

## Youth Activity: Scripture Exploration

### Purpose

To explore Bible passages underlying this year's Week of Compassion theme and to understand more consciously how sharing resources changes the lives of all involved

### Materials needed

Bibles

### Preparation

Ask a youth or team of youth to research Week of Compassion and the ministries it makes possible. Visit [www.weekofcompassion.org](http://www.weekofcompassion.org) or the Week of Compassion Fan Page on Facebook. They will present that information to the group during the activity.

### Activity

Youth who researched Week of Compassion explain to the full group about the offering and what it does. The leader adds information as needed. Introduce Week of Compassion's theme for this year, "Sharing Brings Joy."

Initiate a group discussion about sharing.

- What does sharing mean? [to let somebody use something or have part of something, to use something along with others, to take responsibility together (Encarta Dictionary)]
- What childhood memories do you have of sharing? Did your parents/guardians make you share? What kinds of things did you share?
- What kinds of things do you share now, and with whom? As you've gotten older, has sharing become easier? Harder? In what ways?
- Why is sharing a value to aspire to? What are the benefits? The problems?
- Why does sharing often not get lived out?

Read and talk about one or more of these scripture passages:

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (You reap what you sow. God loves a cheerful giver and supplies blessings abundantly so we can share abundantly. Glorify God through generous sharing.)
  - What is cheerful about giving? When do you feel that way about giving?
  - How do you understand v. 8? What do "blessing" and "abundance" mean? What blessings does God provide? What are the hallmarks of "enough"? If God is able to provide every blessing in abundance, how do we understand the differences in opportunities and life style that rich and poor people in our country have access to? The huge disparities between industrialized and developing nations? Does God love the poor less or more than the rich? Discuss the differences between "is able to" and "will." How does God provide blessings? How do we and Week of Compassion figure into those "blessing delivery methods"?
  - How do you understand v. 11? If we give to the church, will God bless us with material wealth? In what other ways does being generous enrich life? What is your role when you have more than you need?
  - What does it mean to glorify God? How does generous giving do that?
  - What surpassing grace have you received from God? How do you understand that not everyone has received that grace in the measure you have received it? Attempt to describe God's "incredible gift."
- Romans 12:1-2 (Present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.)
  - Worship in Jesus' day included sacrificing (dedicating to God and then ritually killing) unblemished animals as an offering. Paul suggests not that we die for God, but that

- we “present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice” (emphasis added). What does that mean—our physical bodies? Our lives? Our purpose in life? How can we “present our bodies as a living sacrifice” to God in this day and age? How can sacrifice for others, in the context of worshipping God, renew or transform us, and bring us joy?
- What aspects of “worldliness” do you think Paul was warning us not to conform to? What would he be concerned about in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What differences would result from not living according to the standards of behavior common in the world? Our choices have consequences. If not conforming freed up time and money, what would you as a Christian nonconformist do with those resources?
  - What other people think and say about us can greatly affect us. Persevering in a life of nonconformity on important issues and of sacrifice oriented toward God is really hard. How can we renew our minds to sustain us in the effort?
  - How is giving money to an offering like Week of Compassion part of our spiritual worship?
- 1 John 4:11-13, 16-17, 19-21 (If we love one another, God lives in us and we live in God. As God is, so we are to be in the world. Those who love God, whom we have not seen, must love their very tangible brothers and sisters, too.)
    - How does God “live in us” if we love one another?
    - How does God treat people? “As he is, so are we in this world.” How can we make that more true? [Make explicit connections to the ministries of Week of Compassion.]
  - Luke 4:16-19 (Jesus proclaims his ministry in his hometown synagogue: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.”)
    - What is the Spirit of the Lord? How do you envision/experience it? Can you relate experiences (yours or other people’s you know) of being anointed with the Spirit? When have you felt power from doing what you felt God wanted you to do?
    - Some people understand “the poor,” “the blind,” and “the oppressed” in this passage to mean people who can’t accept God’s love for them and for all people. Others understand this literally and point to Jesus’ work among the economically poor and healing of the physically blind. How does Jesus’ life support both understandings? How can we be involved in both?
    - Give examples of how we, through Week of Compassion, continue Jesus’ care for people in need.

Week of Compassion affects everybody involved—those who stretch to share their resources as well as those who receive help from the resulting ministries. Listen to what some offering contributors have said about how giving affects them:

- Giving just feeds my soul! This is what life is about—not collecting things, but helping people.
- Giving helps me appreciate what I have.
- As we see needs met, we are reminded how God takes care of us.
- Week of Compassion lets me put my hands on problems that need attention throughout the world.
- Giving to Week of Compassion makes me feel part of a really good something that is bigger than myself, bigger than my community, even bigger than my country.

Invite reactions to these quotes. Have the youth experienced similar feelings from helping others?

Cluster the participants into small groups. Drawing from their own experiences of sharing, the Bible passages, the donor quotes, and other resources as they choose, each group creates and presents to the full group a skit to illuminate the Week of Compassion tagline: “Sharing resources, changing lives.”