

Illinois Missions Offering 2008

Youth Study

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DISCUSSION STARTER

As students enter, give each one a card from a deck of cards that has only two color suites (You could use the red and black cards from regular playing cards or any two different color suits from a Rook, Uno or Skip Bo deck.) Make sure you have the cards evenly counted out by color so that the teams are somewhat even. Tell them NOT to share with others which color card they have. When it's time to start the study, have those with one color sit on one side of the room while those with the other color sit on the other side of the room.

While you play mediator, collect the cards from the two teams and place them in a pile in front of you, facing the two teams. Shuffle the cards and draw the top card. If it is, say, a red card, a person from the red team steps up, if it is a black card, a person from the black team steps up. This person now has two options:

1. To keep the next undisclosed card
2. To give the next undisclosed card to the other team

If they keep the next drawn card:

- a. And it's a card that matches their team, they do nothing
- b. And it's a card that matches the other team; they must go to the other teams' side

If they give the next drawn card to the other team:

- a. And it's a card that matches their team; they must select someone from the other team to be on their team
- b. And it's a card that matches the other team; they must go to the other teams' side

THE STUDENTS ONLY GET ONE CHANCE TO HEAR THE RULES! ONCE THE GAME HAS STARTED, YOU MAY NOT REMIND THEM OF THEIR CHOICES.

Play continues until there is only one team or until a set time. Team with the most players wins.

MAIN OUTLINE

Ask students if it was hard to keep up with which side was which color. Was it difficult to remember the rules for drawing and choosing what to do with the cards?

Say: Sometimes it's hard to know who is on your side in life, too, isn't it? In the game of life, how do we know who wins? Does anybody really win? Jesus tells a parable about being on the right side of things...literally!

Read Matthew 25:31-46 as a group, having students take turns reading sections.

You could also use this idea:

Break up the room into four sections-

1. Person One reads all of Jesus' words
2. Person Two reads all of God's words
3. Half the group reads the Sheep's response
4. Half the group reads the Goat's response

Ask: Do you really think it will be like that in heaven? Why or why not?
Does our eternity hinge on how we helped people in this life?

Next, have the students list out the needs and responses on a board or poster. Then have them describe the type of need represented (i.e. physical, emotional, spiritual, etc) and to brainstorm ways they could meet those needs in the lives of others. Finally, ask them to describe times when they've responded or not responded to this need in someone else's life.

Ask: What awaits those on the right? What awaits those on the left?

In this passage, there are two key phrases that we want to look at.

1. "to the least of these" – There are two ways we could look at this phrase

a. "least" meaning someone small or insignificant in the world's eyes

Ask: According to the world's standards, who would these people be?

Say: The world looks at fame (or infamous), power or money as the gauge for significance. Movie and music stars, people who do outrageous things, and those with the most money and power are often elevated to status of "significant" in our world. We hold up in high regard those people who fall into these categories. But, Jesus says our rewards will be judged on how we've treated people who aren't famous, who don't have money or power and who live quiet, often forgotten lives.

b. "least" meaning small or basic need

Ask: What kinds of small or basic needs does Jesus refer to in this passage?

Say: Jesus also challenges us to the most basic of needs in people's lives: food, water, clothes, companionship, compassion and grace. He wants us to understand that often it not how much we give away, but rather the motives behind our giving away.

2. "did it unto Me" - Share with the students the importance of the phrase "did it unto Me"

Jesus gave to his listeners. It is not what we did for others that really matters; it's what we did on behalf of Jesus that is important. Good deeds do not get us into heaven; love for Jesus does. As you look at the responses of the sheep, they were just as surprised at Jesus' answer to them as the goats. That's because their motivation for serving was compassion for those hurting, not an inheritance. They sought to serve God through their compassion.

Say: This month, our church will be praying, giving and seeking opportunities for doing unto the least of these.

Pass out the attached sheet that shows how giving small or large amounts of our money can make a difference in the lives of people across Illinois. Challenge students to take the amounts listed and think of things the money would buy for them personally. For example, \$3 could purchase 3 downloads from iTunes or a new ringtone for their phone. Now challenge them to think kingdom-minded. Have the students think of how that amount of money, used in the way listed, could make a kingdom-impact. For instance, that one box of Pop Tarts could change a college students' view of Christians, and ultimately, Jesus Himself.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

There are several ways to end your session. Choose one or all of the options to fit your group.

1. Show one of the short video of how the Illinois Missions Offering can impact ministry across the state. Challenge students to pray regularly for the various ministries highlighted in the video.
2. Challenge students to think back to the exercise where they thought about what the various amounts of money could buy for them personally. Now, challenge the students to commit to “fasting” from that item for the next month, giving the money they would have otherwise spent on that item towards the Illinois Missions Offering. For instance, if the student spends an average of \$5 on music a month, have the student commit to giving that \$5 towards the IMO.
3. Take some time to pray through the list of needs met through offering amounts, focusing on the specific need it represents. For instance, the \$3 for Pop Tarts would go to minister on college campuses. Have the students pray for college students who will be given Pop Tarts during the campus outreach projects.

LIST OF NEEDS MET THROUGH THE ILLINOIS MISSIONS OFFERING

Much of the Offering provides salary support for missionaries throughout the state, but some is used for ministry supplies such as the following:

\$ 1 helps to buy evangelistic tracts for Mississippi River Ministry projects.

\$3 buys a box of Pop Tarts to hand out on a college campus

\$5 will buy evangelistic tracts for a church hosting a block party

\$7 will buy a Bible study workbook for a prison inmate

\$10 provides a ‘Bible story cloth’ for teaching boys and girls about missions

\$20 provides literacy materials English as a Second Language training

\$50 buys water bottles imprinted with the plan of salvation for a county fair

\$175 underwrites the expenses of a Camp Staffer for a full week of Missions Camps

\$300 helps pay the cost of a church block party

\$400 underwrites the expenses of an Acts 1:8 Challenge

\$500 helps cover the expenses of the Regional VBS Clinic

\$1000 pays for the sound system for a new church start

\$2000 provides utilities at the Christian Activities Center in E. St. Louis for one month

\$6,000 helps subsidize rent for a new church for a year