

When Did We See You Hungry?

A Four Week Discussion
and Study Guide
with Suggested Action for
Jewish and Christian Groups



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Accepting The Reality GUIDE I

More than 840 million people in the world are malnourished — 799 million of them live in the developing world. CARE (www.care.org) also cites that more than 153 million of the world's malnourished people are children under the age of 5. Six million children under the age of 5 die every year as a result of hunger. The Majority of those malnourished are outside our nation, but according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about 13 million American households are deemed "food insecure"; living in those households are 12.4 million children. Nearly one in ten Florida households (well over half a million) are considered food insecure. [To consider your own county's household food insecurity projection, see Florida Impact's most current *Feeding Florida: Responses to Hunger in the Sunshine State* publication at www.floridaimpact.org]

As we digest this information, we probably have difficulty accepting these statistics as reality. As the rich man in the parable of Jesus (Luke 16:19-31) was oblivious to the reality of a poor man named Lazarus, so our vision may need to be sharpened and focused to experience the anguished parent striving to comfort the child listless from hunger.

Before you dismiss this reality as somebody else's problem, please meditate on these realities. (1) Are not human beings created by God according to Genesis 1:27, which establishes that we are all sisters and brothers as offspring of God? When a child is suffering from inadequate nutrition, is not this our dear sister or brother, our child, our grandchild? (2) Did God not say, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord," see Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22: 35-40. If you or your loved one were hungry, would you not make it a priority to find food? Likewise, a neighbor who is in need?

God's love for us in Scripture means continuous *action*, not only feeling as emphasized frequently in contemporary expression God *always acts* as God cares. (cf., Psalm 136 and John 3:16.) Our love of God in praise, and as expressed in love of neighbor, is to be of the same essence, only flawed by our limitations. For Christian people of God, when a child does not have adequate nourishment, what does 1 John 4:19-21 imply?

Some active suggestions to experience the meaning of childhood hunger for use this week.

Review these Hebrew and Christian Scripture passages:

Leviticus 19:9-10

Matthew 5:42

Deuteronomy 15: 1-2, 3-11

Luke 24:35 (13-34)

1 Kings 17:1-16

2 Corinthians 8:8-14

- Visit/volunteer at the local soup kitchen/food pantry as a group.
- Play "The Monthly Juggle!" on page 9.
- What do these Scriptures (Hebrew or Christian or both) indicate is the response to hunger?
- Who does God use as instruments to respond to hunger?
- Who is God to use today to respond to childhood hunger?
- How did the Hebrew prophets side with the hungry?
- How did Jesus side with the hungry?
- Where do you wish childhood hunger to be within the priorities of your life?

To Love Is To Respond

GUIDE 2

Please share with one other person or the group your reflections on the discussion last week and insights received in your experimenting with one or more of the suggested activities.

Can we agree (1) that the reality is that there is significant childhood hunger; (2) God who is love does not want childhood hunger among any of God's children who are our sisters and brothers; (3) God's love for us stimulates us to love through action against childhood hunger? Let's proceed.

It is said that if you keep doing the same things repeatedly, do not expect different results. This is possibly one of the greatest challenges to acknowledge among humankind, including those who identify themselves as the people of God.

If we have concluded childhood hunger is wrong, who and what needs to change? The beginning response of the who is "we" and the what is "our perceptions and actions." We begin with the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures when we begin with "we" and "our," not "they" and "their".

In these Scriptures the word repent (and its different tenses) is used 98 times. The concept of repent is a call to significantly change, the meaning of the Greek is to change 180° (cf., Ezekiel 14: 6 and Mark 1:15).

A call to change for the people of God is not surprising. God who is perfect love directs us to be complete love to God, our neighbor, and ourselves; and we fall short. So do the organizations in which we participate—synagogue, church, religious movement. We, including the people of God and our organizations, are continually in need of turning around, of changing.

Turning around, changing to what? To God's justice (see Deuteronomy 16:20-32, 32:3-4 and Isaiah 5:16). God's justice is not simply legal justice. God's justice is filled with grace (unilateral giving) and mercy (unilateral compassion) (Isaiah 30:18). God gave justice to the Hebrews when God called a small family to become a prominent nation (Genesis 12:3) and brought them out of slavery back to the promised land (Exodus 1-40).

