

YOUTH ACTIVITIES (GRADES 6 - 12)

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ACTIVITY ONE: SHOW AND TELL

SUPPLIES: Paper or poster board and markers or paint. *Laptop or phones optional – see directions

OVERVIEW: This project can be done simply and within your group, or you can dive deeper and expand the scope and reach. The core concept is listening to voices that don't feel heard and naming things that go unseen. It starts with youth asking people about being heard or feeling seen. The broader the audience, the deeper the activity will go.

PHASE 1 | INVITE

Invite your youth to work in pairs, asking people the following questions with one doing the interviewing and the other taking notes. Encourage them to trade roles as they talk to different people. Here are the questions:

- When have you felt like no one is listening to you?
- What do you hope someone who feels ignored might hear?
- What do you think the world, or the church does not want to hear?

AND

- What do people not want to SEE in the world?
- What makes you feel unseen?
- What does the world or the church not want to see?

To expand the pool of resources, youth could ask their friends via text or messaging apps or post questions on social media. If you feel comfortable letting your youth go out into the community or taking them to a public venue, this could also expand the input. You could even give them a week to collect responses from different places.

In all settings, remind your youth to be good listeners – making good eye contact, paying attention to full responses, not being distracted on devices, and not arguing with responses they disagree with. Encourage them to thank everyone for their time and sharing.

PHASE 2 | RESPOND

Invite the youth to share the responses they received with each other and identify which ones really stick out to them. Ask the

youth which responses they most identify with, and which are beyond their own experience.

Provide paper and markers, or even paints if you have some especially creative youth. Invite them to either create an image that expresses something that has gone “unheard” or write a poem to express something that has gone “unseen.” This can be as simple as writing a quote from one of the responses in large letters and decorating it, or it could be a more abstract expression.

If some of the themes overlap, youth could combine a poem and an image they create to share together. For example, if someone said, “I feel like no one listened to me as a child,” and someone said, “children go unseen,” the youth could write a poem about children being unseen to accompany an image about children’s ideas and observations being dismissed.

You can allow youth to work on their own and create a project to share, team up with partners, or work as a total group. Adapt based on the size and relationship of your group members.

Projects could be shared with the Church, shared at schools or libraries in your community, or shared digitally online. Videos of recordings with images could be powerful social media posts for your church. You could even use them to promote this year’s Week of Compassion offering as we think about how the Church responds to those too often unseen and unheard.

PHASE 3 | CONNECT

Read Philippians 4:8-9 together.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Explain that many who struggle to be seen and heard in our world often feel unseen and heard by God. Many hear messages telling them they are unlovable or that God favors someone else. Week of Compassion is one way our Church affirms God’s presence with everyone and tries to respond to the needs of those who have been ignored, overlooked, or forgotten. By our acts of service and compassion, we can respond to those crying out in need and try to build resilience and community, so no one feels alone.

Ask the youth what simple acts of service they might do within the communities they live, to make sure others are seen and heard.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, may those who can hear have the patience and courage to listen. May those who can see, find the strength to see everything that is happening around them, even when the truth is hard. May those who have the power to create change be moved with compassion so that all your people might hear and see how loved they are. Amen.



ACTIVITY TWO: BELONGING

SUPPLIES: Large paper or markerboard; markers

OVERVIEW: In advance, spend a little time thinking about your own congregation's practices and community norms. This material will focus on our behaviors, our beliefs, and our belonging as a faith community.

PHASE 1 | INVITE

In advance, create three columns on a large piece of paper or marker board. Draw two lines horizontally so you have nine spaces to write in. Label the first two columns *Behaviors* and *Beliefs*.

Label the first row *Community* and invite the youth to think about their community at school, asking "What behaviors or beliefs help people fit in?" (Some youth may distinguish what people believe from what they 'say they believe.' Go with public expression as the determiner here.) They can write their answers in the appropriate column, or one person can record answers for everyone. (You could also give everyone post-it notes and they can add them to the board.)

Label the second row *Team/Group*, and ask them to repeat this process for either a team, club, or group they are part of, or for their family.

Label the third row *Church*, repeating once more for their Church community. This last one may be hard for them to express for many reasons. Allow conversation and even some disagreement if it arises. Let them discuss what the words mean to them and remind the group that the question is not 'what do they believe' but 'how do you best fit in.'

PHASE 2 | RESPOND

Read Philippians 4:8-9 together.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Explain that Paul wrote a letter to the Christian community in Philippi and lifted up two concerns:

People participating in the church for selfish reasons.

People being made to practice old rituals, customs, and rites of passage.

Paul says that past customs were not required, and that sincerity was important when speaking. Paul suggests that the way to know what is required is to look around and listen. If something seems pure and worthy of praise, pay attention.

Write the word *Belong* at the top of the third column and invite the group to list things people do to make others feel like they belong. Some of these might be duplicated from the other columns, contradict things in the other columns, or be unique.

