


4-1-2013

Teaching Social Justice to Middle School Aged Children

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TEACHING SOCIAL JUSTICE TO MIDDLE SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

By

Stacey J. Gerstung

Honors Scholarship Project

Submitted to the Faculty of

Olivet Nazarene University

for partial fulfillment of the requirements for

GRADUATION WITH UNIVERSITY HONORS

March, 2013

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE

in

Social Sciences Teaching

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. William Dean of Olivet Nazarene University who faithfully encouraged me to continue through the various ins and outs of this project, supplying me with advice and pushing me to complete it. I would also like to thank Reverend Elizabeth Bjorling for entrusting a portion of her youth ministry for seven weeks. Thank you, “Pastor E,” for your suggestions for content and strategies, as well as supplying more than half of the books I referenced in my research. I would also like to thank my team of fellow interns who supplied me with feedback each week, supported my ideas, and helped me enjoy the leftovers of our efforts. I owe a significant thank you to family, especially my parents and fiancé, who continually pushed me to persevere through the emotionally draining aspects of this endeavor. Finally, I would like to thank the Honors Council of Olivet Nazarene University for their approval and support of my unconventional project that so closely aligns with my passion and calling.

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ABSTRACT

Early adolescents find themselves in a very unique juncture of life. Even though these students in the middle grades are often troublesome to adults, they have the ability to perceive deep truths and are making decisions that will affect the way they live the rest of their lives. This transitional time between childhood and adulthood is the prime time to introduce students to important concepts, such as the need to seek social justice.

For this project, lessons regarding various aspects of social justice were taught to the Middle School/Jr. High Youth Group at College Church of the Nazarene in Bourbonnais, Illinois. The following paper highlights the process of the lessons and the activities therein, which occurred over a seven-week period in the months of September, October, and November of 2012. Students who completed necessary paperwork participated in a pre survey and a post survey. Results indicate students did achieve the main goals of the unit.

A variety of methods and activities were used to communicate concepts with students, all of which are described in the course of the paper, and its appendices.

Keywords: Social Justice, Middle School, Jr. High, Youth Ministry, Youth Group, Poverty, Homelessness, Human Trafficking, Hunger, Water Quality, Persecuted Church, Activity, Lesson Plans, Discussion, Resources

INTRODUCTION

Early adolescents, or as they are frequently called, pre-teens, are often an enigma to adults who can recall only the various painful experiences that seem to be the hallmark of this time. In general, students in this age group can seem moody, removed, disrespectful, unnecessarily rowdy, and many other unflattering adjectives. However, students are also energetic, capable of deep passion, and generally enjoy exploring the world around them. This period of life is the last chance to 'carve' ideas into the foundation of these children's lives and minds before they can no longer be called children by the most generous of categorizing, and much less likely to be influenced by adults.

As an intern and volunteer at the College Church of the Nazarene Middle School and Jr. High ministry in Bourbonnais, Illinois, I have spent four years interacting with and attempting to teach students during the tumultuous years of 10-14. Over the course of these past four years, which coincided with my undergrad education at Olivet Nazarene University, I felt that these students needed to be encouraged to consider the larger world around them rather than what they could see in their own, moderately affluent, communities. With the blessing of Reverend Elizabeth Bjorling, then youth pastor of the ministry, and the Honors Council of the aforementioned Olivet Nazarene University, I began planning a unit of instruction centered on the topic of social justice and increasing student awareness of various inequities in the world.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Students aged 10-14 go through a period of rapid development biologically, affecting their physical, social, and emotional natures. Physically, students of both genders often go

through puberty, or at least have begun all of its stages, during this period (Santrock, 2008, p. 60). This move through the pubescent phase can often have psychological effects, especially in terms of body image and behavior due to hormone changes (p. 62-64). All these things have the tendency to make students moody, uncertain, and feel generally awkward and uncomfortable with themselves. As such, it is a factor in how leaders must address them and their needs.

Another realm of physical changes is that of the brain. During adolescence, the brain develops and adapts. The prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for “reasoning, decision making, and self control,” is not typically fully developed until individuals are between ages 18 to 25 (Santrock, 2008, p. 94). This means that middle school students do not have the same ability to reason logically and understand more complicated connections, to a certain extent. Cognitively speaking, students aged 10 through 14 are considered between Piaget’s Concrete Operational stage and Formal Operational stage (p. 97). As students move from the concrete to the formal stage, between the ages of 11 and 15, Piaget argues that individuals are finally able to think abstractly about hypothetical situations, metacognition, and deductive reasoning (p. 98-99). This has major implications for educating students as most of the younger students, and several of the older group, will struggle to relate to people they have never met and who live differently from themselves without concrete examples or experiences.

Many adults are too far removed from this age group in order to fully comprehend adolescents. As such, individual students often feel that their parents and other authority figures do not understand them. Many adults perceive students as having potential but lacking the general ability to accomplish much at a young age. Harris & Harris (2008) contend that this is a new phenomenon since the addition of the idea of “adolescent” or “teenager” developed in

the past 70 years. Harris & Harris state, “The problem we have is with the modern understanding of adolescence that allows, encourages, and even trains young people to remain childish for much longer than necessary,” (p. 33). The authors believe that a primary reason adolescents do not accomplish much is that society does not expect anything of them.

There are two main differences between adults and adolescents, a developmental one and a cultural one, causing a significant generational gap, which needs to be accounted for (Mueller, 2007, p. 35). Mueller states that students are often operating under a postmodern paradigm where “you are the only one who cares about you,” and “you only go around once in life, so do it with gusto,” among other general understandings of their world (p. 52). Because of these generally accepted beliefs, adolescents often have a hard time caring for others and giving up something of themselves for the sake of others. Students often think of things being ‘fair’ or ‘unfair’ for themselves, but sometimes it is difficult for them to expand that idea to a larger group (Lawrence, 2009, p. 81). Furthermore, students live in a highly material world where “success, winning, purpose, and getting ahead have all been defined in material terms,” (p. 315).

These social and cultural norms have significant implications for youth ministry. Because students feel like adults do not care about them, outreach has a huge influence on how adolescents perceive the church and Christianity (Lawrence, 2007, p. 113). Students also have reported that outreach service projects change the way they see themselves and how they fit in the world (p. 117). If projects are intense enough and occur often enough, they can make a significant difference in the lives of the community as well as the lives of the students. However, oftentimes youth groups only do very limited projects to help in short term, but not

the long term, an idea described as shallow or deep justice, respectively (Clark & Powell, 2007, p. 13). Motivating students to seek deep justice can often be tricky due to the tendency to guilt students into it, or to lull them into comfort about their relative inaction (p. 39-40). However, according to Clark and Powell, there is a methodology by which youth leaders can make a stronger attempt to inspire students to act justly. The goal should be to help students recognize that God's intention was for things to be good, things have turned out badly since, God grants grace to people despite their sins, and in accepting this grace, individuals are thusly called to act with gratitude and accept the role in his kingdom to further the interests therein (p. 44-45).

Social justice is frequently discussed in the course of a public school education. There is a trend in education to insure that students recognize that everyone shares a responsibility for others in their local and global community and that social reform is the main goal of education (Oregon State University, 1999). Because these topics are being introduced in a public school setting, many adolescents have a very humanistic understanding of social justice, the idea that people need to fix these problems in the interest of equality and for global progress in general. For this reason, it is all the more important that religious organizations emphasize the theological implications of inequality and poverty, to address the fact that as Christians, there is a Biblical mandate to care for people less fortunate than ourselves. For example, in Matthew 25, Jesus tells a parable in which caring for others is a necessary component of knowing God: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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, 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.” (Matthew 25: 34-36, New International Version). Similar directives are found elsewhere also. In what became a thematic verse of the project, Micah states, “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8, New International Version). In light of God’s abundant grace and provision in our lives, Christians must extend the same illogical grace to others.