Jewish tradition tells us that even poor people should give money to tzedakah. While the Hebrew word "tzedakah" is often translated as charity, it involves more than simply putting money in a coffer. The word tzedakah comes from the word "tzedek," which means righteousness. Doing "tzedakah" involves being a righteous person. Tzedakah is a mitzvah—an obligation—not simply an act of kindness. On Yom Kippur, we announce that, only through tzedakah, repentance, and prayer can we avert the evil decree. Only by giving tzedakah can we live full, meaningful lives. The obligation to give tzedakah is not only held by individuals, but by society as a whole. Throughout Jewish history, much of tzedakah was done through tax-financed, community-run programs that provided for the poor, the hungry, the ill, and the children.

What is Scriptural justice? Isaiah 10:1-2 says, "Oh, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey!" God has declared an entitlement that *all* are to have sufficient food, clothing, shelter, and loving relationships.

When Did We See You Hungry?

Some action suggestions to experience as response to childhood hunger this week:

Review these Christian and Hebrew passages:

2 Kings 4:42-44

Matthew 12: 46-50

Proverbs 14: 21

Romans 12: 9-21

Isaiah 3:13-15

1 John 4:7-12

- ◆ If God's love for us and, subsequently, our love for one another is inconsistent with childhood hunger for the people of God, where is the problem?
- ◆ Does congregational worship feed the physically hungry?
- ◆ Does individual or group Scripture study and discussion alleviate childhood hunger?
- ◆ Does helping once in a "soup kitchen" help eradicate childhood hunger?
- ◆ What are the ways besides just giving money that we can perform acts of "Tzedakah"? Try to be creative in thinking of some of them.
- ◆ How is Tzedakah related to Repentance (Teshuva) and Prayer (Tefillah)?

God Entitles Children To Have Adequate Food: We Are God's Representatives To Fulfill This Promise

GUIDE 3

Please share with one other person or the group your reflections on past discussions and insights received in your experimenting with one or more of the suggested activities.

It is hoped we are aware that, (1) the reality is that there is significant childhood hunger here and throughout God's world; (2) God does not want children to be hungry and neither do we, as all of God's children are our sisters and brothers; (3) God motivates us to love through action against childhood hunger.

Genesis 1 and 2 of the Hebrew Scriptures has God placing humankind in a garden which provides food (cf., 1:30 and 2:9). God's word to humankind after the fall in Genesis 3 is that bread would be available (cf., Genesis 3:19). God provides food for the children of Israel through the Israelite Joseph in Egypt (cf., Genesis 41-47). On the journey back to Israel, the land flowing with milk and honey, God feeds the children of Israel in the desert (cf., Exodus 16). No wonder the Hebrew's hymnbook included Psalm 146:7 "who gives food to the hungry." The Passover *meal* was to be a *sign* of God's continued presence and care for the children of Israel.

The Christian Testament has Jesus relating to food when his followers were hungry. Jesus provided them food using the assistance of his disciples (cf., Matthew 15: 32-38, Mark 8:1-9, Luke 9:12-17 and John

(continued on next page)

6:5-13—all four Gospels). He stated that the provision of food to those who were hungry was the criteria for being a part of the reign of God (Matthew 25:31-42). Bread is to be a sign of God's continued presence as the Christian Testament people celebrate Holy Communion.

God clearly and repeatedly reveals in the Christian and Hebrew Testaments that food is to be provided to all humankind. According to all scientific appraisal, God has fulfilled that promise as there is sufficient nutrition for all people on earth at this time. The stumbling block (sin) is the equal distribution by humankind, which is us. We have not chosen the fast that God prefers (cf., Isaiah 58:1-7). Christian Testament people of God are not responding to James 2:14-17.

As we participate in the fulfillment of God's promise of food for all, including children, we will receive contentment and fulfillment for ourselves (cf., Isaiah 58:8-14 and Matthew 25:34-35).

