



CHILDREN'S LESSON 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO POVERTY

Here is a brief outline of a presentation you could give to help the children in your church to engage with the issue of poverty — and the idea of helping children in desperate need. At the end you can find some practical games and illustrations to bring your presentation to life.

SET THE SCENE

Tell the group some of the things you really like about your life, such as your family, playing sports, church, etc. You could even bring in a few props to illustrate these areas.

Ask the group to share some of the things they really like about their lives.

Tell the group that God wants to change lives for the better, and that throughout the Bible are examples of this.

THE BIBLE

Read out loud the story of Jesus healing the paralytic man in Luke 5:17-26. (You could use *The Message Bible* or another readable translation.) Tell the group that the man in the story is disabled and cannot walk. Because of this he is unable to enjoy all sorts of things.

1. Who brought the man to see Jesus? (His friends – 19)
2. What was the man carried on to Jesus? (He couldn't walk so his friends brought him on a mat – 19)
3. Why was it difficult to get to see Jesus? (Because there were so many people gathered round Him – 20)
4. How did the man get into the house? (His friends lowered him through the roof – 20)
5. What two things did Jesus say to the man? (“Friend, your sins are forgiven” – 21; “Take your mat and go home” – 24)
6. What did the man do after Jesus had spoken to him? (He got up and walked – 25)

GO A LITTLE DEEPER

Tell them that God can use anyone, regardless of age, to help change lives for the better, and that the Bible has many examples in which Christians are asked to help other people.

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Share these verses from Proverbs with the group and ask them what sorts of things they can do in response:

Speak up for the people who have no voice, for the rights of all the down-and-outers. Speak out for justice! Stand up for the poor and destitute! – Proverbs 31:8-9 (*The Message*)

SO WHAT ABOUT US?

Tell the group there are many children in the world who do not have happy lives.

Ask the group if they can tell you any problems that a child living in poverty might face. For example: no school, not enough food, disease, lack of water. You may want to have a couple of photographs of children in poverty for them to focus on. These can be found on compassion.com.

Ask the kids if they think God can help these children just like Jesus helped the man who could not walk. Tell the group that God sent Jesus to show each of us that we can make a difference in other people's lives. It doesn't have to be as dramatic as helping someone to walk again. By simply sharing what we have with someone who doesn't have a lot we can really honor God.

LET'S PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for all the lovely things You have given us to enjoy in our lives.

[You could include some of the things the children mentioned at the start of the session.]

Today we pray for children who do not have such happy lives and feel forgotten, sick, hungry or afraid. Please help all these children to be safe, happy, and to know Your love today and every day.

Amen

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Here are some more ideas you can intersperse with your presentation to help the children really engage with the issues raised.

Don't Be a Party to Poverty

Hold a party for the group. Set up tables with six children at each one. Set out plates and cakes, finger food, drinks — but only for four of the places.

Ask the children on each table how they feel about it.

Explain that the two children on each table who don't have any food represent the world's children living in poverty and hunger, which makes up one-third of all children. And the children who have a plate of food represent the children in the world who have plenty to eat.

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Encourage the children who have plenty of food to share with the other children. Tell them there is more than enough food in the world for everyone — we just need to get better at sharing it.

A Thankful Picture

Collect some magazines and catalogs that have plenty of pictures. Ask the group to go through the magazines and cut out pictures of things they like. This might include pictures of toys, food, holidays, friends, etc.

Have the group glue these onto a sheet of paper along with prayers of thanks they have written for the nice things they have in their lives.

One-Dollar Day

Something for anyone to do: Agree among the group that every single person will have a one-dollar day, where you have only one single dollar to spend in a day. You could give them each a dollar or ask their parents to give them one.

- What choices will you make about what to eat or buy?
- What is the most important thing to do with the dollar?
- What can't you do — what do you have to miss out on?
- How can you be creative with the dollar — perhaps as an individual, or as a group, or a whole community – to make it really “work” (for example, combine all the dollars to produce tickets for a fundraising event)?