PHASE 3 | CONNECT

Ask the group to think of examples from the life of Jesus where he made people feel like they belonged to God. What teachings can they remember about who is included and who is excluded? Be sure to limit this to teachings of Jesus and not the rest of the scriptures. We want to focus on the things people could see and hear when watching Jesus. As they share, circle things that showed up in your *Belong* column. Write others in on the church row that are not yet there.

Ask the group what they know about Week of Compassion, then fill in any gaps that they need help with to understand this ministry. Invite them to think about the communities Week of Compassion reaches and which things on the *Belong* list Week of Compassion provides. Invite them to think about other things Week of Compassion provides that might be good to add to the list, so it reflects the needs of people living in very different situations. Here is a list of groups you might consider:

- Those living in war zones.
- Those displaced by natural disasters.
- Those refugees from communities that make them unsafe.
- Those living in places vulnerable to natural disasters.
- Those living in poverty with broken systems around them.

CLOSING PRAYER

God whose love knows no ending, help us love like Jesus. Help us welcome without judgment, include without expectations, and treat others as family with no strings attached. May the example of Jesus that we see and hear in scripture compel us all to assure everyone that they belong in the kin-dom of God.



ACTIVITY THREE: I HEAR YOU/I SEE YOU

SUPPLIES: Pieces of paper, tape, and markers
Technology for showing Week of Compassion video, [Heard and Seen](#)

OVERVIEW: We all find inspiration and support from other people. We will be exploring who we look to and how we might find heroes and role models from within the communities served by Week of Compassion.

PHASE 1 | INVITE

In advance, write the words *Hero*, *Role Model*, and *Mentor* on separate pieces of paper. Tape them somewhere in your gathering space where everyone can see them. Explain that:

- A *hero* is someone we can only learn about. Whether they are fictional or historical figures, they are not among us today.
- A *role model* is someone we watch from a distance but do not have a relationship with. We can meet them briefly, but they are not part of our lives.
- A *mentor* is someone we know and who knows us. We share a relationship that can change and grow over time.

Invite the youth to take turns sharing an example for each of the three. If you have a larger group, you may want to split into small groups or even pairs for this sharing. Some may not be able to name a person for each category and that is fine. There is no need to fabricate one or overly promote someone they know. Once they have shared, name the common traits that showed up in each category and what things might have shown up across them all. Ask the youth what life experiences they think those named might have in common.

PHASE 2 | RESPOND

Give each person a piece of paper and provide markers. Invite them to make a list or draw a composite character that would be the “perfect mentor.” After they are done, invite them to share their thoughts with the group. Once everyone has shared ask them the following:

- What could your mentor do to disappoint you?
- How might your mentors’ qualities have negative consequences?
- How might someone be imperfect or flawed and be a good mentor?



Ask the youth when they have seen people try to help or support others and it ended up being hurtful or at least not helpful. Here are some prompts if they need some help getting going:

- Someone does it for you instead of letting you learn.
- Someone patronizes you and makes you feel less capable.
- Someone keeps using you to promote themselves.
- Someone helps you to make themselves feel better.

Ask the youth what the best supporters and mentors have done for them. Again, here are some prompts if they need some examples to get going:

- Challenge and support at the same time.
- Words of affirmation and comfort at the right moment.
- Believing in us when we doubt ourselves.
- Showing up – just showing up to support us.
- Listening without interrupting or judging.
- Setting an example, we can follow or not, without judgment.
- Creating opportunities for us to shine that we can't get alone.
- Celebrating our successes and just celebrating who we are.
- Sharing stories of their own challenges and concerns.
- Sharing stories, rituals, and customs from their family or culture.
- Sharing about their heroes and role models.

Read Philippians 4:8-9 together, then ask the youth how the scripture might relate to heroes, role models or mentors.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

PHASE 3 | CONNECT

Explain Week of Compassion's work for those who might be unfamiliar, making sure to define "refugee," "sustainable development" or any other terms they are unfamiliar with.

Share the Week of Compassion Video, [Heard and Seen](#) and then ask the youth if anyone in the video might be understood as a hero, role model, or mentor. (You might also show [Week of Compassion: For 80 Years](#); each video is about 3½ minutes.) Invite them to imagine who those in the video might have looked to for support, affirmation, and inspiration.

Ask them how the work of Week of Compassion might inspire them and their Church if we truly stopped to see and hear the people involved, especially those Week of Compassion is serving. What might they inspire in us today?

CLOSING PRAYER

Constant Connector, you are always weaving us together. One person inspires another. One person leads another. One person supports another till they become an inspiration themselves. Help us build relationships that are real – where we really see each other and truly listen to each other. May we listen for the inspiration in the stories of others and see the amazing ways they are living in faith. Amen.



**WHATEVER IS
HONORABLE**

**KEEP ON DOING THE THINGS THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED AND RECEIVED
AND HEARD AND SEEN IN ME, AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.**

+ PHILIPPIANS 4:9