Some action suggestions to experience the importance of adequate nutrition for God's children:

- ◆ What is the relationship between: a Passover celebration and the issue of childhood hunger? Holy Communion and the issue of childhood hunger?
- ◆ Hope is an emphasis in the Christian and Jewish traditions. Is hope to eliminate childhood hunger naïve?
- ◆ What percentage of your income will you contribute to remove the devastation of childhood hunger? (5%, 0.5%, 0.05%)
- ◆ How do you think you could improve the response of the congregation in which you participate to work against childhood hunger?
- ◆ Discuss hunger for six minutes with one person who you think is empathic with the issue of childhood hunger and one person who considers childhood hunger to be the fault of the hungry children's family or culture. How did this exercise help you to clarify your thoughts about this issue?

When Did We See You Hungry?

We, The People Of God, Resolve To End Childhood Hunger GUIDE 4

Please share with one other person or the group your reflections of past discussions and insights received in your experimenting with one or more of the suggested activities.

It is hoped we are aware that, (1) the reality is that there is significant childhood hunger in all parts of the world, including locally; (2) God does not want children to be hungry and neither do we as all of God's children are our sisters and brothers; (3) God motivates us to love through action against childhood hunger as we are God's representatives to fulfill God's promises; (4) As we do God's will, our own lives will be fulfilled.

The late respected Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "Our society is in crises not because we intensely disagree but because we so feebly agree." This reproach can readily include the majority of the people of God. Our goal for these four discussions is to motivate participants to dynamically agree to resolve to end childhood hunger. God is providing the motivation, guidance, strength and resources to begin, continue and complete this challenge (cf., Isaiah 42:1-4 and Luke 4:14-21).

We suggest a plethora of approaches toward our goal of ending childhood hunger, beginning in the State of Florida, our nation, and throughout the world. We begin with one step, possibly a very small step, at a time. It can be done by God's blessings (cf., 1 John 5:3-5 and Isaiah 42:1-4).

The goal can be accomplished by individuals and groups; direct and indirect action; short, intermediate, and long term objectives; people of God; people of good will; private, corporate and governmental institutions; secular and religious organizations; individual and holistic approaches; being supported and giving support; cooperating with veteran movements and initiating new movements; inviting new persons to agree with our resolve to end childhood hunger and join in hands with those who already have begun the resolve.

My resolution to participate in the challenge to eliminate childhood hunger is to:

√ Change my personal life style in these ways:

√ Change our family life style in these ways:

(continued on next page)

√ Increase the emphasis of our congregations attitude and practice of hunger issues in these ways:

√ Contact these organizations in our community about childhood hunger:

√ Intentionally invite other persons or groups to become involved in the issues of childhood hunger.
They are:

Florida Impact is a representative organization of most of the state's major religious denominations and groups. It monitors the Florida Legislature and U.S. Congress concerning matters of interest to low-income families, which includes childhood hunger. *Impact* prepares background information for legislative priorities relative to economic justice, sends out notices when individual issues are being discussed, coordinates advocacy with other organizations committed to the same issues, and reports to its constituents the results of these efforts. *Florida Impact* has been effectively addressing hunger in the state since 1979. You are welcome to join in this endeavor.

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The Monthly Juggle!

This game helps individuals understand how poverty circumscribes a person's life and get behind the figures of the federal poverty level and into the reality. This recreates a monthly income, outlines the circumstances of the player, and then the player relies on the "luck of the draw" to see if they make it to the end of the month and remain within their budget. Make up additional cards of your own. Copy and cut out the cards, placing a START card and one of each of the BUDGET cards (one RENT, one FOOD, etc.) in one envelope for each player. The object of the game is to make ends meet. Good luck.