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GOD'S HEART FOR HUNGRY KIDS

A Lesson About Caring for the Hungry Children will be able to:

- define the word “hydroponics” and apply knowledge of the word with 90 percent accuracy;
- summarize at least three reasons why children in poverty are malnourished and hungry;
- determine at least two health challenges for children in poverty that are the result of malnourishment;
- create a fun and healthy snack using foods that can be grown hydroponically; and
- design a plan for the family to support and pray for farmers around the world who produce food for nourishment and health

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- cloth sack with fresh vegetables for guessing game. Include those often grown hydroponically: tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, snow peas, sweet peppers, broccoli and lettuce
- paring knife/kitchen knife to cut vegetables with adult supervision
- toothpicks to hold veggie snacks together
- cutting board
- world map/atlas

Background information: Research the *compassion.com* website for facts about world hunger. Here are several:

- One person in every seven goes to bed hungry every day.
- More than 140 million or 25 percent of children younger than 5 in developing countries are underweight.
- Nearly 15 percent of babies in developing countries are born with a low birth weight compared with only 7 percent of babies in industrialized countries.
- More than 6 million children die from malnutrition every year.
- Worldwide, 161 million preschool children suffer chronic malnutrition.

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- One-third of the world's population is undernourished, and there are 25,000 starvation-related deaths each day.

Sources: www.one.org, www.bread.org, www.unicef.org, www.who.int, www.unep.org

Some reasons behind hunger in impoverished areas:

- Poor people have experienced a series of global shocks in recent years, including spikes in fuel and food prices, the economic decline, and severe droughts.
- The price of natural gas, which is used to produce ammonia, the main input in all nitrogen fertilizers, rose more than 550 percent over the past 10 years. As a result, the cost to produce nitrogen fertilizer increased.
- Global food prices increased 57 percent from December 2005 to January 2012. This includes staples such as wheat, rice, corn and soybeans.
- The international food price spike of 2007–08 is estimated to have kept or pushed 105 million people into poverty.

Research information about hydroponic growing. Two good websites are www.gardenguides.com and www.ehow.com/how [article: How to Grow Hydroponic Vegetables]

THE LESSON

Play a guessing game with children to identify the vegetables you have hidden in a cloth bag. Invite each one to reach in, grab one, and guess what vegetable it is before he or she pulls it out of the bag. [All of these are vegetables that can be grown hydroponically — in liquid rather than soil!]

Once children have discovered and identified the names of the vegetables, challenge them to guess how these might all be alike [ideas: all are good for you; all can be cooked, etc.]. They are also all vegetables that can be grown hydroponically.

Encourage children to guess the meaning of the word “hydroponic” [hint: from the Greek words “hydro” for water and “ponos” for labor]. Speculate why some people cannot grow their vegetables in the ground as others can [poor soil, lack of water, and difficult growing climate].

Research and learn about how vegetables are grown hydroponically. Hydroponics is the method by which plants are grown in a nutrient solution rather than soil. The most popular way to grow the vegetables is to grow the roots through a neutral medium such as vermiculite, sand or coconut fiber. Plants are fed better and grow faster. They need less of a root network so they can be spaced closer. The lighting is artificial, so the plants are not dependent upon the elements of sunshine and rain in order to grow.

Challenge children to remember the last time they heard their stomachs growl, and talk about how children without food have growling, empty stomachs all the time. Ask children to discuss with you

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how they feel when they are hungry while doing schoolwork. Do they have the energy to think and remember what they are learning? Do they have the energy to go outside and play a game?

Supervise children as they create the funny but nourishing snack described below. Wash hands before this activity.

- Wash the vegetables to create a veggie creature. (Suggestions: Use the zucchini or cucumber for the body, slices of carrots for legs and arms, a tomato for the head, etc. Encourage creativity. If available, add herbs for hair and clothes!)
- Supervise cutting the veggies. If possible, add a small piece of cheese as a body part for a more balanced snack with protein. Show children how to connect the pieces with toothpicks. Have a little salad dressing available to give the veggies more flavor.
- Eat it up!

