

“PEBBLE PAINS”

(A lesson about hunger)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Katie McRee

Key verses:

Matthew 25:35-40

Objective: To learn about food insecurity and what it would be like to live each day not knowing when we would be able to eat again. To think about ways that we can freely share what God has given to us with people that have been given less.

This lesson can be used as a way to initiate a new hunger fundraising effort for something like the 30 Hour Famine or Hunger Walk.

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- Hook: Pebble Run (10-15 mins)
 - Youth will be competing in a race with varying handicaps
- Book: When did you see me hungry?, Matthew 25:35-40 (10 mins)
 - Looking at some well known bible verses about hunger
- Look: God Gives (5 mins)
 - Thinking about why we have been asked to share
- Took: Hunger Pebbles (8 mins)
 - Using pebbles to remind us to pray for those who have hunger handicaps

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- A bowl of pea gravel- you will need about 10 pebbles/youth
- Socks (optional)
- Bibles
- Copy of “Hunger in America”
- Copies of discussion questions (optional)

(Open in prayer, announcements, and any other start of gathering traditions)

Pebble Run (Hook, 10-15 mins)

In this section, youth will all be running a simple race with varying amounts of pebbles in their shoes. The pebbles represent hunger and the unequal distribution is supposed to represent the disadvantage that people feel when they have to go through their day without fuel.

- Before the youth arrive, plot out a route for a simple foot race. It should be a fairly long race, because you will want there to be people that come out way in the lead, and some that fall way behind. Perhaps you can do several laps around the playground? Or maybe one lap around the entire church?

Round 1:

- Tell the group that we are going to have a good, old-fashioned foot race, and explain the route. The winners will be rewarded and the people who do not do well will be penalized.
- Now tell them that everyone will have a handicap during this race, and hand out one pebble to each kid, explaining that they will have to keep that in their shoe during the race- somewhere on the bottom of their foot where they can feel it. You may want to bring some socks in case there are kids who are wearing sandals and have no way of keeping the pebbles in place.)
- Once they think they have it figured out, stop and say, "I'm going to change the game a little bit. Some of you are going to have to carry more pebbles in the bottom of your shoe. This is non-negotiable, you just have to do it." Pass out one, two, or half dozen more pebbles to some of the kids (there should still be a few kids with just one pebble)
- Have the kids run the race.
- Distribute/remove pebbles based upon their performance. For the youth who won the race, let them remove the pebble from their shoe. The youth who landed somewhere in the middle, they can just keep what they have. For the youth who came in at the end, give them even more pebbles.

Round 2:

- Repeat the race.
- Again, distribute the pebbles based on performance

Round 3

- You can do one more race, or stop if you are short on time

Discussion Questions (5 mins)

(These can either be done with the entire group while you facilitate, or the questions can be printed up ahead of time and they can do this in small groups)

- How did it feel to run a race with a pebble, or multiple pebbles in your shoe?
- Were you able to race to the best of your ability?
- If you started with just one pebble, how did you feel about your chances in comparison to the other runners?
- If you had multiple pebbles, how did it feel to be given extra pebbles for no apparent reason? Were you discouraged? Did you welcome the extra challenge?
- When you lost and were given more pebbles, how did that feel?
- Did this activity seem fair?

The Least of These (Book, 10 mins)

In this section, we are reading through some well-known verse about hunger and a call to action!

- Have everyone look up Matthew 25:35-40. Choose person who will read out loud while everyone else follows along
- Here are the verses for your planning purposes:

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, **36** I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? **38** When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? **39** When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Discussion Questions (5 mins)

- Ask if anyone in the group has ever been hungry. How does your body react when you are hungry?
- What caused the hunger? (Poor planning and forgot to eat? Intentional fasting? Poverty?)
- How did the hunger end?
- Thinking back to that time you were hungry, if you didn't have a way of getting food and just had to carry on through your day without eating, how would your day have looked different?
- What do you think it would be like to wake up everyone morning feeling hungry and not knowing how or when they hunger would go away?