Furthermore, there are certain conditions in which humans thrive. People cannot flourish and reach full potential unless they are provided with the proper environment to do so. This environment involves material needs such as nourishment, water, space, shelter, as well as emotional and spiritual needs such as support, recognition, and love. The intention of creation was for all people to realize this wholeness. However, due to the presence of sin in the world, this complete, perfect wholeness is impossible. The Bible supplies directives Christians are compelled to follow, not simply ‘because the Bible says so,’ but because it is the goal of Christ to bring redemption to the world, a chance for people to receive a taste of this wholeness through God’s presence in their life. Christians ought to share this passion for bringing wholeness to the world in God’s name because God values each person, regardless of their place of birth or socioeconomic status, and Christians are to be His agents on earth. Humans do better in just conditions, and these conditions are aligned well with the guidelines laid out in the Bible.

Social justice refers to equal opportunity for all, and while not the only cause, poverty leads to many unjust situations and is a significant global issue. It is the root of many other issues worldwide such as malnutrition, human trafficking, lack of economic development, lack

of education, disease and much more (Global Issues, World Bank). 22,000 children die each day due to the various effects of poverty (Global Issues). According to the Millennium Development Goal Report 2007, (As cited at Global Issues) Women and girls are more negatively affected by poverty, as many families seek to put boys through schooling before girls, “Based on enrollment data, about 72 million children of primary school age in the developing world were not in school in 2005; 57 per cent of them were girls. And these are regarded as optimistic numbers.” There are few areas of life left untouched by poverty.

Poverty has many social justice implications, but for the purposes of this project, five justice topics, largely influenced by poverty, were presented to the students: hunger, water quality and access, homelessness, human trafficking, and the persecuted church. The first three are tangible needs that many students have seen or can physically relate to with some simulation or illustration. Slavery is a significant global problem, exposure to which is important. Finally, the persecuted church is an issue of social justice, while not closely related to poverty, is closely related to religion and is thusly important to teach students.

Hunger, water quality, and homelessness were chosen because of the concrete nature of middle school students. Young adolescents, as previously discussed, are transitioning from concrete to abstract thought processes and as such, the more concrete the need, the easier it is for students to relate to and understand. The world produces enough food to feed everyone, but those who live in poverty do not have the funds to buy necessary foods or buy the land to produce the food (World Hunger Education Service, 2012). As such, hunger is very much related to poverty.

Initially, diseases such as malaria were to be a topic of instruction. However, poor water quality is the root cause of many preventable diseases, and as such was chosen as a primary topic. Impoverished people living in remote areas of the world do not necessarily have readily available water to meet their needs. Water access and quality not only effects health, due to the bacteria contained within it, but also other areas of life, “Time spent gathering water is time they [women and children] can’t spend learning to read, write, earn an income, or take care of their family,” (Charity Water, 2011). As such, water is more than a health and quality of life issue, but a factor that greatly affects educational equality and thus, social justice.

Homelessness is a justice issue affecting people in the United States and the world as a whole. In January 2011, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development estimated approximately 636,017 people homeless, a number inflated by the increase of foreclosure (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2012). The national statistics are miniscule compared to global statistics: “Over 100 million persons are homeless worldwide and over 1.2 billion inadequately housed,” (International Network of Street Papers, 2013). Also, there are free simulations available that can be utilized for instructional purposes. One such example is available at playspent.org, an interactive simulation that demonstrates the struggles of living under the poverty line in the United States, a circumstance resulting in homelessness for thousands of Americans (Urban Ministries of Durham, 2011). Homelessness is an important side effect of poverty that influences social justice in general.

Slavery and religious persecution are less concrete for the average suburban middle school student than the previous three topics. Examples of slavery in the United States appropriate to share with ten year olds are difficult to locate, even though there are cases of

trafficking in the United States: “After drug dealing, trafficking of humans is tied with arms dealing as the second-largest criminal industry in the world, and is the fastest-growing,” (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). Many students have never had to confront inequality of this kind. Also, due to the freedom of religion in the United States, students can have a hard time relating to those who practice their faith in restricted nations. Christians in other nations, even at young ages, need to understand the troubles others in the community face on a regular basis. Human trafficking and religious persecution might occur primarily in foreign nations, but as these issues are directly related to equality, they closely pertain to social justice and are important for students to understand.

Although sources directly pertaining to instructing middle school students about social justice are difficult to find, existing sources do demonstrate the importance of these issues and communicating them to adolescents. All these facts are important to take into consideration when embarking upon a unit about social justice.

DESCRIPTION OF INTERNSHIP

College Church of the Nazarene is a large Wesleyan-tradition church in the moderately sized village of Bourbonnais, Illinois. Ministry to school-aged students is divided into three primary areas- children’s, pre-teen/ junior high, and senior high youth ministries. The pre-teen and junior high ministry targets students in grades 5th-8th. Reverend Elizabeth Bjorling is an ordained minister in the Nazarene church and, until January of 2013, was Pastor of Preteen and Junior High Ministries at College Church. The 5th and 6th grade students are referred to as the “Merge” group; the group for 7th and 8th graders is called “Livewire.”

As a part of Rev. Bjorling's ministry at College Church, she invited a small group of college students and young adults to serve as "interns." An intern is expected to attend weekly meetings, as well as maintain regular attendance at the regular youth group nights and any special events therein. Also, interns help plan events and brainstorm ideas about the ministry and provide feedback about different situations as they occur.

I began volunteering with this ministry as a college freshman. The following year, I was invited to be an intern.

As an intern in the Junior High Ministry at College Church of the Nazarene, I have observed situations that provide inspiration and the groundwork for my research. In previous years, students of the "Livewire" youth group have had the opportunity to participate in the "Box-a-thon," an event which seeks to educate the students on homelessness, specifically its prevalence to Kankakee County, in which most of the students live. This event normally has around 20-30 participants, all of whom must raise at least \$25 dollars for a local homeless shelter in order to participate. This is the extent to which poverty, or any other social justice issue, is addressed within the context of the College Church Jr. High ministries. The younger students, those a part of "Merge," had no involvement in social justice.

Because of these conditions, as well as my passions in the social sciences and the general quality of life for people, I felt a unit on social justice concepts and poverty could be very valuable for students.

METHODS

Because my project was implemented within an established ministry, collaboration was of the utmost importance. To that effect, I sought feedback from Pastor Elizabeth Bjorling about the scope and structure of my project. Together, we identified my goals, collaborated on an over-arching theme for her teaching time, and decided on specific topics to teach. The unit, along with her Biblical instruction, was to be called “Just Walk,” in accordance with Micah 6:8: “. . . And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

As we decided, my main goals for this unit were for students to be exposed to global issues and for them to feel empowered to do something about them. My secondary goals centered on the idea that students would understand the importance of the Christian’s response to social justice problems in the world according to the mandates laid out in the Bible.

In order to determine the topics I could cover, we had to determine the length of my unit. This was done by examining Pastor Bjorling’s typical plans for the fall semester and determining the number of weeks between significant events. As such, I began my unit three weeks into the semester and would conclude two weeks before the Wednesday of Thanksgiving Break. This was a seven-week period. We determined that an introductory evening would be important to ease the students into a new format to which they were unaccustomed as well as provide a foundation for students on a likely unfamiliar topic. The final week, Pastor Bjorling wanted to speak on the concept of “shalom” and asked if I could weave that concept into social justice. Thus there were five available week to cover with other topics, as described in the “Review of Literature.”

Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, students whose parents completed the necessary permission documents, as dictated by the IRB, participated in a brief pre- and post- survey designed to measure the effectiveness of instruction as well as student perceptions (Appendix B). I developed the survey implement to assess student perception of social justice and gauge where students were in regards to my goals, awareness of issues, and actions they could take as students.

Because of the nature of a youth group setting and the relative small number of students who submitted the requisite paperwork, fifteen out of a potential pool of sixty regular attendees, the survey was intended to gain a general sense of student perception and awareness, not to assess knowledge of particular students. As such, the questions were less objective and fact-based and there were no right or wrong answers.

Surveys were given to the students who were willing and able to complete them. The full text of both are printed in Appendix B of this paper. Additionally, students were asked to write their grade level on their surveys to help analyze results, not all students complied.