Discuss together why vegetables are good for us. What might happen to children who don't have vegetables or fruits to eat? What foods are most common for children in poverty? Present this menu from a Compassion-assisted child development center in Guatemala: blended beans, spaghetti with tomato, hardboiled egg, three tortillas, plantain with honey, oatmeal drink. How would these foods help malnourished children? Do you think you would like to eat there, too? Why or why not?

Discuss one or more of the following statements with children:

- "One person in every seven goes to bed hungry every day." Ask: Are you hungry when you go to bed at night? If you are, what do you do?
- "Approximately 140 million or 25 percent of children younger than 5 in developing countries are underweight." Discuss: What does it mean to be underweight? Why is this a concern for children? Sometimes children are overweight. Why is this, too, a concern for children?
- "Every day, more than 16,000 children around the world die because they don't have enough food to eat." Talk about it: This means one child dies every five seconds. What are your ideas about why children are so malnourished? What can be done to help?

Read or listen to James 2:15-17. Discuss one or two of the following points:

- How do you think the apostle James felt about people who were concerned about the poor and hungry, but did nothing to help? Do you agree or disagree with him?
- What are some ways you can help put "feet and action" to your faith in Jesus Christ?
- What are some ideas you have to help children around the community and beyond to have better nourishment? At your church or in the community?

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- Who grows healthy food in your neighborhood or town? How can you encourage the farmers and growers of the food you eat?

This week, challenge children to try some of the following activities at home:

- For every fruit or vegetable you eat, put some coins in a jar by the refrigerator. Take your week's savings to buy some food for your local food bank.
- Every time your stomach growls, let it be a reminder of people who are hungry all over the world. Pray for children who are hungry. Pray for the people who are helping end world hunger and the global food crisis.
- With a parent, help an elderly person carry groceries to his or her car.
- Be thankful your family can buy groceries and that there are so many foods from which to choose that children in other countries don't have. Visit your local grocery store and count the number of potato chip or cereal choices you see. Do children around the world have these kinds of choices? Why or why not?



CHILDREN'S LESSON 3

GOD'S HEART FOR THIRSTY KIDS

A Lesson About Clean Water Children will be able to:

- identify how water pollution contributes to unsafe water for kids and all living things in God's creation;
- demonstrate the effect of "pollutants" on clean water;
- summarize ways to prevent water from becoming unsafe to drink; and
- apply principles of creation care to home water management.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- 3 clean glass jars with lids (such as empty pasta sauce jars)
- 3 of the same potted green plants (herbs like basil or mint, which you can often find at the grocery store)
- vinegar or lemon juice
- measuring cups
- markers or stickers to make labels for each jar and a corresponding plant
- pencil and notebook to track your experiment for one week
- sunny, safe place in which to place the plants inside or outside
- several pieces of blue construction paper for water drops for Give It Away Activity
- safety scissors
- world map or atlas

PREPARATION

- Assemble the supplies listed.
- Label each jar and each potted plant like this:
Jar #1: Plant #1 A little acid
Jar #2: Plant #2 A lot of acid
Jar #3: Plant #3 Plain water
- Read John 4:13-14.

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THE LESSON

Ask children the following questions:

- How long do you think you could live without drinking any water?
[Answer: five or six days]
- How much water do you think each person in our family uses every day?
[Answer: Americans use about 160 gallons of water a day per person.]
- How much water do you think you use when you brush your teeth?
[Answer: 2 gallons, unless you turn off the water while you brush]
- How much of the Earth's water do you think you can drink safely?
[Answer: Less than 1 percent. The rest is salty or frozen.]

Most kids in developing countries don't have the ability to get clean water to drink. Let's discover why!

1. During the time you are exploring the lesson, keep a glass of clean water nearby. It will be a reminder of how blessed we are to have clean water every day.

