

Children's activity 2: Soup parable



(Upper Elementary and Middle School)

Objectives: The children will begin to imagine ways they can share and invite others to the table and will explore in story how we rely on one another. The children will be introduced to the OGHS offering and its importance.

Supplies: Printed copies of the story, props or materials to make props for imaginary pots of soup, bowls, serving spoons, eating spoons, tables.

Instructions:

Variation 1 (could be elaborate and be used for multiple weeks. Would work for a consistent group of students for Sunday school or children's church)

Read the story (below) aloud once or twice. Discuss the important parts and the message of the story. Split the group into smaller "acting groups." Invite them to stage their own versions of the story (someone reading the story while the others pantomime, turning the story into a skit, or putting on a puppet show). If time allows, encourage them to create props; if time is short, provide props for them to choose from. Have each "acting group" perform their version of the story for the whole group.

Variation 2

Select four volunteers to help act out the story. Give child #1 the big pot of imaginary soup (perhaps even have oven mitts and a chef's apron). Give child #2 the four bowls. Give child #3 the four spoons. Have child #4 sit alone at a small table or sit on a blanket big enough for at least four people. Feel free to allow other children to help read the story aloud while the four volunteers act out the story.

The Story: There was once a place called Good Hope. Around supper time, the hungry people of Good Hope would imagine their favorite meal with delicious flavors and aromas. But, no matter what or how much they imagined, their plates were still empty.

One person had a drawer full of spoons but no bowl or soup. Another had nice bowls, but they were empty. Finally, a third neighbor had a pot and ingredients for soup, but no spoon to stir it or bowls to serve it in.

The neighbor with the soup sat down on his stoop and cried, "I don't have a spoon to stir or a bowl to eat my soup. I will surely starve."

The neighbor across the street with the spoons sat down and said, “I do not have a bowl to eat from nor soup to eat. I will surely starve.”

Lastly, the neighbor with the bowls sat down and wept, “I have been staring at my empty bowls all day and my stomach is growling. I will surely starve.”

As the three neighbors sat with what they had, with their stomachs growling, a fourth neighbor arrived. This neighbor was well-known for being wise and kind.

Without a word, she/he started collecting sticks and building a fire. When the fire was hot, she/he exclaimed, “Dear neighbors, you will not starve! Come sit with me by this fire, and let us see if we will all have enough to eat.”

The three neighbors gathered by the fire and placed what they had near it. The neighbor with the soup pot set it down on the fire, and soon it was bubbling and steaming and smelling really good. Then the neighbor with the spoons began to stir the soup. And when the soup was ready, the neighbor with the bowls set them down and they filled each one.

Then the neighbor who had spoons gave one spoon to the neighbor with the pot of soup, one to the neighbor with the bowls, and kept one spoon for her/himself. The three neighbors were so excited! This soup smelled better than any meal they had ever imagined. Just as they prepared to bless their food and eat, the neighbor with the spoons said to the fourth neighbor, “Dear friend, come sit with us and eat.”

The fourth neighbor replied, “I do not have a pot of soup; I do not have any bowls; and I do not have any spoons. I do not have anything to contribute to this wonderful meal.” The neighbors disagreed and one said, “Oh, but you brought the greatest ingredient of all. You taught us the importance of sharing with others.”

Another neighbor said, “You brought us together around this fire. We have one more spoon, so you must join us to make the meal complete.”

The fourth neighbor joined the others and together, one and all, they shared a meal.

Processing:

(For variation 1) Ask: How was it different hearing the story and performing the story? Reflect on the unique ways that each “acting group” told the story. If they made interesting artistic choices, talk about them!

(For variation 1 or 2) Ask: What were the important ingredients to make the meal? Were there important “ingredients” other than food and dishes? Can anyone give an example of how the story is true today? (Perhaps in their school cafeteria or in a soup kitchen) Where is God in the story?

Remind the group that sometimes people experience homelessness, hunger, inadequate clothing or shelter, and that these are experienced because of disasters like floods or tornadoes, jobs not paying enough money, crops not growing because of droughts, or people leaving their homes because of war or violence.

Conclusion:

Say: One Great Hour of Sharing helps us make space at the table for our neighbors. Our gifts to the OGHS offering teach us how to share the resources we are able to give. Even if our offering appears small, it may make a big difference when combined with the gifts of others. We demonstrate God’s love by being hospitable and compassionate in the midst of suffering. When we give to One Great Hour of Sharing, we welcome others to the table and we also welcome God to share in our meal with us.

Read the Scripture (Matthew 25:31-46) or the focus verse (Matthew 25:35)