The first three questions were yes or no responses about students' familiarity with the term "social justice" and global poverty and specific social justice concepts. The following six questions assessed how students perceived the importance of helping those in need according to the Bible and themselves, how often they thought about how to help people in poverty, if they knew of any ways to help, and their relative levels of comfort in discussing their religious beliefs and social justice ideas. [The final two questions were designed to compare to each other on each survey rather than compared to other students' responses. I wished to examine whether students felt more or less comfortable discussing justice issues compared to their

faith.] Students were prompted to circle a number, one through seven, seven indicating a strongly positive response to the statement, according to their current perceptions.

Instruction took fifteen minutes out of the course of normal youth group activities, with the exception of the week on Hunger, which took an hour and a half. The justice instruction was followed by a rotation between Pastor Bjorling's sermon and small group discussion. Most of the justice instruction was lecture based, with some interactive elements. One activity was conducted at the "Box-a-thon," the aforementioned supplementary justice event for the older students. That activity took roughly an hour of time. Students learned about different issues related to justice, including slavery, hunger, water quality, homelessness, and freedom of religion (see Appendix A for lesson plans). On the night about hunger, an event known as a "Hunger Dinner" took place. Hunger Dinners have been used in various capacities and are a common way to communicate Hunger statistics to groups of adolescents or young adults. The Hunger Dinner planned for this unit followed the general guidelines found at the Go Now Missions website (2008). All other events and activities were developed by Pastor Bjorling and myself.

Pastor Elizabeth Bjorling reviewed every lesson prior to the week's instruction. An evaluation is included in Appendix C.

RESULTS

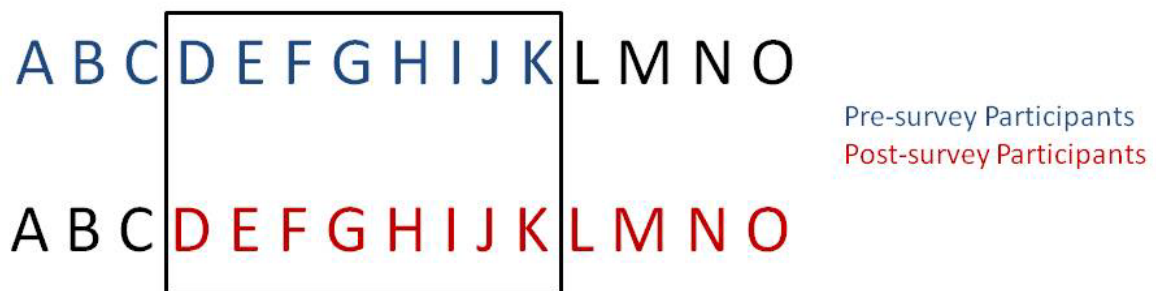
Because of the fluid and informal nature of youth groups, guaranteeing student participation in both the pre and post survey was impossible. As such, out of fifteen students who submitted the necessary paperwork, eleven students took the pre-survey and twelve

participated in the post-survey. This does introduce significant problems in regards to the analysis of results. However, the purpose of the survey was not to compare individual students' responses on the two tests, but rather to obtain a general idea of where the body of students was as a whole group. However, it is important to address the statistical implications of the inconsistent test group.

It is impossible to track the progress of individual students between the pre-assessment and the post-assessment due to the anonymous nature of the surveys. It cannot be proven that any individual took both surveys.

In the following figure, each of the fifteen possible students are represented by a letter of the alphabet. Any four students could have not taken the pre-survey. Any three could have not taken the post-survey. This figure represents the “worst case scenario,” assuming that the least possible overlap between test groups occurred.

Figure 1: Test group inconsistencies and overlap



As the figure indicates, the minimum overlap between groups is eight students. As such, basic conclusions can still be drawn between the surveys, although it is not statistically perfect.

Prior to instruction, the survey showed only one student polled was familiar with the term “social justice.” Following instruction, all but two students answered affirmatively to a question asking students if they knew what the phrase “social justice” meant. Also, based on

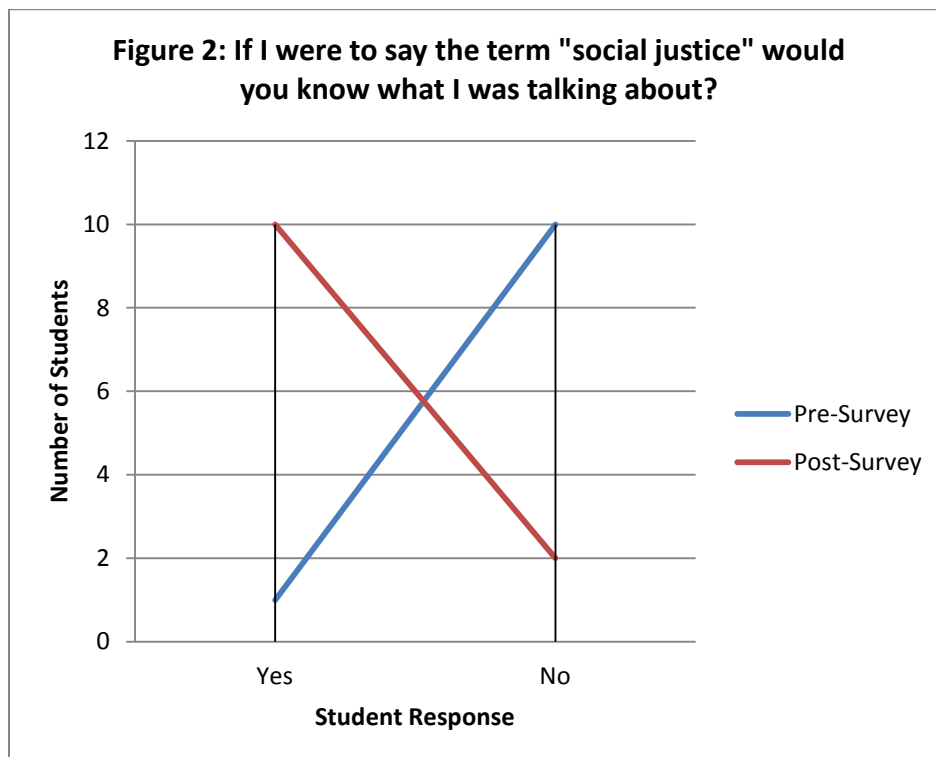
the consistency of pre and post survey results, students had been exposed to poverty concepts at church, but only half (generally older students) remembered discussing it at school.

The following table indicates the average response for each of the six numerically scaled questions on both the pre and post-surveys.

Table 1: Average Responses, Pre and Post Survey		
Question	Pre-survey Average Response	Post-survey Average Response
According to the Bible, how important do you think helping poor people is?	6.09	6.25
According to you, how important do you think helping poor people is?	6	6
How often would you say you think about how to help poor people?	4.09	4.5
Do you know of anything you can do now to help poor people around the world?	4.45	5.417
How comfortable do you feel talking to friends about Jesus?	4.82	5.333
How comfortable would you feel talking to friends about helping poor people?	5.18	5.5

