

National Youth Project 2010-2012

12 For 12: Developing Full Communities

Bible Study: Improving Health

THEME VERSE

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Acts 3:1-10

See John chapter 9 for a similar account of miraculous healing, except Jesus is the healer, and the depth to the ramifications of such a miracle are discussed.

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Activities

We often take our bodies for granted. The following activities show us what it is like to not have full use of the body. If there is a member of your group who does not have use of these or other parts of their body, perhaps some sensitivity is required in assessing whether these activities are appropriate for your group. Conversely, if there is a member of your group who is, for example, blind, and is comfortable enough with your drawing attention to it, inquire as to whether or not they would be willing to play the blind person in activity number 1. These activities are for the purpose of imagining life without the wholeness of health which is the assumed norm.

1. Have the members of your group pair up. In each pair, one person will close their eyes or be blindfolded, and the other person will lead them around your space to accomplish a task, such as: disposing of garbage or recycling in the proper receptacle; opening a book to a correct page; stacking a couple of chairs; getting a drink of water. Feel free to come up with your own tasks; tasks should be difficult to do blindfolded, but not impossible with the help of another.
2. Copy a couple of Bible verses onto paper using your weak hand (non-dominant).
3. Have the whole group move from one room/setting to another. However, one third of the group should pretend their legs are lifeless and without movement, yet the group must accommodate them and ensure that the whole group relocates to the new room/setting.



Follow-Up

Discuss the tragic comedy of the activities: did people feel or look silly doing these things? How did you deal with difficulties and challenges? What did it feel like to receive help? To give help? What are some reasons why a person might be blind, or without use of their dominant hand, or paraplegic? How do people around the world cope with such difficulty a) medically, and b) socially?

Reading the Word

'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'
Matthew 25:35-36

For larger context, Matthew 25:31-46 will give you a good idea of how this selection fits in.

Discussion

Feel free to discuss the following questions and ideas as most comfortably befits your group. If you prefer to write ideas down, grab a whiteboard and erasable markers, or chart paper or something. If your group might need to all be in the branches of a tree to be in the right frame of mind to go deep here, take your group up the nearest sycamore. Go where the spirit leads you!

- What is it to be healthy? Define the terms 'healthy' and 'unhealthy.'
- Consider the Israelites as Moses led them through the wilderness; about how they complained and God gave to them manna to eat (Exodus ch. 16). What happens to a person when s/he cannot get enough food? What happens to a group of people? What happens to a society when many people in it are routinely starving?
- In what way was physical health addressed in the passage from Matthew? What other kinds of health are there besides physical? Discuss mental, spiritual, emotional, relational, sexual, social, and any other types that come up. Does Matthew 25:35-36 address any other types of health, and how?
- What does it mean for a community to be healthy? Discuss access to food, shelter, clothing, water, transportation, services, utilities, education, and medical facilities or personnel. Discuss proximity of danger, violence, war, famine, and fear. Discuss relative freedoms, such as ability to travel, leisure time, practice of religion, human rights, and social welfare systems. In what ways do these things affect the health of a community or an individual? Are there any things in this list that do not affect our health (depending upon what definition you have given to the idea of health in your group discussion)?

Other discussion facets might include:

- What does Luther say about the commandment "Thou shalt not kill?"
- Consider how sickness and sinfulness have been related, or even equated, in people's minds throughout history. What do you think about that correlation? A Biblical example would be from John ch. 9. Think both about how people thought sin caused disease, and about how our brokenness in sin is like illness, or being 'less than whole.'



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- What does Jesus say about health in the Bible? What does he do about it? Consider the miracles he performed regarding lepers, the lame, the sick and the dying (or dead!). Does Jesus value health as we do? Perhaps Jesus' love and compassion are shown most prominently in the miracles he performed to bring people to the wholeness of health.
- How does your view of health differ from the view of the world at large, if at all? Do we humans place adequate value on the health of the impoverished people of the world?
- Do we deserve to be healthy? Does anyone? That would lead to a larger question of: what do we deserve, if anything?
- What are current crises of health in the world? Which areas of the world have these crises most frequently, and why? Relate, as you feel comfortable, a crisis of health that occurred closer to home: perhaps even to you or someone you know.

How Can We Help?

- How can health be improved?
- Whose health needs to be improved?
- How can you help improve the health of another person, or community, who/which is in need?

One way to help is by donating money to Canadian Lutheran World Relief, the agency supported by the ELCIC, or to Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, the agency supported by the ACC.

The National Youth Project

Supporting the National Youth Project, 12 For 12, is a way to improve the health of families in places around the world.

Lutheran Contributions can be sent to:

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
302-393 Portage Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3B3H6
Cheques payable to the ELCIC

Anglican contributions can be sent to:

The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund
The Anglican Church of Canada
80 Hayden Street, Toronto ON M4Y 3G2
Cheques payable to PWRDF

Please indicate that your contributions are a part of "National Youth Project: 12 for 12" so that we can keep track of our goal!



Closing Prayer

Feel free to use this prayer, or augment, supplement, or replace it as you see fit!

God of love, we are so blessed to be alive, and to have the health that we enjoy. We are grateful for the vibrancy of life, and the ability we have to do our daily activities. Heal us of sickness, such as that of our bodies, our hurt feelings, our sinfulness, and our broken relationships. Help us to see our neighbour in need, so that we can care for them with a compassion modeled after our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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A tradition in the ELCIC, the National Youth Project is a way for youth groups to engage a social justice issue, and to support a common project that addresses this issue. The project runs for two years, from national youth gathering to national youth gathering. 12 for 12 is the first joint Lutheran–Anglican project.