

Youth Activity I: We Need Each Other to Feed Each Other

Materials needed

- Ingredients for the Recipe
- Baking Tools
- Access to a Kitchen

This activity is intended to illustrate that each one of us has an important job to do in God's kingdom. Some jobs seem bigger, and some tools seem smaller, but each one is necessary if we're going to change the world. Just like Naomi needed Ruth, Ruth needed Naomi, and both of them needed Boaz and he needed them. In the same way, we need each other to make sure all are fed, and none of us is more important than another.

Instructions

Choose a recipe according to the size of your youth group. A boxed brownie mix would work well for a small group, and a from-scratch recipe would work better for a larger group. If you'd like to draw a deeper connection to Ruth's story, use the recipe for a quick barley bread (instructions below). Emphasize that Boaz worked the field, and Ruth collected the barley and beat it so Naomi could bake the bread.

Distribute the ingredients, one by one, so that every student has one item—either an ingredient or a tool (spoon, bowl, spatula, etc.). Make sure to give the recipe to someone. Tell the students they are the only one who can use the tool or ingredient they've been given. They have been given the responsibility of taking care of it and properly using it, and ultimately sharing it with the rest of the group.

Then tell the recipe-holders to make the recipe all by themselves. Make the point that having instructions is only worth something if you also have ingredients and tools.

Then tell the group that their mission is to bake the treat on the recipe card, and ask what might happen if the recipe-holder were to lose the recipe, or drop it in water, or tear it up. How would the group be able to complete their mission? Ask what would happen if the person holding the mixing bowl were to break the bowl. Then where would they be? Emphasize that each person's tool or ingredient is necessary for completing the mission.

While the treat is baking, use this time to teach your group about refugees in our world today. Explain that refugees are persons who have had to flee their home country and cannot return for fear of persecution based on their race, religion, politics, or association with a certain social group. Share that over 80 percent of refugees are hosted by developing countries. Ask the group to imagine how their life would change if they had to leave their country based on the color of their skin, or that they came to youth group/church that day. What would be the most difficult thing about such a sudden and drastic relocation? What would be the most frightening? Be sure to mention that there are nearly 60 million forcibly displaced people in the world (refugees, those seeking asylum, and internally displaced people combined), and that over half of refugees are under the age of 18. For reference, 60 million is slightly less than the population of the entire country of Italy. Those people are often without adequate food and clean water, and they live in danger or fear or both. Ask the group to consider what a blessing it is to be able to freely meet at church, to gather together, and to bake delicious bread that can be broken and shared.

Then turn the conversation a bit, and ask the group to share gifts they see in each other or in themselves. Use this as a time to encourage each other. Discuss how important it is to take responsibility for those gifts, to take care of them, and to share them. Talk about being good stewards of our talents, our finances, and ourselves, and how part of caring for those things is being will to give them away. Talk about sharing generously.

Tie it all together by reminding the group that the Week of Compassion offering is a place where we can be generous with our time and treasure, giving to brothers and sisters around the world who have been displaced. Be sure to emphasize that, just like each student contributed a unique ingredient to the bread, so each person (refugees included) has a unique offering to bring to God's table as well. Remind them that we all need each other to complete the meal, and that walking together—like Ruth and Naomi—we can receive as well as give.

When it's time to pull the treat out of the oven, distribute one of the batches. Enjoy it. Savor the time together in community, just as you savor the delicious flavor. Turn the conversation to gratitude and thanksgiving, emphasizing the blessings of gifts given—given to and from God, and to and from each other. What a beautiful communion.

If you doubled the recipe, share the second batch with someone else—another class, or give each student one piece to take home and share with someone else. Emphasize giving, sharing, and caring for others.

Close with a prayer below, and a petition to open the students' eyes to see when and how they might give to others and answer God's call to love.

“Dear God of Love, hear our prayers for the millions of refugees and displaced persons of the world. Be with those who are forced to flee their homes due to widespread violence, and hunger, and fear. Guide us to show our compassion through our actions. Lead us in solidarity, so that we may stand beside our brothers and sisters across the world who have been stripped of security and refuge. Open our hearts. Use our gifts in service to those in need. Oh God, we pray that every child belonging to you know that they have accompaniment on their journeys. Where they go, we will go. You created each of us to not be alone, to need one another. Bless our gifts and talents in service of solidarity and connectedness. We pray these things to you, Oh God. Amen.”