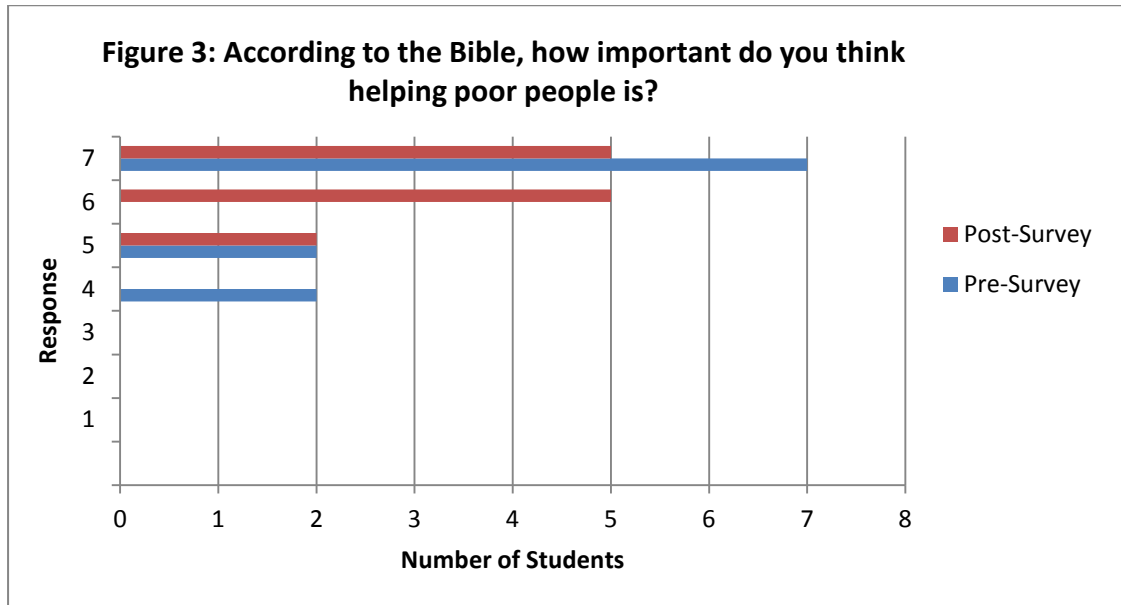
There was not a significant change in most responses judging purely on the pre survey and post survey responses. The most significant increase was found in students' confidence in their ability to help those in poverty and otherwise suffering of social justice ills. There were no questions in which the average response decreased; although the average student's personal perception of the importance of poverty did not change.

The questions which most directly addressed the goals of this unit were as follows "If I were to say the term 'social justice' would you know what I was talking about?" "According to the Bible, how important do you think helping poor people is?" and "Do you know of anything you can do now to help poor people around the world?" The following figures address the specific results of those questions.

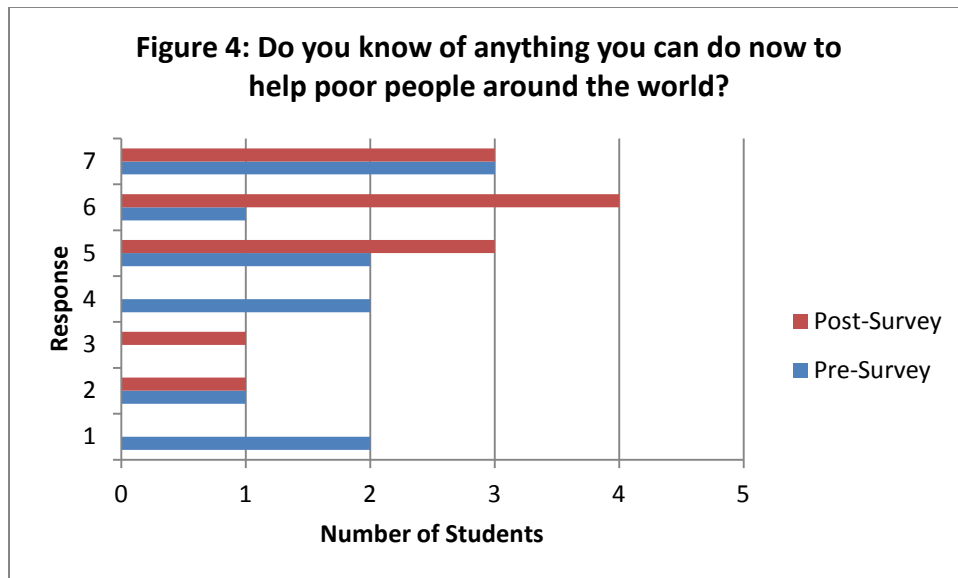


The evidence clearly shows (Figure 2), as previously discussed, more students were comfortable with the concept of social justice following the unit of instruction. However, two

students were still unfamiliar with the term “social justice” after six weeks where discussing it was a primary goal.



Overall, student understanding of the importance of social justice according to the Bible increased, with no students responding less than a “5” on the post-survey. However, as evidenced in Figure 3, two students fewer responded with a “7” on the post-survey in comparison to the pre-survey. This could be due to the fact that a slightly different group of students complete the two surveys. However, it could also indicate that the Biblical perspective on helping those in need was not emphasized as much as the “bare facts” regarding the needs in the world.



Students' understanding of their ability to help people around the world increased over the period of instruction. Prior to instruction, two students knew of nothing (as indicated with a response of "1") they could do as individuals to help people. Following instruction, only two students in total answered less than a "5" in response to the same question.

On the post survey, students were free to answer an additional 'short answer' question about what was their "favorite part" of the lessons. Two students specifically referenced the hunger dinner as their favorite activity. Four students talked about how they appreciated learning what other students their age were doing and what they could do to help with these issues.

REFLECTION

The "Just Walk" series was an exploration in social justice for the students and instructors. The unit had its difficulties though. Because of the environment of the youth group setting, formal formative assessment of instruction was difficult. Students come to youth group

after a long day of school and have little interest in filling in worksheets or any other kind of paperwork. Because of the general fatigue, student attentiveness was also a problem so it was crucial to include as much action and interaction as possible. Therefore, informal formative assessment was crucial. In this case, formative assessment was in the form of small group discussion that is a part of the regular structure of Wednesday night youth groups. I gained insight into these discussions with regular communication with other small group leaders, especially those who serve as fellow interns. Through this assessment, as well as my own observations, I adjusted instruction whenever possible to address misconceptions.

As previously mentioned, there were several goals for this unit. The first was that students would be exposed to global issues and for them to feel empowered to do something about them. Another was that students would understand the importance of the Christian's response to social justice problems in the world according to the mandates laid out in the Bible. The fact that the greatest increase was found in students' confidence in their options to help others is a good indicator that the instruction was effective in meeting the first goal. There was not, however, a significant increase in students' understanding of the importance of caring for the poor according to the Bible. This could be because students had a strong sense of the importance of caring for the poor according to the pre survey, so there was not much room to increase. Also, the sermons from Pastor Elizabeth Bjorling for each evening of instruction were not specifically on instances in the Bible where God instructs people to care for the less fortunate. However, according to the surveys, they received that instruction elsewhere, so speaking specifically about it might have been redundant. For future instruction, it would be prudent to connect the idea of giving generously to relationships; their relationships with God

and because of the nature of that relationship, generosity should spill into their relationships with others. Generally speaking though, students do recognize the importance of caring for others, so that goal could be considered met also.

While survey results generally showed instruction was effective in helping students reach the goals, it was not effective for all students. Two students who took the post survey did not recognize any familiarity with term “social justice”. Considering social justice was the theme of the entire unit, this is both surprising and discouraging. However, if students missed the first two weeks of instruction, it is likely they would not have received a direct definition of the term. To improve on this, the definition of social justice should have been revisited each week.

Also, in the case of College Church’s youth group, there was an unfortunate lack of time to devote to a service project so that students could learn “deep justice” as described in the Review of Literature. However, the church has an ongoing ministry to the Center of Hope in Kankakee, the ministry students raised funds for through the “Box-a-thon.” If students are regular attendees of the church they would be familiar with this ministry and the services they provide, and likely have had an opportunity to donate or volunteer before this unit. In this way, the service provided to the ministry, although not direct, was deeper than if it were through an obscure ministry in which the church had no prior involvement. In order for the service to be considered truly deep, ongoing projects should be preformed.

Overall, this unit did prove successful in teaching students about social justice concepts and the importance therein. The simulation activities seemed to prove most effective in communicating these concepts, as several students specifically referenced events such as the

Hunger Dinner as being particularly meaningful. If this unit were to be repeated, finding more interactive or simulation activities could further the reinforcement of these ideas.

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APPENDIX A

The following are the seven lessons used to teach the discussed topics. They do not fit a certain format exactly, although the Olivet Nazarene University lesson plans were consulted. Because the ONU lesson plans are designed for a school setting, certain components proved unnecessary in a youth group setting. Lesson plans include any helpful background information, materials, general guidelines for instruction and activities, and discussion questions for a small group setting. Any facts can be found at the sources at the end of each lesson; many are urls for specific web pages visited. Any and all facts presented can be replaced in lieu of more recent facts should the instructor deem it appropriate.

