

Blankets for Refugees

This activity provides a glimpse into the life of a refugee. Participants are divided into “families” of five persons. This can be done as a stand-alone activity for an hour or for an entire weekend.

PREPARATION

MATERIALS:

- Masking tape
- One plastic 5-gallon jug for each group of five people
- Old cooking pots, one for each group
- Plastic sheeting or tarps, one per participant
- Table for distribution of materials
- Heavy weight blanket (optional, one per person)
- Sign with “Refugee Camp” written on cardboard or scrap wood

PREPARE THE CAMP:

Before the session, find another location removed from the starting point where the participants can walk and set up “camp”. Divide this area into 10' x 10' plots with masking tape or small stakes in the ground. Place the “Refugee Camp” sign close to the entrance.

THE SIMULATION

Before starting the journey, explain to the participants that this simulation will give them a small glimpse into the struggle of refugees. Inform them that refugees have to flee in a hurry, leaving all of their personal belongings behind—wallets, food, cell phones, shoes, combs, purses, etc. Collect these from the participants and label them, putting them in a secure place. Explain as refugees that have arrived with only the clothes on their back.

Divide participants into “families” before leaving on their journey. Depending on the space and numbers, assign one person to be a family of one. Explain that is because all of the members of their family were left behind.

Before the participants leave, distribute the jugs, pots, and plastic and tarps. Send the participants on their journey through the wilderness (or your church or neighborhood) carrying their assigned items.

AFTER ARRIVING AT THE CAMP SITE: Tell participants this set up is similar to refugee camps around the world. You have no idea how long you will be staying in the camp. You are to keep in mind that you will not be assigned any additional materials or supplies.

With your family decide how to organize the following functions, all to be performed within your assigned 10' x 10' area: sleeping, collecting water, cooking, eating, building a shelter or tent, gathering firewood and protecting from dangers such as wild animals.

Then let participants begin to set up their plot and settle into the refugee camp.

(continued on back)

When the first bell rings, participants must walk back to the starting location to collect water for their daily use.

Later in the activity, when the second bell rings, participants will walk again to receive their food to take back to their camp site. Lunch or dinner is an opportunity to share with the participants an appropriate simple lunch to show a scarcity of food. Pita bread with a small bowl of peanut butter, simple fruit, (nuts, bananas, mangos, etc.) could be offered with water.

Night time could come early as the participants decide how their entire family would sleep in such a small area.

Following an appropriate amount of time, all of the groups should come together to discuss their experiences. The conversations will be insightful.

End the activity with a prayer:

Oh God, our creator and liberator, we pray for all those who face the trials and tribulations of exclusion. We lift up all those who have been made outcast in our world - for those impoverished by inequality, for those who find themselves in the cold from homelessness, for those who are treated differently because of their skin color or religious background. Today we say a special prayer for all the refugees in the world who have faced violence and persecution. Now many of them face discrimination upon arriving to the safety of this land. Strengthen our faith to be accepting to all and fortify our witness to advocate for just and humane policies that expand the path of welcome for refugees to join our communities. In the same way, we pray for all those who face sickness and disease, in our congregation and throughout our community, may Your blessing comfort them and may Your healing power touch them. In the spirit of love and compassion we pray. Amen.