country, who are starving to death.

But I feel paralyzed. I feel helpless. What can I do?

What can one person do? It would take millions and millions of dollars to collect the grain and then ship it all the way across the world, and then to get it from the ships to the people. It would take millions of dollars and thousands of people to get the starving people back on their feet, to help them start growing crops again and find clean water to drink.

It would take hundreds and hundreds of doctors to take care of the diseases that chronic hunger causes. And it would take who knows how many experts to make sure that the food and supplies get to the people who need them.

I don't know what to do. My heart breaks every time I think about it. But what can I do? I'm only 15 years old, and I have to go to high school. I have no money of my own. My parents have no money to spare. What can one person do? I don't know what to do.

And so I do nothing.

## **Third Monologue**

*As the third reader begins, the fourth player (PP4) begins to come down the aisle. He/she sees PP1, makes eye contact, turns around and goes back. He/she re-enters at the words "we can find a way" with a loaf of bread and a cup of water. He/she takes it to PP1, sits companionably next to him/her while PP1 eats and drinks.*

I have been listening to the first two speakers, and hoping that I can respond to both of

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them in the right way. My second friend is right; the problem of hunger in the world is so huge that it's hard to even

think about it.

And it's hard to imagine what one person can do.

But Jesus was pretty clear when he said, "When you did it for one of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me." If we are going to listen to Jesus at all, then we should realize that each face of each starving child is also the face of Jesus Christ.

And if that doesn't make us want to do something, then we could look at the Old Testament. The prophets kept saying, "You're going to be in trouble because your laws make the needy people suffer." The people of Israel didn't listen, and look what happened to them! The Assyrians wiped them off the face of the earth.

And the people of Judah didn't listen, and the Babylonians came in, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, destroyed the temple and sold the people into slavery.

I think the same thing could happen to us. But still we don't listen. Maybe it's because those starving people are all the way around the world—at least, most of them are.

Maybe it's because we've heard so much about people stealing hunger offerings and governments not letting the donated food get to the people.

Maybe it's because somebody told us they aren't worthy of our help—and we are so anxious for excuses, we choose to believe it.

But those excuses are not good enough. Would you like to look Jesus Christ in the face and say, "Well, it wasn't worth the effort because...?"

We can find ways to get the food to the people. There are missionaries and relief workers in those countries, or near them, who can help get the donations where they need to go. We just have to make the effort to find out who they are. There are ways of knowing which organizations can be trusted, and which ones can't. There is no excuse.

Even if we aren't rich by US standards, we have more than those children ever dreamed of. We can give our "coke" money for a month. We can wash cars and raise money. We can pray every day for hungry people. We can do it.

I may just be one young person, pretty unimpressive by myself, but I can do something. It doesn't matter how small it is. The boy with a few fishes and loaves didn't have much to give. But he gave it. And I will give what little I can. I can make a difference, and with God's help, I intend to do it.

*The first and second readers join the third reader at the microphone or lectern. The three read from Isaiah 58:6-9. Each reads a verse and then all three read verse 9.*

*—Katie Cook is the editor for Seeds of Hope. This drama was printed in Sacred Seasons, Hunger Emphasis 1999, The Bread of Deliverance, and was updated for this collection.*