Lesson 1: Introduction to Concepts

Background: This lesson was made intentionally flexible for the framework of the given night at youth group. This night was the first night back from the summer activities so I was very limited on time and planned to speak 5-10 minutes.

The pre-test was taken prior to the evening's activities as the students came in.

Although not ideal for an early adolescent audience, much of this lesson is discussion-based.

With the brevity this lesson required, the most effective way to engage students and still communicate content is through discussion. Middle schoolers often love to talk about themselves, to the point where discussions become story time. Through a structured discussion, more students are likely to feel pulled in and want to participate. The hope is also that these concepts can spark conversations with their parents.

Materials:

Umbrella, with words attached to strings that dangle from it when opened

Introduce Self: My name is Stacey and I'm in my last year at Olivet Nazarene University. This is the fourth year I've helped with this youth group. My major is Secondary Social Science Education, which basically means I will be a middle or high school history teacher.

Explain Project: Because I'm in my last year and in a certain program at school, I have the chance to do a special project. For my special project, I've come up with some lessons to teach you about social justice. My lessons are going to go along with Pastor Elizabeth Bjorling's as we learn more about what it means to follow our Bible verse for the next couple of months, Micah 6:8. So the next couple months we'll ask you to do some fun and different things and we'll talk about some things you may have not heard about before.

Introduce Subject:

To start off I have a few questions for you guys:

What are some things you care about? (Anticipate answers like pets, family, friends, etc)

Now something we feel passionate about is a little more specific. What do you feel passionate about? What makes your heart beat faster when you start to think about it? What sorts of things get you fired up?

What bothers you when you look at how the world is? What do you wish you could change?

What does "justice" mean? (Anticipate "fairness," "equality," "rights," etc)

What comes to mind? (law, police, rules, judges, etc)

Justice is all about people having equal opportunity, chances, and treatment.

If justice is about things being fair, what do you think "social justice" means?

Social justice is a big idea that a lot of things fit under. Imagine social justice as being an umbrella (expand umbrella). And under that umbrella a lot of causes, problems, and issues fit under (show examples on the umbrella). The one we'll be talking about specifically is poverty, and all the things that can influence someone's life when they live in poverty, whether they live here or anywhere else in the world.

Conclusion: So over the next few weeks, we're going to be talking about some social justice issues, specifically focusing on how living in poverty effects justice in the world and what God calls us to do about it. I'm really excited about going through all this stuff with you guys and hope you are too!

Lesson 2: Hunger

Background: I knew leaving last week that most students still did not get what social justice is, partially because of how abstract a topic it is, and how quickly I had to present it. So the beginning of the lesson for this evening was a lot of review.

I fully recognize that the lesson is a little weak on statistics and numbers. Part of that was intentional because, for the most part, 10-14 year olds do not care about numbers too much and they do not mean much to them because numbers are not concrete enough for them to conceptualize. The other part of my lack of numbers is because I was afraid I was going to be short on time so if there was something I was willing to trim back, it was statistics.

Materials:

Supplies for Hunger Dinner

Provide questions for each "table," so a leader can do a small scale debrief

Map or globe

Obstacles of various sorts – chairs, tables, people, whatever

Some sort of tape/marker on floor

Before Dinner: Set up tables on stage for “wealthy” kids. Mark off areas on floor for “malnourished” kids. Get drop cloths ready to go out to various eating areas on floor and mark areas on floor in tape. Divvy up rice and beans and only rice in bowls ahead of time to give to students as they sit down. Explain event rules and expectations to leaders.

Randomly assign children to tables as they come to youth group, based on a colored mark on their hands. Assign one student for full meal table, two for rice and beans, three for just rice, and then begin again. It skews the proportions a small amount, but otherwise it’s very hard to keep track as children trickle in.

Attention Getter: So who remembers what social justice is from last week? [*Not expecting a lot of retention here, but I’ll take what I can get*]

Concrete Justice Obstacle - I need two volunteers. All you have to do is walk from this line of tape to the other across the room. (*One has a mostly clear path, the other has many obstacles.*) Was this a fair challenge? Of course not. What if the line across the room represented an education? Or a job? Or enough food for their family for the week? Or a home? Many people in the world do not have a “fair” or just life. They try their hardest, but because of things like poverty they don’t have the same chance that a lot of us do in life. When we seek to be socially just or talk about “social justice” this is the sort of thing we’re talking about. We want to do our best to reduce and take down the barriers that might hold someone else back from reaching their potential.

So, social justice is what people of different places and life situations do to help other people have equal opportunities and rights.

Remember that as Christians, this is important to us because we are called by God to show to others how awesome our God is. Because God loves ALL people, we are called to love people like God does, and sometimes that is through things that fall under the umbrella of social justice.

During Dinner: After free time in the social justice illustration, tell them to find the spot that corresponds to their marker spot color. Leaders will divide themselves as necessary between the groups.

As volunteers pass out bowls to students, explain that this is the world, and these are their rules:

They are divided up into their “country” by the color of marker on their hand.

You cannot leave your “country” to go begging, trading, etc.

The food in your country is the only food you get.

Do not throw the food. It’s precious considering that’s all you get.

Feed them quickly. Have leaders ask the small group questions while eating the meal.

After 5-10 minutes, I ask them questions while they continue eating (primarily from Hunger Dinner pdf, but adapted for our group):

What about this experience made you uncomfortable?

What words would you use to describe the behavior of the people at the other spaces?

When we said that we would be doing a dinner tonight, what was your expectation?

How would you feel if this is what you were served almost every day?

What table do you think best represents the US?

What parts of the world do you think your table represents?

This dinner is to show proportionally the amount and types of food different people of the world get. Most of the people in the world don't have access to complete and healthy meals. But some people in the US don't have access to healthy foods either. This is what we'll be talking about tonight.

Vocabulary:

Hunger –

- the uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of food; craving appetite. Also the exhausted condition caused by want of food
- the want or scarcity of food in a country [World Hunger]
- a strong desire or craving

Malnutrition –

A general term that indicates a lack of some or all nutritional elements necessary for human health

Undernutrition –

What happens when people don't have enough food to function and/or their bodies can't process the food they do get. Generally used to indicate not enough calories or protein (what you need to build strong muscles and bones), but it may also relate to vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

An undernourished or malnourished person is someone who is consistently unable to get enough of the calories or the right nutrients their body needs to be healthy.

Content: Tough question for you all: what is the *difference* between someone being “hungry” and someone being “malnourished” or “undernourished”? Hunger is a more general term. I can be hungry between meals, but it doesn’t mean that I’m malnourished. Malnourished is a medical term that classifies when someone does not have access to enough healthy foods in appropriate quantities. (*Make sure they can understand the difference between the two terms*)

Thinking back to our meal, what areas would illustrate a high likelihood of malnutrition? Why?

Let’s talk about some statistics. [*For all statistics references, pull kids up who can help visually represent the proportion.*]

In the world –

In the tiny country of Burundi [*Point to on Map/Globe*], for example, six out of every ten people are undernourished.

57% of the population of Haiti is undernourished. Haiti is about as far from Bourbonnais as LA is.

Nearly one out of every three of all children in developing countries are underweight or stunted in growth because of lack of food.

Nearly 1 in three people in the world are undernourished.

With older kids (7th – 8th) – Talk about how poverty affects food distribution within families –

Dads getting most, boys getting more than girls, etc

In the US –

1 out of every 7 families doesn't have consistent access to the food they need.

The 5 places in the US with the highest percentage of food insecurity are Arizona, Arkansas, Oregon, Texas, and Washington DC .

Kids who experience hunger are more likely to have problems with anxiety, depression, behavior issues, and other illnesses.

Chronic (regular) malnutrition when children are little can affect their health for the rest of their lives, even if they have better nutrition later on in life.

The world DOES make enough food to feed everyone. The food just doesn't get to everyone.

