Day 1 – The Hunger of the Children

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Lamentations 2:11-12

This week as we journey with those who are hungry, we invite you to a rural village in Zambia, where a small boy is sleeping…

You are five years old, your name is Reward. You wake up to the noise of your sister snoring next to you. You were dreaming of a hot plate of nshima, a porridge-like dish, and flavourful beans but you know it was only a dream and in reality, that dizzy, sick feeling in your stomach will soon set in again. You had a mother and father once, until one day they were gone and now your grandparents look after you. They try their best to take care of you, your sister and four cousins who are also orphans. You love to run around and play with the other kids in your village, but these days you just don’t have the strength to jump and skip, instead you sit down and draw in the dust with your finger. Some days you feel too sick to go to school and have a hard time focusing in class. You don’t understand why you feel so tired all the time, but you think it has something to do with the sharp pain in your belly.

Your grandparents notice you and your cousins sitting down instead of playing, so they travel into the bush where the wild animals live. While they’re gone, you and your younger cousins are afraid because you’ve heard stories of bad people coming to harm little children. When your grandparents return, they have thick roots to fill your stomach with, but the roots just end up giving you more stomach pains. You understand that your grandparents are also suffering from these stomach pains and can’t work in the fields like other parents who have cows and other animals. It makes you sad to think that your whole family is hurting and that there is nothing you can do to help.

Prayer

Pray all children would have enough nutritious food for their bodies to grow healthy and strong, and their minds to be focused so they can learn in school.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Thanks to World Vision International for providing the material for these readings.
Day 2 – The Fast We Have Chosen

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 58:6-9
One day, a family in the community brings your family goats through a World Vision initiative to help families called ‘Pass On’. You learn that through this project, once your goats have babies, you get to pass on the blessing by giving a goat to other families in the village. That very day you get to drink goat’s milk and your eyes light up with joy.

From that day on, each day brings a new surprise and a new blessing. Now you have energy to play with your friends and focus at school. The milk from your goat is so delicious, other people want to buy it and drink it also! Your grandparents eventually save up enough money from selling goat milk to buy other food and crops they can plant in the field.

You never realised one goat could do so much, but soon that goat turns into two, and three, and your family then gives a goat to a nearby neighbour who was hurting like you once were. The best part of this story is that you, your sister and cousins finally get to go to school and play. You get to learn the answer to all of the questions that you once were too hungry to even think about. Like what makes the trees grow and where does the rain come from? There is no stopping your curiosity. You learn that a single gift from God can multiply beyond your imagination.

Questions to Consider
How do you think God’s people should respond to issues of hunger and malnutrition? How can you be a part of these solutions?

Prayer
Ask God for families to receive what they need to grow their own food or have the money to buy it.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)
Day 3 – A Miraculous Meal

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – John 6:5-14
The people were hungry. They had seen the healing miracle Jesus was performing among sick people and so they kept following him. They were hungry to see more of these miracles. But, of course, following Jesus in the rugged, hot hills was physically demanding, so their stomachs rumbled for food too. Jesus decided to meet both their spiritual and physical hunger, and to use the occasion as an object lesson for his disciples.

Jesus, therefore, gave his disciples a problem-solving opportunity. Philip could not work out how to buy sufficient bread. Andrew fared little better. He introduced a boy to Jesus—a boy with five barley loaves and two fish. “But what are they among so many?” Andrew asked. Jesus showed him! He had the disciples settle the people into groups. He then took the very limited resources the boy gave him and gave thanks to God for the food. The disciples shared it out. And kept on sharing it out. John tells us that from these very modest beginnings, through prayer, everyone ate “as much as they wanted” so that the whole crowd was “satisfied”. Yet there is more to the story: Jesus asked his disciples to “gather up the fragments left over so that nothing may be lost”. There were twelve baskets full. Twelve! The basic events in the story are remarkably simple: Andrew introduces the boy to Jesus, the boy offers to Jesus his modest resources, Jesus takes these and thanks God for them, and God multiplies the resources. It is from such small and modest beginnings that the Kingdom of God grows and flourishes.

Questions to Consider
What are your ‘loaves and fish’? How might God multiply your gifts to bless others in your community?

Prayer
Pray for opportunities to use your ‘loaves and fishes’.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Thanks to World Vision International for providing the material for these readings.
Day 4 – Multiplying God’s Gifts

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Proverbs 29:7

Hunger and malnutrition are two of the greatest manifestations of poverty. When families cannot afford nutritious food, it feeds a vicious cycle: parents become less able to earn a living to provide for their family, and children become less able to learn and succeed in school. In many situations, children drop out of school in order to help support their family and become vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Sadly, hunger is still a daily reality for 815 million people—nearly 1 in every 9 people on the planet. And yet, as a world, we already produce enough food to feed everyone. In Reward’s story, we see a struggling community in Zambia who is sharing its resources in order to meet each other’s needs.

Reward’s family benefited from the faithful gift of another family, who helped donate extra goats. As those goats multiply, Reward’s family will ‘pass on’ offspring to others struggling in their community. Together, they are sharing and multiplying the gifts God has blessed them with.

Questions to Consider
How can you relate to Reward’s story? How have you seen God multiply the gifts of others or of yourself?

Prayer
Pray for more opportunities to share what you have with others, especially those in need.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)
Day 5 – Continuing the Story

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Matthew 25:34-40
Continue to walk in Reward’s story throughout your daily actions this week. As you sit down to eat, take a moment to think about the blessing of food and how your day is impacted by the availability of nutritious food.

Fast a meal during the week or try eating a simple meal, like rice and beans. Use that time to meditate on the experience of hunger and pray for the millions of children who face hunger as a daily reality.

Donate to a local food bank – whether to the SWBC Mercy Basket or another local organisation.

Visit World Vision’s website to see how you can help provide food or animals to those who are hungry.

Towards the end of the week, reflect on these questions and discuss them with your family, small group or a friend:

- How has fasting and your prayers for children facing hunger challenged your day-to-day experience?

- How has Reward’s story inspired you to make changes in your everyday walk or caused you to have a different perspective on hunger?

Prayer
Pray for churches, organisations and communities that help hungry families get the food they need.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)
Thanks to World Vision International for providing the material for these readings.