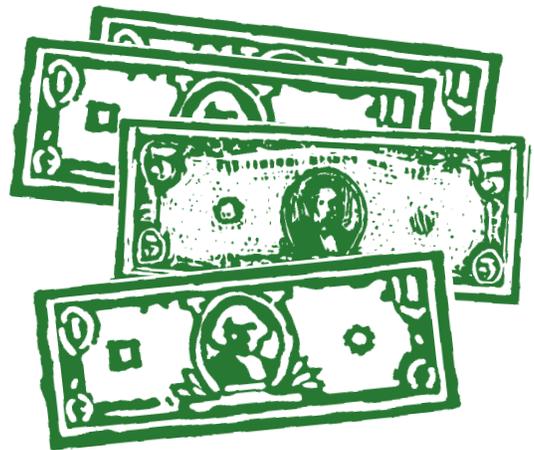
The Rules

1. Pull the START card from an envelope. This card will tell you who you are.
2. One at a time, pull the numbered BUDGET cards from the envelope in numerical order. Each one will tell you what to do.
3. Tally up your figures on the sheet provided, and share with the other players how you make out at the month's end.

The Budget

START

1. Other income	+	_____
2. Rent	-	_____
3. Utilities	-	_____
4. Transportation	-	_____
5. Food	-	_____
6. Child care	-	_____
7. Medical	-	_____
8. Other	+/-	_____
TOTAL		_____



If you have money left over, CONGRATULATIONS, you've achieved another month of food security for you family.

If you come up with a negative number, SORRY, you and your family are in dire circumstances. Beware of the risks associated with poverty and hunger, such as health problems, insecure living arrangements and lack of access to resources.

Start Cards

The Monthly Juggle! START Card

Who you are:

Single parent

2 kids

Work full-time for minimum wage

ADD \$1145.00 to your monthly budget under START. This is your monthly take-home income.



The Monthly Juggle! START Card

Who you are:

Two parent family, one parent works part-time, one works full-time, both minimum wage

2 kids

ADD \$1717.00 to your monthly budget under START. This is your monthly take-home income.



The Monthly Juggle! START Card

Who you are:

Elderly person with custody of 1 grandchild

Income is government assistance, Social Security, and pension

ADD \$1090.00 to your monthly budget under under START. This is your monthly take-home income.



The Monthly Juggle! START Card

Who you are:

Single parent

3 kids

Work full-time, but low-paying job

ADD \$1430.00 to your monthly budget under START. This is your monthly take-home income.



When Did We See You Hungry?

Budget Cards

The Monthly Juggle!



1. OTHER INCOME

Your sister loans you some money.

ADD \$100.00 on line 1.

The Monthly Juggle!



2. RENT

You are on a waiting list for subsidized housing.

SUBTRACT \$840.00 on line 2.

The Monthly Juggle!



3. UTILITIES

Heat wave! High utility bill from the A/C.

SUBTRACT \$350.00 on line 3.

The Monthly Juggle!



4. TRANSPORTATION

New brakes for the car (and gas and insurance).

SUBTRACT \$250.00 on line 4.

The Monthly Juggle!



5. FOOD

Just the regular monthly food bill.

SUBTRACT \$400.00 on line 5.

The Monthly Juggle!



6. CHILD CARE

You are still on the waiting list for subsidized child care. You pay full amount.

SUBTRACT \$590.00 on line 6.

The Monthly Juggle!



7. MEDICAL

Your family contracts a nasty virus. You pay copayments for medicines and doctor visits.

SUBTRACT \$100.00 on line 7.

The Monthly Juggle!



8. OTHER

Congratulations! You win church bingo!

ADD \$50.00 on line 8.

Budget Cards

The Monthly Juggle!



1. OTHER INCOME

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) partial payment.

ADD \$600.00 on line 1.

The Monthly Juggle!



2. RENT

You do not receive any housing subsidies. Pay "fair market rent" for a one-bedroom house.

SUBTRACT \$680.00 on line 2.

The Monthly Juggle!



3. UTILITIES

Nice weather, no heater, no A/C.

SUBTRACT \$180.00 on line 3.

The Monthly Juggle!



4. TRANSPORTATION

Pay your gas money for the month.

SUBTRACT \$155.00 on line 4.

The Monthly Juggle!



5. FOOD

You were finally approved for SNAP (Food Stamps) this month, which helps cover most of the grocery bill.

SUBTRACT \$120.00 on line 5.