But starving yourself will not get the food to them. What will?

Who is working to help this?

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries - <http://www.africanazarene.org/nazarene-compassionate-ministries-and-helping-hands-africa> (agricultural training, education and nutrition)

Center of Hope – Kankakee

Feed My Starving Children – www.fmsc.org

Conclusion: Hunger makes you vulnerable to other problems. It can make you more likely to get sick, which we'll talk about next week, it makes it harder to focus in school, and it can make it hard for people to hold a steady job. This makes this issue a very very important one.

Hunger is one of the things that we, as Christians, are CALLED by God to help with. Our job, like Pastor E said last week, is to show everyone around us how AWESOME God is. And one of the ways we can do that is by helping get access to the food they need.

Resources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice

<http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm>

Go Now Missions – Hunger Meal pdf

http://www.gonowmissions.com/component/docman/doc_details/9-hunger-meal--being-content-whether-well-fed-or-hungry.html

http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/us_hunger_facts.htm

<http://www.fao.org/hunger/en/>

“Zealous Love” by Mike and Danae Yankoski. Published 2009

<http://www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-hunger-us>

“Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger” by Ronald J. Sider. Published 2005.

Lesson 3: Water and Disease

Materials:

Glass of water with dirt, etc in it

Map

Attention Getter: Water Relay – Sort students into teams. Give each team a large bucket about halfway full with water. Students must carry the bucket around a cone and back to their corresponding team and the next person will take the bucket and go. This serves as an introduction to the content of the evening. *Due to time this activity was not done at College

Church, also it will be dark by the time youth group starts and about 40 degrees, but it is a good activity to help students start to think concretely about the topic.*

Introduction: *Begin passing around the cup of water.* Let's all look at this cup of water. Describe the ways it's different from the water you get at your house.

How many of you have ever visited a lake or river before? What if that was the water your family had to drink and use for cooking and everything else? What if you had to wash your clothes in that water? You would be sharing that water with everyone else in the community, including animals, and fish. Think about that. Gross, right?

Facts:

1 out of 3 people in the world do not have adequate sanitation systems, human waste, etc. That means a bunch of bacteria, germs, and diseases get carried through water.

1 in 9 (800 million) do not have readily available access to water

Those people have to walk several miles to get water. For us, that would mean walking to the nearest lake or river to get water and carry it back. For many of us, that would mean walking to the Kankakee River every day. If a community is lucky enough to have a well, people of the village stand in line for HOURS to get water for their house.

Instead of going to school, some children spend hours waiting in line to get water. Often, large, yellow fuel containers are used to transport water. These frequently weigh 40-80 pounds when full. How many of you in this room weigh 80 pounds or less?

So let's think about the dirty water . . . and about all the things that end up in the dirty water. (*Brainstorming ideas, especially with the younger group could be valuable.*) What sorts of influence would these things have on the health of the people in the community?

Bad water + Bad food = poor health. Remember last week how we talked about malnourishment? And that not having all the nutrients that your body needs to survive makes it weaker? It not only makes it physically weaker, it can make it more vulnerable to getting sick. When people drink bad water, it introduces tons and tons of bacteria and germs into people's bodies who are already more likely to get sick in the first place.

As time allows, watch the video from the organization, Charity Water:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCHhwxvQqyg&feature=player_embedded

So. What are Christians doing about it? There are several non-Christian organizations that are helping with access to clean water, like the one who made the video we watched, but there are also Christian based organizations that are talking to people about God at the same time they're helping them have access to good water:

Lifewater International

The Water Project

Water Missions International

Also, Nazarene Compassionate Ministry like we talked about last week

If you want to hear any more about these organizations feel free to come up and talk to me afterwards and I can give you websites!

Discussion Questions: Have you ever seen pictures of people carrying water to their homes?

(Basically this question is to gauge prior exposure to the issue, if they haven't feel free to expound on the topics covered such as weight of water or distance to help make it concrete.)

What factors influence water quality? (Natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, etc; war; sanitation; waste disposal; local animals; etc)

What have you heard that people are doing to help with these problems?

How can helping with the problem of clean water help show how awesome our God is?

Resources:

<http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/sanitation.shtml>

<http://www.charitywater.org/about/mission.php>

<http://www.filtersfast.com/articles/Water-Charities-A-Comprehensive-List.php>

<http://www.lifewater.org/>

<http://thewaterproject.org/>

<http://www.watermissions.org/>

Lesson 4a: Global Homelessness

Materials:

Powerpoint with pictures of/from

- Suburban Neighborhood
- Indian Child
- various slums
- homeless ministries

Attention Getter: This is a picture of Brittney's house. Brittney is 12, goes to middle school in Missouri. Has a crush on Harry Styles. She finds her 10 year old brother, Brandon, annoying, and he agrees. She thinks History is boring, but loves math, plays soccer and softball, goes to church at least once a week and hangs out with her friends whenever she has free time. She eats three meals a day, and sometimes snacks. She doesn't get everything she wants, and

sometimes gets into fights with her mom about the clothes she wants to wear and the movies she wants to watch, but she comes home every night to a bed that's warm and comfy.

Content: This is a picture of a boy named Sanjay. Sanjay is also 12 and lives in a city in India. He doesn't really have a home because his parents died from an infection they got from eating bad food that they couldn't get treated because they didn't have money for doctors. So now, he stays wherever he can. Some nights he can find a place to sleep in abandoned buildings like this. His neighborhood looks like this (picture of slum). He's heard about orphanages, but they are too crowded and he is too old so no one would want him. Sanjay tries to also take care of his little sister, Kumari. Kumari is crippled because of a complication at birth, a complication that also affects her ability to take care of herself. Frequently, Sanjay leaves her by herself during the day so he can make some money for food.

Sometimes he works in a tea shop, hidden away of course because it's technically illegal. Sometimes though he finds things in the garbage and will sell them on the street for some money, other times he'll scavenge for materials that can be sold to be recycled. He makes about \$6.00 a month that he uses for food for himself and Kumari. Because he spends all day working, he doesn't go to school. Because he doesn't go to school, he will never get the training he needs to get a better job. Unless something changes for him, he will probably always live in the slums.

Sanjay lives in the Dharavi slum of Mumbai, but there are many others who live in the favelas of Brazil, the slums of Nigeria, the barrios of Mexico, or Skid Row in California. Homelessness is something that happens all over the world. And as with Sanjay, many children

who grow up homeless have a hard time getting a good job in the future. Homelessness means a lot more than not having a house.

Organizations: There are many local, national, and global organizations that help with homeless people. For example, some people who come to the Center of Hope are sometimes homeless.

Even if you don't see people living on the streets in Kankakee, people from places where it gets cold live in abandoned buildings or in their cars or sometimes hotels if they can afford it. Many churches have special ministries where they reach out to the homeless and try to help provide them with job training, food, or medical care.

Organizations like Christian Relief Services work on a global scale to help people in poverty find a way out. Other organizations like Compassion International and World Vision have programs where you can sponsor children so they can go to school and have homes and such. International Justice Mission seeks to help with the issues that are the root of the poverty and the causes of things like homelessness.

Discussion Questions:

Have you or your family ever helped with a homeless shelter?

Has anyone ever talked to you about homelessness? In school or your family? What have you talked about?

Have you ever seen a homeless person on the streets? How do you react? How do you think you should react? (Leaders – please feel free to direct this part with personal knowledge/experiences with missions trips/handing out gift cards for food/Habitat for Humanity, etc)

When Stacey was talking earlier about how people are helping homeless people, what ways stuck out to you? What is something you feel like you could do to help people who don't have homes?

