

Not a Game—Hunger

Activities to help youth understand the real-life impact of hunger on people in the world and our community (for use prior to CROP Walk or another type of hunger alleviating activity)

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

—1 John 3:17–18 (NRSV)

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

—James 2:15–17 (NRSV)

Service is an important component of youth ministry. We are called by Christ to love and serve our neighbors. But, how do we get the young people not only to show up to work at a food bank or other project but to start the process of understanding the root causes of hunger in their own community? How do we assist them in understanding what it might be like to live in our country of plenty and not have enough? These activities are designed to empower young people by equipping them with facts about hunger and have them use that knowledge to better engage in the service project you have planned or to figure out ways to alleviate the problem in a new way. Note that in the Hunger and Food Insecurity Statistics cards, you will need to look up statistics for your particular state. Bread for the World's website has the option of clicking on hunger facts by state: <https://www.bread.org/library/us-hunger-and-poverty-state-fact-sheets>.

Supplies needed for these activities:

- 11" x 17" piece of paper for each table
- pens, crayons, markers
- cut-outs of Hunger and Food Insecurity Statistics cards
- plastic cups or some other nonbreakable item for each table
- cut-outs of Are You HUNGRY for Knowledge quiz
- paper

1. **Welcome Activity (10 min.)**—On tables have an 11" x 17" piece of paper with the word *HUNGER* in the middle. To one side, in small type, have these instructions:

Create a Wordle on HUNGER by using these prompts:

- Use six words that define hunger.
- Use four physical effects of hunger.
- Use six mental/emotional effects of hunger.

Together, create a word cloud or Wordle, with varied sizes of letters, colors, and types of handwriting in answer to the prompts on the paper. The main word is *HUNGER*.

When youth are finished, post these sheets of paper around the room and have groups share their Wordles. Are there similarities in words that were chosen? Were there categories for which groups had difficulty coming up with words? Tell youth that by the end of your time together, hopefully they will know a little more about hunger and can fill in with additional words.

Ask youth to raise their hand if they've ever said, "I'm starving"? Or "I'm so hungry I might die."

We use these terms lightly, but most of us have not ever experienced hunger. Being hungry is a real phenomenon for *forty-nine million* people in the world—1 in 8 people and one million children *die* of hunger and its related issues every year. Hunger kills more than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined. So, anything we can do to raise awareness about hunger, raise funds for organizations that work to alleviate hunger, or stand in solidarity with those who are hungry is serious stuff that will make a big impact.

2. **Video (10 min.)**—Show *CROP Hunger Walks: We can do so much in 2019*, which can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NAqsbOWLEw (If you are working at a local food bank, there may be a video about their work. Or you could invite in a speaker. CROP or Church World Service have general videos about hunger, so you can certainly choose a video that focuses more on hunger than on walking. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has videos on hunger focusing on The One Great Hour of Sharing offering.) Ask youth to describe something they have learned about hunger from the video?
3. **Discussion (10–15 min.)**—Give each table statistics cards on hunger and food insecurity (these are included at the end of this plan) from local, U.S., and worldwide sources. Ask them to pass the cards around the table and have each person read a card. Some cards will have questions. Have the table talk about the questions. (*Florida is the state I have used as an example. Remember that you will want to change those stats for your state.*)

4. **Activity (15 min.)**—Collect the statistic cards from each table. Put a plastic cup per table or some other nonbreakable object at the front of the room. Explain to youth that each table will be competing against one another to see who has more knowledge about hunger. Ask questions derived from the video and the statistic cards they just read and discussed at their tables. Tell the youth *not* to call out an answer. If their table knows the answer, a representative from their table should run forward and grab their cup (or whatever object). The first table that grabs their cup will get to answer a question from the Are You HUNGRY for Knowledge quiz. (Questions are included at the end of this plan.)
5. **Food Diaries (10 min.)**—Give each young person a piece of paper and pen. Ask them to write the days of the week down the side of the paper. For each day, list the following:
 - How many times have you eaten fast food?
 - How many times have you eaten with your family in a restaurant?
 - How many times have you eaten fresh fruit or vegetables?
 - How many times have you had a choice about what to eat when you got home from school?
 - How many times have you had a snack in the middle of the day or in the evening before bed?
 - How many times have you made a sandwich at home?
 - How many times have you eaten a homecooked meal with meat/protein, fruit or vegetables, and a dessert option?
6. **Expense Activity (15 min.)**—Now work with your table and put approximate cost amounts next to each meal or snack you had. If you worked forty hours a week at a job that paid you minimum wage (*\$8.10 an hour or whatever minimum wage is in your community*), how much would you make a week? Add up the amount of money you spent on food this week. How much money would you have left for rent? Clothes? Phone? Internet? Medicine? You might expand this by looking up the average rent in your community, basic phone fees, and internet charges and have youth factor all that in as well as other things they do. Then have them imagine they were a single parent working at a minimum-wage job trying to provide for themselves and their child. What would happen if they got sick and missed a few days of work or if their child got sick and they had to stay home to care for him or her. You might choose to weave this story further.