Quick Barley Bread

Total Time: 50 min

Prep: 10 min

Cook: 40 min

Ingredients

- 10 ounces barley flour, approximately 3 cups
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 ounce baking powder, approximately 2 1/2 tablespoons
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 cup canola oil, plus extra for pan
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup whole milk



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Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Lightly rub the sides and bottom of a 4 to 5-quart Dutch oven with canola oil and set aside.

In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, salt and baking powder. In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the honey, 1/4 cup oil, eggs and milk. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until combined.

Pour the batter into the prepared Dutch oven; do not cover with a lid. Place the Dutch oven in the oven. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 190 degrees F. Allow to cool in Dutch oven for at least 5 minutes before turning out onto a cooling rack.

Recipe courtesy of Alton Brown, 2006

Youth Activity II: Where you go, I will go

For this activity you will need enough blindfolds for half of the youth in your group. It would also be helpful to have a white board, chalk board, or giant pad of paper for a reflective discussion after the activity.

Instructions

Before your lesson, write down several sets of different instructions on slips of paper that can be followed in whatever location your youth will gather. Things like, “Go to the water fountain and take a drink.” “Go to the kitchen and count how many different kinds of food are in the refrigerator.” “Go to the sanctuary and grab a Bible.” Make the instructions as simple or as complicated as you’d like, but try to have at least half as many sets of instructions as you have students.

Once the youth have gathered, read the scripture in Ruth. Then split your students into pairs and distribute blindfolds—one for each pair. Ask the pair to decide who will be the leader, and who will follow. Have the followers don their blindfolds, and distribute one set of instructions to each leader. Tell the leader to lead the follower using only their voice (no touching!) and without revealing the instructions until they’ve arrived at their destination. When they’ve completed the task, ask them to come back to your gathering place and return the fulfilled instructions.

When all the pairs have returned, surprise them with a switch. Ask the leaders to put on blindfolds, and then redistribute instructions (so everyone has different ones) and ask the followers to lead. Once again, ask them to return to the gathering place after they finish.

After all the pairs have once again returned, ask everyone to gather around the white board (if using). Ask the people who followed in the first round to share their experience. What was it like to be led without seeing? How well did their leader lead? What did they wish the leader did differently? Were they ever nervous or frustrated? As they respond, write down key words that described their experience on the left side of the board.

Then ask the leaders in the first round what it was like to lead a person who couldn’t see. What was it like to not be able to reach out and lead them by the hand? Did they ever get frustrated? Write down these responses on the right hand side of the board.

Then ask the leaders how they felt when they were told they would now become followers. What was their response? Were they angry, excited, nervous? Did any of them worry that their performance as a leader would affect the way they were led? Add any key words to the “follower” side of the board.

Draw the connection to the 60 million refugees and displaced persons in the world. Explain that refugees are people who must leave their homes because they are not safe, and go to places where they’ve never been. In many ways, these people are not able to see where they’re going, or what’s coming next, and are often surprised to find themselves “blindfolded” (like the second round of “Follow the Leader”). Use that part of the activity to illustrate that we all are in need of someone to walk with at different points in our lives—that none of us are better or more valuable than another. Trying to find your way in a new place is tedious when you have to feel your way alone, and it’s scary, and can be lonely and dangerous. The blindfolded students’ journeys through the church were surely difficult, but imagine how much more difficult it would be to follow those instructions without anyone walking with them? (If you created instructions for your “leaders” similar to the suggestions above, be sure to point out that refugees often do not have access to clean water or food, and sometimes are forced to leave their homes because of their faith).

Make the connection to Ruth and Naomi. Remind the students that these women were refugees, too, leaving their land to find food and safety. But they were not alone. They leaned on each other, and they walked that frightening, unknown road together.

Tell the students that the Week of Compassion offering is one way we can walk with refugees and displaced people around the world. Even though we are not close enough to touch them, we can offer support through our generous giving. We can walk together through this dark time, and we can all count on the promise of God to guide our feet, no matter where we go.