

2 Cents-A-Meal

Responding to Hunger in the World

A Sample Exercise for Young People

“Feed My Sheep”



We are called to serve those in need. Students should be able to tell about the source of that call and to explain how the 2 Cents–A-Meal program works.

GATHERING

1. Set a date for a regular 2 Cents- A -Meal gathering in your Church. Asking the children to bring their canisters forward during the offering works well. They especially like to pour their coins into a nice, noisy soup kettle.
2. Prepare Object Lesson. Scatter several pennies around the classroom ahead of time for the children to find (reserve two for yourself). When all are gathered, ask what a penny can buy. Is it worth much? Then hold up your two cents and tell the class that today they will learn how two cents can change someone *else's* life as *well* as their own.
3. Lead the children in prayer (here is a suggestion):
“Almighty God, Whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess, grant us grace that we may honor thee with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”
4. Select someone to read John 21:15-17 (RSV)
 - a. Consider the Scripture: When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time,

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“Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

b. Introduce the theme by retelling in your own words Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s denial and Peter’s subsequent three denials of Christ. Help the children to imagine how devastated and lost Peter must have felt when the cock crowed (Mt. 26: 30-35, 69-75).

c. Now introduce the story from John. This is one of the greatest displays of love and compassion on the part of our Lord found in the Bible. Retell in your own words how Jesus gave Peter three chances to publicly declare his love for Jesus, where previously he had denied him. Note Jesus’ response each time Peter speaks. In giving the command to “Feed my sheep,” Jesus shows his forgiveness of Peter and entrusts him with a task. That responsibility is a great gift. It also suggests that statements of faith are not enough. We must act on them.

d. Explain that the “sheep” referred to in this passage are all those in need and that this command is addressed to all of us, Christ’s church. While this passage can be interpreted on many levels, the simplest way to respond to this command would be to feed the hungry. But this task can seem overwhelming. How can we feed so many people?

5. Introduce the 2 Cents- A -Meal program.

This is one way we all can respond. Explain that in this program, one places a 2 Cents- A- Meal container on the table where family meals are shared. Each family member then puts at least two cents in the container for each meal they eat. Note that two pennies aren’t good for much else. Most stores even keep dishes of them to use when customers don’t have any when making a purchase. Tell them that two cents a meal for a year is over \$21.00 per person. This may not seem like much, but what if you multiply it by the number of people in your family? Then what if we could multiply that by all the families in the congregation, denomination, or in the church at large? Suddenly, all our small gifts put together may be considerable and potentially make a real difference to those in need.

Discuss contrasting strategies that “feed my sheep,” including providing direct emergency services on one hand and trying to change public policies that are indifferent to hunger and inhibit persons from becoming self-sufficient. Consider how students might become involved in each or both approaches.

Now stress that this is only half the program. The other half is to say a prayer at the family meal for those in need. This can be added to your usual grace at meals. If the family doesn’t usually say a grace, this would be a good time to start. Now we have both myriad dollars and prayers offered for the hungry. They are fed and we have responded to our call.

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EXPLORING

Make a 2 Cents- A- Meal container. Ahead of time gather containers with removable lids. Coffee cans, cocoa, etc. work well. It is best to have straight-sided containers. The children could be asked to bring these in for a couple of weeks before this lesson is done. Supply colored paper, markers, glue, felt, cotton balls, or other materials to use in decorating the containers. Each should say “2 Cents- A -Meal”. “Feed my sheep” would also be appropriate. Any number of symbols would work; cotton ball sheep seem especially popular. Help the children cut a coin slot in the lid.

Ask the children to write a brief prayer for those in need. This could be done as a group or individually. Instruct them to place their containers and prayers on the dining table so they are handy at mealtime and let them know when the gatherings will take place.

Connecting

Option 1- Ask if anyone has ever done anything they know they shouldn’t have done. How did they feel? Were they forgiven? How does it feel to be forgiven and trusted again? Note that we are in just such a position. We are forgiven and trusted to respond to those in need.

Option 2- Using magazines, newspapers, or TV reports, ask the students to find examples of hunger in the world. Note any information on ways the world is responding to those needs. Are any class members participating directly in one of these responses?

GOING FORTH

Gather the group for a final prayer. An option might be, “Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Teacher: Let us go forth in the name of Christ!

Students: Thanks be to God!