OR

Give one of the family situations (see “Family Meal Case Scenarios”) to each table. Have them determine their family’s food diary. Share with the group if this would be acceptable every week?



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7. **Discussion (10 min.)**—Gather back as a large group and share what choices you made and how you felt about the choices you had to make. How do the choices you had to make for your family compare with your personal food diary?
8. **Closing (5 min.)**—Close by gathering in a circle for a prayer of thanksgiving for all the bounty that each person in the group has and ask God for help in working toward a time when no person will go to bed hungry. Have youth share something they learned about hunger that they want to lift up to God.

Following the prayer, use your phone, tablet, or computer to check out this Kid President video on hunger: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hzpj4M2fBsU>. What did you learn from viewing this?

Hunger and Food Insecurity Statistics

1 in 8 people worldwide don't get enough to eat.

60% of the world's hungry are women and girls.

Why do you think this is the case?

The number of hungry people in the world exceeds the total *combined* populations in the U.S., Canada, and the European Union.

Hunger kills more people each year than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.

One million children die each year from hunger.

Thirty-four million children suffer from malnutrition, which is a treatable and preventable disease.

Almost forty-nine million people in the United States experience hunger or food insecurity during a year.

What does food insecurity mean? It is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's measure of a lack of access at times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.

An average American uses 80–100 gallons of water a *day!* An average person in a developing country, such as Africa, uses only 5 gallons of water a day and on average walks 3.4 miles to get that water.

Do you know how much water an average American shower uses? (17.2 gallons for an eight-minute shower) How much water does it take when you flush the toilet? (1.6–3.5 gallons of water per flush)

Hunger and Food Insecurity Statistics

The average American eats 5 pounds of food a day.
In developing countries, some people eat as little as 3 ounces of rice a day.

How active do you think you could be if 3 ounces of rice is the only thing you had to eat all day long? How would you space out your meals?

By age 5, girls carry the primary responsibility of collecting water for their families (for washing, cooking, and drinking). Five-gallon buckets full of water can weigh up to 40 pounds.

How much does a one-gallon container of water weigh? (8.34 pounds)

The total amount of food needed in the United States is estimated to be about 10.6 billion pounds. Americans throw away 10 times that much food every year.

How much food is thrown away each year in our country? (10 x 10.6 billion)

For statistics about hunger in your state, visit the nonprofit Bread for the World: <https://www.bread.org/library/us-hunger-and-poverty-state-fact-sheets>.

You can click on your state in the “Hunger and Poverty Facts by State” section to learn state-specific hunger statistics.

What surprised you about your state and hunger? Does this inspire you to do anything new or want to do something to help?

More than half of the people who regularly come to food banks for food and supplies have jobs. Their jobs are often minimum-wage jobs or don't cover rent, utilities, and food for a whole month.

Church World Service (CWS) is the organization that sponsors CROP Walks all over the country. CWS works to alleviate hunger and poverty in our community, in our country, and in our world.

Can you name another organization that works to alleviate hunger and poverty in our community?

Are You HUNGRY for Knowledge?

Questions with Answers in parenthesis:

1. If your table was the world, who would more likely experience hunger? (*the females*)
2. What does food insecurity mean? (*you don't know if you will have food for your next meal, and the food you have may not be healthy*)
3. Hunger kills more people each year than what three diseases? (*malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS*)
4. How many gallons of water does the average American use every day? (*80–100 gallons*)
5. How many gallons of water does the average African use every day? (*5 gallons*)
6. Approximately how much does a one-gallon container of water weigh? (*8.34 lbs*)
7. At what age do girls in developing nations begin to be responsible for collecting their family's water supply for the day? (*age 5*)
8. What is the top food insecure county in our state? (*you will have looked this up*)
9. How many pounds of food does the average American eat per day? (*5 pounds*)
10. What is the annual walk sponsored by CWS that raises money and awareness to alleviate hunger in our community and the world? (*CROP Walk*)
11. What is one way we could help alleviate hunger in our community? (*participate in CROP Walk, work at a food bank, collect nonperishable items for a local food bank, cook a meal for a shelter, consider doing snack bags of fresh fruit for kids at a local after-school program in a food insecure part of the community*)