Resources:

<http://www.meadvillepa.com/leslie.html>

<http://www.allianceinteractive.com/blog/leading-causes-death-india>

http://asourown.org/assets/uploads/Get%20the%20facts_Final.pdf

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Street_children_in_India#Work

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Favela>

<http://www.christianrelief.org/>

<http://www.meadvillepa.com/images/leslie.jpg>

http://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/citiesalliance.org/files/images/Slums%20in%20Nairobi%2C%20Kenya_0.JPG

<http://cuwhist.wordpress.com/cultural-geography-geog-220/slums/>

http://beyondprofit.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/IMG_05871.jpg

http://farm1.static.flickr.com/92/282585428_7f15e3d467_o.jpg

<http://orthodoxcemetery.com/sjm/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/iphone-056.jpg>

<http://centerofhopek3.org/>

Other images from Joy MacDonald's personal collection, used with her permission

Lesson 4b: Local Homelessness and Boxathon

Materials:

Projector

Laptop with Internet Access

Background: At the Boxathon, the homelessness event for 7th and 8th graders, students raised pledges from friends and family to raise money for the Center of Hope in Kankakee, Illinois. For the evening, students slept outside in boxes to experience homelessness for a night.

Activity: As a part of the unit on social justice, students were gathered together (during the “soup kitchen” time) and participated in an online interactive experience at www.playspent.org. “Spent” is a simulation that provides the participant with real-life situations and choices, where the player has to decide how they would handle the given situation.

For the purposes of this evening, the students voted as a group in order to decide what course of action they decided to take. Following completion of the simulation, students were asked about their observations about the choices Americans in poverty frequently have to make. Also, we discussed how the parents of people they know at school might be struggling with these same decisions on a regular basis so it becomes very important not to bully or make fun of others because they might not smell the best or their shoes are old and worn out. They might not have regular access to a shower and their parents might not have money for the newest and best clothes.

Note: The initial round of the simulation took roughly 10 minutes, but students enjoyed the experience so we went through it twice more (it goes faster after the first round). There are a wide variety of “situations” that pop up, so the simulation does not get ‘old’ in that amount of time as long as students stay engaged.

Lesson 5: Slavery**Materials:**

Big pretend money

Some sort of twine

Powerpoint with

map of West Africa

fair trade logos

Cocoa farms/machete

“Name tags” for students in the skit/demonstration (Optional: costume pieces)

Fair Trade Chocolate (Used Green & Black’s Chocolate)

Attention Getter: Pass out the chocolate to students. As you’re eating your chocolate, I have a question for you. Does slavery still exist?

Yes, slavery does still exist. It’s not something that just is in the history books or the Bible. All around the world adults and even kids your age are forced to do work that they do not want to do, that is unsafe for them to do, and are kept from school illegally to do this work. The slave trade is the fastest growing illegal trade in the world. When people buy and sell human beings, it’s called human trafficking.

Content: Call for a few volunteers. One child will be Salif, one will be his uncle, and one his mom. Two children to be the business owners (Mr. Kofi and Mr. Akwasi) Randomly conscript kids to be the other slaves. Later in lesson, ask for volunteers for other employees. As the story is told, have the children act it out.

Salif is a 12 year old boy who grew up in Burkina Faso with his mother. One day, she had to go to another village to help her sister who was sick, so she sent Salif to stay with his Uncle Aziz for a little while. His uncle was not a good man and he owed people money, so, Uncle Aziz sold Salif for some money and he was taken to another country called Ghana.

When he got to Ghana, he learned that he would be expected to work on a cocoa farm. Cocoa farms frequently employ children because it's easier for kids to climb into the trees to chop down the pods than adults, plus if a kid like Salif is brought there illegally, if he gets hurt no one will really care too much, except his mom.

When his mom came back from helping her sister, she discovered that Aziz sold Salif, and as much as she tried, there was nothing she could do. She didn't speak the same language as the police in Ghana, she had no money to hire lawyers, and Aziz has no idea where the people took him. So, Salif's mom is heartbroken, with no way to find her son.

Meanwhile, Salif works all day, never going to school, never learning a different job, getting beaten if he ever doesn't do his job right or if he tries to get out. He works with other kids too (pull up other volunteers), but they're stuck. They can't go anywhere or find other jobs or go to school (loosely tie together with twine). They work for a man named Mr. Kofi (pull up Business owner).

Over in another village, there's another man who owns a cocoa farm named Mr. Akwasi. Mr. A and Mr. K get about the same amount of money from their job (give same amount of money). Who would like to work on Mr. A's farm? (Take volunteers) Mr. A pays his employees (money gets passed out to employees). Because Mr. K uses slaves who are mostly kids, he doesn't really have to pay them. But owning a farm costs money, you have to pay for the

property, and the tools too (take money from them). So who is going to have to have higher prices to maintain their business? Mr. A who pays his employees or Mr. K who doesn't have to? Mr. A, even though he's following the law and doing things right is going to have to have higher prices because it costs him more to run his farm.

Mr. Akwasi's chocolate is going to be different from Mr. Kofi's, because it's legal, because he's following the law, and because he's being fair. Because of that, when Mr. A sells his chocolate, it can be used in something called "Fair Trade" chocolate.

Fair Trade labels looks like this (show picture of label), if you see this label on food, or any sort of product, you can trust that it came from a place like Mr. A's farm, and not Mr. Ks.

The chocolate you're eating right now is fair trade. It is a little more expensive than chocolate made by children and slaves, but it tastes the same and is made fairly and by following the laws.

I want to tell you though that the illegal use of slaves and children for labor is in all kinds of industries, not just chocolate. A lot of the clothes and shoes we wear, coffee we drink, chocolate and other foods we eat is all produced by people who are doing work they're not paid fairly for or they're being forced to do. All over the world, in different industries and businesses, people are being illegally bought and sold, trafficked, to do things that they don't want to do or in unsafe conditions.

Organizations: But there are all kinds of organizations who do things to help. IJM, and Not For Sale are organizations that work on a global scale to stop the problems that cause slavery. They also help free people who are found in slavery. Save the Children does child

sponsorships like the organizations we talked about last time, plus they also have a program where they save children from slavery.

Here is an example of one of the things Not for Sale does for children once they have been saved from slavery: (video of camp program for children)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCGaFRV2y7s&feature=plcp&safe=active>

Conclusion: You can do something about this. You can decide right now that you won't let these stories go unknown. You can talk to your parents about this stuff, you can help support organizations working to end the slave trade by fundraising or doing research to learn more about kids like Salif and make sure that their stories are not ignored. You can help give a voice to people who are unable to speak for themselves. Not for Sale (Free 2 Work) also has an App for your phone where you can scan barcodes and get a report for the company and see if they are known for using unfair labor.

Discussion Questions:

What questions do you have about tonight's lesson?

How do these social justice topics make you feel? This stuff breaks God's heart too. And we are called to show the world what God looks like.

What can we do to help give people a voice? How does this relate to showing people what God looks like?

Resources:

notforsalecampaign.org

free2work.org

<http://www.notforsalecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/NFSHighSchoolCurriculum.pdf>

Lesson 6: Persecuted Church

Materials:

Computer with Internet access and projection capabilities

Content: Previously, pretty much everything we've talked about has had to do with poverty and how social justice, or our attempt to make the world more fair, relates to poverty. What are some of the issues we've talked about with poverty? (*slavery, hunger, water quality, homelessness*).

What we're talking about this week though, is the persecuted church, which is not about poverty, but it is about justice and freedom.

In this country, we have freedom, but in many places, they do not. Show the map from <http://www.persecution.com/public/restrictednations.aspx?clickfrom=bWFpbl9tZW51>.

All these red dots mark countries in which the laws restrict Christianity or the practice of faith in some way.

Imagine with me for a second though what Christians, in these other parts of the world go through, where being a Christian or going to church is effectively illegal.

At any point, the doors of this church could be broken in to.

We could all be arrested, fined, put in jail.

Your parents could get in trouble for sending you here.

The small group leaders would get into extra trouble.

Pastor Elizabeth would likely to be beaten, along with all the other pastors.

If your parents work for the church, they would lose their jobs, and get beaten for working here in the first place.

If your parents' bosses found out you went here, or if they came to church ever, your parents could lose their jobs and have a really hard time finding new ones.

There are Christians all over the world who are dying and being imprisoned for telling people about God and his love for us, but as with everything we've talked about, there are people doing things to help.