- How might being hungry though out the day be like having a pebble in your shoe?
- Do you think you see people who are truly hungry on a regular basis? (Not just someone who has missed a meal)
- Do you think you have a responsibility to help people in need?

Hopefully your youth will realize that there are hungry people in virtually every community in the country, including their own. Sometimes these people are easy to pick out, but other times we walk right past them, or sit next to them in class and never know. Check out the “Hunger Facts” sheet, provided by Atlanta Community Food Bank for more information about hunger in the greater Atlanta area. Spend a few minutes talking about how hunger exists in foreign countries, but it also exists at home!

God Gives (Look, 5 mins)

In this section we are going to start connecting the pieces by thinking through and old Haitian proverb, “God gives, but he doesn’t share,” meaning that God has given mankind all we need to flourish, but he hasn’t shared the resources equally. It is on us to share! Feel free to talk though the proverb using the questions below, or in any way that is a good fit for your group.

Say something like:

Has anyone ever heard the old Haitian proverb that says, “God gives, but he doesn’t share.”

- In light of what we have been discussing, what do you think means? (It means he has given the world enough food, but he hasn’t distributed it equally)
- Do you think God frowns upon sharing?
- If this proverb says that God doesn’t share, what does that mean for us? (It means that those with more are responsible for sharing.)
- How is this proverb related to the scriptures we were looking at earlier?
- Would you agree or disagree with this statement, “Everyone has something they can share.”
- What is something you have been blessed with that you can share to benefit someone else? (These may be physical needs, but they may have talents, skills or other resources that can make someone else’s life better.)

Mini lecture:

All of us have felt hunger, but few of us will ever have to know what it feels like to be truly hungry to the point where we are starving. When you are comfortable and have a full belly, it is so easy to look the other way and forget that there are people in our communities and all over the world that don’t have enough food, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t there. Just as we discussed, God has given the world enough food and resources, but it is up to us to share.

Hunger Pebble (Took, 8 mins)

In this section we are going to challenge the youth to keep a pebble in their shoe for the next week as a reminder to pray for and find ways to share with people who are hungry.

Say something like:

Let's think all the way back to our first activity where we raced with pebbles in our shoes.

- How are those pebbles similar to hunger? (It's difficult to perform your best when you are hungry)
- How was giving the losers of the race additional pebbles similar to what it must be like for people who are hungry? (Example: if being hungry makes it difficult to perform at work, you can lose your job, and make your situation even worse)
- How can people who don't have a pebble in their shoe be helpful to those who do? (They could help carry them to the finish line so that they can get the pebble out of their shoe!)

** This may be a good time to introduce any hunger fundraising efforts the 30 Hour Famine or Hunger Walk- the ways we can literally help get the hunger pebbles out other people's shoes!

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Say something like:

I am going to challenge you to do something this week that will be difficult but will help you get a feeling for the constant, nagging discomfort that comes from being hungry. It will help you to remember to pray for people that are hungry, to look for people that are hungry, and to raise money for people that are hungry. (For the Hunger Walk, 30 Hour Famine, etc.)

(Get back out the bowl of pebbles)

I am going to keep one of these pebbles in my shoe until we meet back here again next week. It will be really uncomfortable and annoying, but it will help me have a clearer understanding of how hard it can be to go through a day feeling hungry. I hope you will join me and do the same.

Pass around the bowl and let the kids take a pebble if they would like. You can come up with some rules about when they should wear the pebble or take it out (like if they have to wear it for their soccer game), but ultimately it may be best to let them decide these details. They get out of it what they put into it!

Close in prayer, thanking God for the various resources he has given to us and asking that he help us find ways to share. Show us the people in our communities that need help and show us how to provide that help. Help us be bold in asking for donations for the upcoming Hunger Walk (or other Hunger Fundraiser).