Family Meal Case Scenarios

Family #1: There are three people in your family, two adults and a child under 10. You have \$18 to spend on food for one day. Decide how your family will use this money to provide daily food for the family. (*Costs are for the meal for the whole family.*)

Breakfast for three people:

Cereal and fruit: \$2

Frozen waffles and fruit: \$3

Toast: \$1

Lunch for three people:

Cheese sandwiches: \$2

Ham sandwiches, apples, and cookies: \$4

PBJ sandwiches and carrots: \$2

Dinner for three people:

Pasta, salad, and bread: \$5

Hot dogs and soup: \$4

Dinner at a pizza place: \$15

Snacks for three people:

Ice cream: \$4

Fruit: \$2

Cheese and crackers: \$2

Circle your choices. How much will your menu cost:

Per day: _____

Per week: _____

Per year: _____

How many fruits and vegetables were you able to provide your family: _____

With 1 being poor and 5 being nutritious, how would you rank your family's diet today? _____

Family #2: There are five people in your family, two adults and three children: 6, 12, and 15. You have \$18 to spend on food for one day. Decide how your family will use this money to provide daily food for the family. (*Costs are for the meal for the whole family.*)

Breakfast for five people:

Cereal and fruit: \$4

Frozen waffles and fruit: \$5

Toast: \$2

Lunch for five people:

Cheese sandwiches: \$4

Ham sandwiches, apples, and cookies: \$6

PBJ sandwiches and carrots: \$4

Dinner for five people:

Pasta, salad, and bread: \$8

Hot dogs and soup: \$6

Dinner at a pizza place: \$20

Snacks for five people:

Ice cream: \$6

Fruit: \$3

Cheese and crackers: \$4

Circle your choices. How much will your menu cost:

Per day: _____

Per week: _____

Per year: _____

How many fruits and vegetables were you able to provide your family: _____

With 1 being poor and 5 being nutritious, how would you rank your family's diet today? _____



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Family Meal Case Scenarios

Family #3: There are four people in your family, one adult and three children, 4, 6, and 12. You have \$8 to spend on food for one day. Decide how your family will use this money to provide daily food for the family. *(Costs are for the meal for the whole family.)*

Breakfast for four people:

Cereal and fruit: \$3

Frozen waffles and fruit: \$4

Toast: \$2

Lunch for four people:

Cheese sandwiches: \$3

Ham sandwiches, apples, and cookies: \$5

PBJ sandwiches and carrots: \$3

Dinner for four people:

Pasta, salad, and bread: \$7

Hot dogs and soup: \$5

Dinner at a pizza place: \$18

Snacks for four people:

Ice cream: \$5

Fruit: \$2

Cheese and crackers: \$3

Circle your choices. How much will your menu cost:

Per day: _____

Per week: _____

Per year: _____

How many fruits and vegetables were you able to provide your family: _____

With 1 being poor and 5 being nutritious, how would you rank your family's diet today? _____

Family Meal Case Scenarios

Family #4: There are five people in your family, two adults and three children: 2, 8, and 16. You have \$30 to spend on food for one day. Decide how your family will use this money to provide daily food for the family. (Costs are for the meal for the whole family.)

Breakfast for five people:

Cereal and fruit: \$3

Frozen waffles and fruit: \$4

Toast: \$2

Lunch for five people:

Cheese sandwiches: \$3

Ham sandwiches, apples, and cookies: \$5

PBJ sandwiches and carrots: \$3

Dinner for five people:

Pasta, salad, and bread: \$7

Hot dogs and soup: \$5

Dinner at a pizza place: \$18

Snacks for five people:

Ice cream: \$5

Fruit: \$2

Cheese and crackers: \$3

Circle your choices. How much will your menu cost:

Per day: _____

Per week: _____

Per year: _____

How many fruits and vegetables were you able to provide your family: _____

With 1 being poor and 5 being nutritious, how would you rank your family's diet today? _____