

Description

There's no denying it: The world is hurting. From a crumbling environment to starving children to modern-day slaves, how do you make a dent in all the pain out there? Look at how God views his damaged creation and how he intends to heal it with you as his hands and feet.

Goals

1. Help participants feel accepted, safe, and free to ask questions and grow spiritually.
2. Help participants understand how God views the world and how he intends to change the world.
3. Help participants consider how to align their purposes and actions with God's.
4. Encourage participants to get involved in God's mission and get a taste for what it's like.

Outline

Starter: "One Peace at a Time"

Story Part 1: Laura (alternate story: Alex)

Bible Encounter: Mark 6:30-44

Story Part 2: Laura (alternate story: Alex)

Experience: "Franciscan Benediction," Group & Individual Plans

Opening

Give a sincere and warm welcome to each person, letting them know you are glad they chose to come to the session. Share the vision for the group, then feel free to use the following language to open the session:

Today, we're going to learn and talk about the question "How do I make a difference in a messed-up world?" The Bible makes it clear that God loves the world and grieves at what has gone wrong with it. Even more, God is committed to making the world right again, healing its hurts, and bringing justice to all its inhabitants.

Another question naturally comes up: "What part—if any—do you play in the process?" Are you passively waiting for the world to change, or can you actively participate with God in changing and healing it? Our Bible study, stories, and discussion in this session will address this question.

Starter: “One Peace at a Time”

What do the video and song lyrics seem to say about the state of the world and the problems to be fixed?

Story Part 1: Laura

On a scale of 1 to 10, how empowered do you feel to change the problems of our world? Why?

Bible Encounter: Mark 6:30-44

Context: The Bible calls Christians “the body of Christ.” As a song by Christian songwriter John Michael Talbot puts it, “Christ has no body here but yours; no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks, compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.” So Jesus intends to carry out his purposes and plans in the world through us. But how?

In this passage, Jesus took the limited resources of his disciples and combined them with his power to meet a great need. By this point, the disciples had seen Jesus perform miracles such as casting out demons, bringing a girl back from death, and healing a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. This story begins when the disciples returned from traveling in pairs to nearby villages to preach and serve others.

1. What had Jesus’ disciples been doing and how do you think they were feeling as this story began?
 - Excited about what they’d been doing & teaching (see Mark 6:12-13).
 - Hungry and tired (verse 31).
 - Your notes:
2. If you were one of the disciples, how would you have reacted when you saw a crowd had followed you to where you were trying to rest? How did Jesus react?
 - Since the point of leaving was to find a place to be alone and rest, they might have felt disappointed, resentful, or angry when they saw the crowd.
 - Jesus had compassion on the crowd. They made the effort to follow him, indicating a strong desire, or even desperation, to be near Jesus and learn from him.
 - Jesus saw the crowd “like sheep without a shepherd,” meaning they could have been easily lost, in danger of attack, or struggled to find food and water. It’s possible he saw their need as even greater than the disciples’ desire for food and rest.
 - Your notes:

3. As the end of the day approached, how did the disciples feel when Jesus told them to provide food for the people?
 - If the disciples still hadn't had time to eat or rest, they must have been extremely hungry and tired (and probably grouchy) by this point.
 - They probably didn't feel like they had much left to give, and again they asked Jesus to send the crowd away.
 - They couldn't imagine how they would feed so many people—they didn't have enough food or the money to buy any. The problem probably felt too big for them to solve.
 - Your notes:

4. If you were one of the disciples, how would you have felt as you distributed enough food for 5,000 men (plus women and children), then picked up 12 extra baskets afterward?
 - It's not clear in the text how they felt, so feel free to imagine: Would they have been amazed? Confused? Too tired to notice what was happening?
 - The extra baskets seem to emphasize the abundance of what Jesus had provided. They had gone from not having enough to having tons of leftovers.
 - Your notes:

5. What did Jesus teach the disciples about himself through this experience?
 - That he has miraculous power (to multiply the small amount of food).
 - That he wasn't asking them to do something they couldn't (with his help).
 - That he cares about providing for people's tangible needs (like food) in addition to teaching them about God.
 - Your notes:

6. In this story, Jesus showed that he has miraculous power. Why do you think he used the food that the disciples already had, rather than from another source?
 - He showed the disciples that they did have something to contribute toward solving the problem at hand. With Jesus' help, what they had was enough to make an impact.
 - He could have solved the problem by himself—perhaps conjuring food out of thin air—but the approach he took allowed the disciples to have a role and see the miracle from up close.
 - Your notes:

7. What does this story teach us about how God can use us?
 - God can miraculously use our limited resources to address big problems—problems that would overwhelm us on our own.
 - God likes to involve us, and invites us to work alongside him to meet the needs of people in the world.
 - Your notes:

Story Part 2: Laura



How do I make a difference in a messed-up world?

Experience: "Franciscan Benediction," Group & Individual Plans

"Franciscan Benediction" Watch the clip, then pray aloud through the benediction wording provided. Be mindful that some participants may not yet be comfortable praying aloud.

Group Plan

As a group, plan a service activity to do near campus. Is there a homeless shelter, food bank, retirement home, or hospital where you could volunteer together?

Think ahead about some possibilities; your campus may have an office dedicated to connecting students with volunteer opportunities. Also be open to suggestions from the group.

Individual Plan

Make a short list of some people you see in a typical week. What needs do you see in their lives? Friendship? Tutoring? Food?

It will be helpful if you can provide a good example for the individual application. Think carefully about the person you choose to share about, as it might be awkward to talk about a person other participants know.

Make a list of resources you'd be willing to offer to God—your own "loaves and fishes." Think about material items (money, food, a car to lend), as well as non-material (academic knowledge, musical ability, being a good listener). What resources do you have that may seem small to you, but Jesus could multiply?

Pray together for faithfulness to take the next step in the group activity. Ask God to show you how he might use you in the lives of the people you've written on your individual list. Pray and offer your resources to God. Ask him to show you how he might use them for his work in the world.