2. Challenge children with these questions. During the discussion, assess your child's knowledge of water pollution.

- How does pollution make water dirty and unsafe to drink? What kinds of waste do you think might pollute the water?
- How does water pollution hurt the living creatures of the oceans too?
- Discuss the oil spill that occurred off of the Gulf Coast in 2010. How did this affect the wildlife and industry of coastal states such as Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida, etc.? What might happen to menus at restaurants like Red Lobster or other seafood restaurants as a result of the oil spill?

3. Begin the experiment:

- Assemble your supplies, the labeled jars and three potted plants. Involve your child in the process (including buying the plants, if possible).
- Mix the water for the plants in each of the jars like this:

Jar #1: A little acid: Measure $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of lemon juice or vinegar and pour into Jar #1. Add plain tap water to fill the jar. Put the lid on tightly.

Jar #2: A lot of acid: Pour 1 cup of lemon juice or vinegar into Jar #2 and fill the rest of the jar with plain tap water. Close the lid.

Jar #3: Plain water: Fill Jar #3 with plain tap water. Close the lid.

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4. For the next seven days, invite your child to do the following:

- With a measuring cup, water each plant with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water from the corresponding jar containing little acid, a lot of acid, or plain water.
- Every two or three days continue to water the three plants, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water each time using the water from the original jars.
- Make notes or draw what is happening to your plants. Which one looks great? Which one looks the worst? Do the plants have different colors? Continue the experiment and observe the results for one week or when you begin to note changes in the plants.

5. Discuss and decide what caused the results you observed! Ask the following questions:

- Can you name some dangerous substances that get into the water and cause it to be unsafe? Lemon juice or vinegar was used in this experiment as the “pollutant,” but there is nothing toxic about lemon juice or vinegar. We use vinegar in salad dressings and lemons in lemonade; real pollutants are different. Some examples to help you start thinking include fertilizers and spilled gasoline. Challenge your child to think of pollutants that might be near your home and neighborhood that could cause water pollution.
- How might pollutants that spill into the ground affect the drinking water of children in developing countries?
- What have you learned about pollutants? What are some examples of pollutants that get in our air and water in the United States? Why do we still have clean water in spite of pollutants falling into our streams and oceans?

Ask the children to imagine they are riding a bike or playing games or sports really hard. So they are very hot and thirsty. Suddenly they see a water fountain in the park or gym and run over to get a cold drink. Where does that clean water come from? How can there be clean water in fountains outside at parks and inside at gyms? Have you ever thought about where the water comes from? How do you know when it is safe to drink?

Explore the story of Jesus who met a woman at the well. She came there to get clean water for drinking and cooking. Discover more about real thirst. Read or listen to John 4:13-14.

- Why did Jesus tell the woman that “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst”? Jesus said, “The water I give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” [NIV].
- Was Jesus talking about physical water when He told her about “living water”? Discuss with your child the meaning of “living water” — which begins with belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior. What are some ways we can experience God’s presence in our daily lives, so that our faith in Jesus really is a lively and living relationship with Jesus?

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- Have you ever seen water fountains that spurt out of the ground unexpectedly? In some city parks, children can run and play and get wet in the water fountains. Explain how this water makes you feel. In what ways does the love and friendship of Jesus make you feel alive too?
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GIVE IT AWAY ACTIVITY

How can you and your family help save God's water and His creation, the Earth?

- Cut out some very large "drops of water" from blue paper.
- Look at the world map/atlas as a family. Choose a country where the children do not have access to clean water on a regular basis.
- Write the name of that country on the cut-out water drop. Put the drop near your water faucet or refrigerator.
- Every time you get a glass of water to drink this week, pray for that country to help its people get cleaner water.
- Put into practice some of these ideas: Turn off the water while you brush your teeth or shampoo your hair; fill your water bottles instead of buying new plastic bottles of water for daily use; take a shorter shower or use less bath water in your next bath. You can think of more ideas!