

Ending Poverty In Community
A Toolkit for Young Advocates

Lesson 1
Putting a Face on Poverty: Who is Poor in America Today?

Overview

Using the most current data, 40.6 million Americans live below the poverty line (U.S. Census 2016). That's one out of every seven Americans struggling to meet their basic needs. The numbers are staggering. But behind the numbers are real people who deserve to live and grow in dignity. In this lesson, participants complete a Poverty Quiz, view a multimedia presentation on the nature of poverty in the United States, and reflect on how our faith calls us to help those in need.



Objectives

- Participants reflect on what it means to live in need today by completing the CCHD Poverty Quiz.
- Participants interpret images and statistics that connect real people to the staggering numbers behind poverty.
- Participants listen to a song and respond to reflection prompts that challenge them to consider how our faith demands that we address poverty in our own communities.

Materials for this Lesson

The handouts for this lesson can be accessed from the EPIC menu on this CD under the Lesson 1 heading. You can also access the handouts online by clicking on the links provided below.

For a list of [materials](#) for Lesson 1, see "Materials Checklist" under the Lesson 1 heading.

Part I: Opening Prayer and Warm-up

(Estimated Time: 15 minutes)

1. Before the session, cut the [quotations](#) provided ("Quotations," found under the Lesson 1 heading) into strips and place the strips into a bowl. Place the bowl, a lit candle and a Bible opened to Matthew 25:31-46 on a small table in the meeting room. The quotations are from real people around the country reflecting on what it means to be poor in America today. Since the quotations will be used as part of the final reflection, they should remain in the bowl beside the lit candle throughout the session.

2. Ask a volunteer to proclaim the Gospel [Matthew 25: 31-46](#). After the Gospel is proclaimed, ask participants to consider the following questions for large group discussion or silent reflection:

- *According to the Scripture passage, what is Jesus asking us to do?*
- *When you hear the word "poor," who or what comes to mind?*
- *What does it mean to be poor today?*

3. Participants now will have an opportunity to find out how much they know about the state of poverty in America today. Divide participants into groups of three or four. Distribute photocopies of [Participant Handout 1A](#) ("Participant Handout 1A," found under the Lesson 1 heading) so that everyone has a copy. Ask participants to work together to complete the quiz.

Note: The answers to the quiz are contained in the PowerPoint presentation that follows, and on Facilitator Handout 1A, found under the Lesson 1 heading.

Part II: Activity — PowerPoint Presentation

(Estimated Times: PowerPoint Presentation, 30-35 minutes)

4. Once participants have completed the Poverty Quiz in their small groups, view the PowerPoint Presentation, titled "Who is Poor in America Today?" This presentation provides the correct answers to the quiz as well as additional information about the state of poverty in America. Ask participants to review their answers to the quiz as they view the PowerPoint Presentation.

The presentation can be found under the Lesson 1 heading, or online

 [Click here to download PowerPoint](#)

Note: Facilitators may wish to review the presentation at least once before the class or session to familiarize themselves with the content.

Part III: Reflection

(Estimated Time: 10 minutes with discussion)

5. Ask participants to silently reflect on whether their understanding of the word "poor" changed after this session. If so, how? Invite seven volunteers to come forward. Ask one volunteer to re-read the following passage from the opening Gospel passage:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

Then ask the other six volunteers to pick one of the paper strips from the bowl on the table at the front of the meeting room. Ask them to read the quotation found on their strip to the rest of the class.

6. Distribute [Participant Handout 1B](#) ("Participant Handout 1B," found under the Lesson 1 heading) so everyone has a copy. Ask participants to reflect on and respond to each answer in silence. If time permits, ask them to share their responses in small groups or with the rest of the large group.

The facilitator may wish to play a contemporary song in the background as participants complete the handout or to use the song as a discussion prompt.

Several examples of contemporary songs related to the issue of poverty and our response are included below: "If We are the Body" (Casting Crowns); "Give Me Your Eyes" (Brandon Heath); "Beautiful Stranger" (Rebecca St. James); "Yours" (Steven Curtis Chapman); "Always Enough" (Casting Crowns); "Hold Us Together" (Matt Maher); "Something Beautiful for God" (Bryan Sirchio); "Man in the Mirror" (Michael Jackson); "Dreaming on a World" (Tracy Chapman); "Right On" (Marvin Gaye); "Poor Man's House" (Patty Griffin); "Mr. Wendal" (Arrested Development); "Another Day In Paradise" (Phil Collins); "Fan the Fire" (Earth, Wind & Fire); "God Save Us All" (Lenny Kravitz); "Hands" (Jewel); "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" (Blind Alfred Reed); "Homeless" (Pennywise).

Additional Resources

For a list of [additional resources](#) Lesson 1, see "Additional Resources" under the Lesson 1 heading.

Faith in Action Extension Activities

Activity 1

Instruct youth to create a public awareness campaign based on the statistics they found most compelling in the Poverty Quiz and PowerPoint Presentation. The campaign may include posters, flyers, banners, etc. that would raise awareness in their school or parish community.

Activity 2

Each year, the federal government calculates the minimum amount of money required by families to meet basic needs. The resulting calculation is what is commonly referred to as the "**Poverty Line.**" The federal poverty line is set at **\$24,339** for a family of 2 adults and 2 children in the United States. How far does **\$24,339** go in America?

Instruct participants to break into small groups of four and, as a family, "live" on a budget of **\$24,339** a year, or \$2,028 a month. Participants should research the cost of living in their own community – including housing, utilities, transportation, food, health care, child care and other expenses they need or want to live. Participants can interview adults and use information from newspapers (e.g. classified advertisements on apartment rentals, etc.) and magazines to complete their research. Ask them to prepare a visual display or a report to be presented to the rest of their school and/or parish community. Facilitators may wish to have students view CCHD's Poverty Tour (found on this CD) after completing the activity.