Organizations: Voice of the Martyrs is an organization that reaches out to people in other countries who are being hurt for their faith. They help support in a lot of different ways, dropping parachutes with books, Bibles, and radios that play Christian music and messages; helping provide medical help to people who are physically hurt because of their faith, to help the families of people who have been killed, and to encourage those people who are being persecuted.

You can be a part of what they're doing too. We can all pray for these people. Through the VOM website, you can sign up for prayer requests to be sent to yours or your parent's email address once a week. Or you can decide as a small group to send letters of encouragement to someone who is currently in prison through the VOM website, prisoneralert.com. Like we talked about last week, there is always something you can do. God gave you your talents, gifts, and passions for you to use to tell others about him or to help others do so. As time allows, show the following video clip of how the Voice of the Martyrs supported Pakistani Christian and Non-Christian refugees who were not allowed to go to a regular refugee camp:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=5vMuHtkkbMU. This is an example of the sort of work that VOM does to help support Christians tell others about Jesus all over the world.

Discussion Questions:

What have you heard about the persecuted church before? What do you think we should do about it?

In general, what are you thinking that God might be calling you to do with your life? What are your talents? What do you care about? What makes you get excited and amped up?

Resources:

therebelution.com

persecution.com

prisoneralert.com

Lesson 7: Shalom

Materials:

Graph showing the idea of what a “calling” is (Venn Diagram)

Youtube clips:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbfrjBmOtw&feature=related&safe=active>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3_V84gbUZs&feature=related

Content: Who knows the word Jewish people use to greet each other? The word they use for hello is “shalom” this word, actually means peace. So when they say “shalom” to say hello, they really mean, “peace be with you”.

In the Bible, you can also find the word “shalom” not in terms of saying hello, but saying that God will bring “shalom” to the Earth. He brings ultimate peace to the chaos through his kingdom. And as a part of that kingdom, we also must do our part to follow God’s calling and bring “shalom.”

Shalom is the complete Peace that is God. When we invite God into our lives and become Christians, we get filled with “shalom.” We can have a “peace that passes understanding,” one that doesn’t make sense. This peace/shalom can and should fill us, our lives, and our actions. And through this filling up of God, we can do a better job of showing the world what God looks like. When we act on “shalom,” actively live it out, we’re doing our “calling.”

Being “called” or having a “calling” sometimes seems like this really big deal. And that it’s something only some people have, like people who are called to be pastors or missionaries. But really, it’s something we ALL have.

Your calling is where your talents, passions, and global need overlap (show Venn diagram). We are all called to do something to help bring “shalom” here on earth to show everyone how awesome our God is and WHY he makes a difference in our lives.

Two teens, Alex and Brett Harris, wrote a book called, “Do Hard things” this movie talks about it. Show the clip about the book, “Do Hard Things”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbfrjBmOtvw&feature=related&safe=active>

Helping increase “shalom” isn’t something that only adults do. Teens all over are acting on their callings in life and doing things about the injustices they see and feel called to change.

There are all kinds of stories at the “Do Hard Things” website, therebelution.com of examples of how teens are changing their world for God’s glory.

Here’s one example of someone who started acting on his calling to bring about “shalom” starting when he was 12 years old. Here’s him talking about why he got started, and what he did once he felt God’s call in his life. Show clip of Zach Hunter speaking on the beginning of his organization “Loose Change to Loosen Chains”:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3_V84gbUZs&feature=related.

I could talk for a long time about all the different things teens are doing, and the different things God might be calling you to.

Organizations: The Rebelution is the website and organization begun by the two brothers who wrote the book, “Do Hard Things.” There, you can learn more about what other students your age are doing to fix the things they see wrong in the world, with God’s help and in His name.

Discussion Questions:

Where do you see chaos in our world? Where do you see shalom?

We are called to bring shalom to the world. What can we do this week in our own lives to help bring about shalom?

This is our last week for this unit. What issue stuck out to you the most? What do you want to do something about? (Encourage students to find ways to work together to bring shalom to these places.)

Resources:

therebelution.com

Do Hard Things Book

<http://realteenfaith.com>

<http://www.zachhunter.me>

APPENDIX B

Pre-Survey

Social Justice Survey

If I were to say the term “social justice” would you know what I was talking about?

Yes No

Do you remember ever talking about things like poor people, homelessness, modern day slavery, hunger, etc in **church**?

Yes No

If yes, what can you remember about it?

Do you remember ever talking about things like poor people, homelessness, modern day slavery, hunger, etc in **school**?

Yes No

If yes, what can you remember about it?

Please select the best answer in your opinion:

According to the **Bible**, how important do you think helping poor people is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not important					The most important thing	

According to **you**, how important do you think helping poor people is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not important					The most important thing	

How often would you say you think about how to help poor people?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never					All the time	

Do you know of anything you can do now to help poor people around the world?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can't think of anything					I know lots of ways to help	

How comfortable do you feel talking to friends about Jesus?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not comfortable at all!					Very comfortable!	

How comfortable would you feel talking to friends about helping poor people?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not comfortable
at all!

Very
comfortable!

Post-Survey

Social Justice Survey

If I were to say the term “social justice” would you know what I was talking about?

Yes No

Do you remember ever talking about things like poor people, homelessness, modern day slavery, hunger, etc in **church**?

Yes No

If yes, what can you remember about it?

Do you remember ever talking about things like poor people, homelessness, modern day slavery, hunger, etc in **school**?

Yes No

If yes, what can you remember about it?

Please select the best answer in your opinion:

According to the **Bible**, how important do you think helping poor people is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not important						The most important thing

According to **you**, how important do you think helping poor people is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not important						The most important thing

How often would you say you think about how to help poor people?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never						All the time

Do you know of anything you can do now to help poor people around the world?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can't think of anything						I know lots of ways to help

How comfortable do you feel talking to friends about Jesus?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not comfortable at all!						Very comfortable!

How comfortable would you feel talking to friends about helping poor people?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not comfortable at all!						Very comfortable!

What was your favorite part of the Social Justice unit the past few weeks?

APPENDIX C

April 17, 2013

Dear Honors Committee,

Over the past 4 years, I have been privileged to have Stacey Gerstung as part of my Preteen and Jr. High Ministry volunteer and intern teams at College Church of the Nazarene. She has been a dynamic and dedicated member of my team. When she came with the idea of investing her Senior Honor's project in our ministry, I was delighted. We worked together to determine the scope and sequence of the topics and schedule. We also, coordinated the lessons she taught with the messages I preached to the students each week.

Because of the time constraints, Stacey had the challenging task of teaching all of the 5-8 grade students and leaders at the same time. This is not a task for the faint of heart! As the weeks progressed, Stacey increased in her ability to communicate and keep the attention of the entire group. The more narrative her style became, the more the students responded. They were captivated by the stories of students the same age as they were in other parts of the world. Stacey did a great job of tweaking information to make it age appropriate.

Each week her main content had to do with facts about a specific issue and agencies that were meeting needs in those specific areas. The spiritual and theological application components of the experience occurred during the preaching time with me and the unpacking time with their small group leaders. Each small group leader was equipped with a set of questions I crafted to meld the factual and spiritual application sections together. Students responded very positively to the different topics Stacey shared about. During the fall, countless students came up to me sharing how they had even begun projects to make a difference! You never know the ripple effect that could take place when a student's talents, interests, and, abilities are applied to a need in the world. I am excited to see the fruit of those seeds that were planted last fall!

Thank you for allowing Stacey to partner with us. I believe we benefited greatly for Stacey's investment in our students through this project. If there are any specific questions I can be of help answering, I would be glad to. You can phone me at 309-883-0147 or email me at: askpastorelizabeth@gmail.com. I can see the vivid value of this project in Stacey's abilities as a communicator and conveyor of

knowledge, she improved every week! I believe she has a bright future ahead in the field of education. Thank you for your time investing in students like this!

In His Joy,

Rev. Elizabeth Bjorling

Executive Director, Hagah Ministries

Previous Preteen and Jr. High Pastor, College Church of the Nazarene