The Monthly Juggle!



6. CHILD CARE

You are still on the waiting list for subsidized child care. You pay full amount.

SUBTRACT \$500.00 on line 6.

The Monthly Juggle!



7. MEDICAL

Your allergies are acting up.

SUBTRACT \$22.00 on line 7 for allergy medicine prescription and OTC medicine.

The Monthly Juggle!



8. OTHER

Baby had a growth spurt and needs new wardrobe from the thrift store.

SUBTRACT \$60.00 on line 8.

When Did We See You Hungry?

Budget Cards

The Monthly Juggle!



1. OTHER INCOME

You get a deposit back on your old apartment.

ADD \$200.00 on line 1.

The Monthly Juggle!



2. RENT

You are on the waiting list for subsidized housing.

SUBTRACT \$720.00 on line 2.

The Monthly Juggle!



3. UTILITIES

Pleasant weather, regular bill.

SUBTRACT \$200.00 on line 3.

The Monthly Juggle!



4. TRANSPORTATION

Car payment, gas, and insurance.

SUBTRACT \$405.00 on line 4.

The Monthly Juggle!



5. FOOD

Just the regular monthly food bill.

SUBTRACT \$380.00 on line 5.

The Monthly Juggle!



6. CHILD CARE

You pay after-school care.

SUBTRACT \$235.00 on line 6.

The Monthly Juggle!



7. MEDICAL

Everyone healthy. But pay for vitamins.

SUBTRACT \$12.00 on line 7.

The Monthly Juggle!



8. OTHER

You go over on your cell phone minutes while dealing with a family crisis!

SUBTRACT \$120.00 on line 8.

Budget Cards

The Monthly Juggle!



1. OTHER INCOME

Your child support check came.
ADD \$166.00 on line 1.

The Monthly Juggle!



2. RENT

You do not receive any housing subsidies. Pay "fair market rent" for a two-bedroom house.
SUBTRACT \$840.00 on line 2.

The Monthly Juggle!



3. UTILITIES

Cold snap! Your utility bill is high due to unusually cold weather.
SUBTRACT \$380.00 on line 3.

The Monthly Juggle!



4. TRANSPORTATION

The water pump goes out on your car (and gas and insurance).
SUBTRACT \$320.00 on line 4.

The Monthly Juggle!



5. FOOD

Just the monthly food shopping bill (using coupons, buying items on sale, no extras).
SUBTRACT \$300.00 on line 5.

The Monthly Juggle!



6. CHILD CARE

You receive a child care subsidy from the Early Learning Coalition. Pay minimum amount for child care.
SUBTRACT \$80.00 on line 6.

The Monthly Juggle!



7. MEDICAL

The baby gets the flu.
SUBTRACT \$93.00 on line 7 for the co-pay, medicine, and missed work.

The Monthly Juggle!



8. OTHER

Your washing machine broke down.
SUBTRACT \$40.00 on line 8 for the laundromat.

When Did We See You Hungry?

Budget Cards

The Monthly Juggle!



1. OTHER INCOME

You do child care for extra money.

ADD \$75.00 on line 1.

The Monthly Juggle!



2. RENT

You live with your parents because you can't afford your own place. But they charge you rent.

SUBTRACT \$200.00 on line 2.

The Monthly Juggle!



3. UTILITIES

Nice weather, normal electric bill.

SUBTRACT \$180.00 on line 3.

The Monthly Juggle!



4. TRANSPORTATION

Pay your car payment, gas, and insurance for the month.

SUBTRACT \$350.00 on line 4.

The Monthly Juggle!



5. FOOD

Just the regular monthly food bill.

SUBTRACT \$210.00 on line 5.

The Monthly Juggle!



6. CHILD CARE

Your sister watches your child, but she still charges you for it.

SUBTRACT \$60.00 on line 6.

The Monthly Juggle!



7. MEDICAL

Pay for your regular prescriptions.

SUBTRACT \$90.00 on line 7.

The Monthly Juggle!



8. OTHER

Don't forget to pay your credit card bills monthly!

SUBTRACT \$160.00 on line 8.

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