

Unit One: More Than Meets the Eye

Open by asking:

1. What are the first few words, phrases, or images that come to your mind when you think about poverty?
2. If you had to describe the purpose of a short term mission trip in one sentence, how would you describe it?

Thank people for their responses.

Say, “Whether you have been on many short term mission trips, or none, we want to invite you into a church-wide conversation on what it means to do short term missions well. Through the Missions Department we partner with twenty-two missionary families in 15 countries. Though each missionary isn’t able to receive teams, short term teams do make up a significant part of how we connect with and support the ministry of many of our missionaries. When you make a Faith Promise, you are participating in a short term team! Both long and short term missions is something we do as a whole church body and so it is something we think is worth engaging in conversation with the whole church about! For the next two months we are going to do just that, with each Sunday school going through the course Helping Without Hurting in Short Term Missions.”

Watch the Video

Ask:

1. What is an idea that struck you from the video? What questions do you have after watching this?
2. Think back to your answers to the first question: what words, phrases or images come to your mind when you think about poverty. Is there anything you would add to your answer after this video?

Say, “How we define poverty will heavily influence how we respond to and attempt to alleviate that poverty. For example,

- If we believe the primary cause of poverty is a lack of knowledge, then we will primarily try to educate the poor.
- If we believe the primary cause of poverty is oppression by powerful people then we will primarily try to work for social justice.
- If we believe the primary cause of poverty is the personal sins of the poor then we will primarily try to evangelize and disciple the poor.
- If we believe the primary cause of poverty is a lack of material resources than we will primarily try to give material resources to the poor.

Ask:

- 1) Do your answers tend to gravitate towards or emphasize one or more of these categories of “primary causes”?
- 2) Given the complexity of poverty and poverty alleviation, how can we specifically commit to make short term missions part of a long term process of learning and engagement in God’s work rather than a one-time spiritual or emotional experience? What might that look like for you personally?

Close in prayer

Unit Two: Who Are the Poor?

Open by asking: Take a moment to reflect on a time when you helped a materially poor person. What was going through your mind during and after you helped this person? What do you imagine was going through their mind?

Thank people for their responses.

Take a moment to **re-issue the invitation** into a church wide conversation on short term missions from last week.

Watch the video

Ask:

- 1) What is an idea that struck you from this video? What questions do you have after seeing the video?
- 2) You may or may not be materially poor, but what evidence do you see in your life of brokenness in the four fundamental relationships – relationships with God, Self, Others and with the Rest of Creation?
- 3) How might participation in an on-going relationship with a missionary or in a short-term trip (or both!) help challenge and heal you in areas of your brokenness?
- 4) What may some of the temptations in a relationship with a missionary or a short-term trip be to further entrench us in areas of our brokenness?

Close in prayer

Unit Three: They Are Not Helpless

Open by asking:

- 1) In what contexts might you be willing to give low-income people things or money?
- 2) In what contexts might you be uncomfortable giving low-income people things or money?

Watch the video

Ask:

1. What is an idea that struck you from the video? What questions do you have after seeing the video?
2. Reflecting on your answers or thoughts regarding the first question this morning, is there any way you would retool your answers in light of the information about relief, rehabilitation and development? Why or why not?

Say: “Paternalism is habitually doing things for people that they can do for themselves. It can take a number of subtle forms. For example,

- **Resource Paternalism:** giving people resources they do not truly need and/or could acquire on their own.
- **Spiritual Paternalism:** taking spiritual leadership away from the materially poor, assuming we have more to offer than they do.
- **Knowledge Paternalism:** assuming we have all the best ideas about how to do things.
- **Labor Paternalism:** doing work for the materially poor that they could do for themselves.
- **Managerial Paternalism:** taking ownership of change away from the poor; insisting that they follow our “better, “more efficient” way of doing things.

Ask:

1. While you may have never experienced material poverty, consider experiences in your job, school, home or church. Have you ever been on the receiving end of spiritual, managerial, or knowledge paternalism? How did those experiences make you feel?
2. Why do you think people are so quick to engage in paternalism, despite its negative effects?
3. Given the type of poverty we may encounter on a short term mission trip, how can a group support the asset-based interventions and development work the host missionary is engaged in?
4. What types of actions could harm the long-term asset-based work?
5. How might a short term team specifically hold each other accountable to support, rather than hinder, successful ministry on a trip?

Close in Prayer.

Unit Four: The Kingdom is Upside Down

Open by asking:

1. Has there ever been a time when someone sought out your wisdom or opinion, wanting to learn from your experiences? How did this make you feel?
2. Has there ever been a time when someone was willing to enter into your life, listening to you share aspects of your heart and reality? How did this make you feel?

Watch the video

Ask:

1. What is an idea that struck you from the video? What questions do you have after seeing the video?
2. Ask for someone to read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. How might this passage provide a foundation for engaging in learning, fellowship, and encouragement as we enter a low-income community?
3. Now think back to the ways the materially poor and non-materially-poor are broken. How could entering a community with a 1 Corinthians 1 attitude begin to address the brokenness in both of our hearts?

Close in Prayer

Unit Five: Being a Blessing

Open by asking:

1. Describe a time when someone misunderstood your words or actions. What was at the root of this misunderstanding?
2. Describe a time when you felt disrespected by someone. Why did you feel this way?

Say:

As we build trips around learning, fellowship and encouragement, we still have to be very conscientious when interacting with our hosts. Missions expert Miriam Adeney relates a story told to her by an African Christian friend:

Elephant and Mouse were best friends. One day Elephant said, "Mouse, let's have a party!" Animals gathered from far and near. They ate, drank, sang and danced. And nobody celebrated more than the Elephant. After it was over, Elephant exclaimed, "Mouse, did you ever go to a better part? What a celebration!" But Mouse did not answer. "Where are you?" Elephant called. Then he shrank back in horror. There at his feet lay the Mouse, his body ground into the dirt – smashed by the exuberance of his friend, the Elephant. "Sometimes that is what it is like to do mission with you Westerners," the African storyteller commented. "It is like dancing with an Elephant."

Watch the video

Ask:

1. What is an idea that struck you from the video? What questions do you have after seeing the video?
2. Review the definition of Cultural Norms: "Subconscious assumptions, behaviors and protocols that people naturally follow without even thinking about them."
3. Have you ever personally encountered a different set of cultural norms, whether in another country, another church, or even another family setting? If so, how did you respond?

Say:

Some major categories of differences in cultural norms are:

- Concept of time
- Concept of self

- Role of “face”/Degree of Directness
- Locus of Control
- Power Distance

Ask:

4. Take a moment to imagine a situation in which a differing norm could cause problems or present challenges in a short term mission trip or other cross cultural interaction. How might you handle this situation wisely, respecting your hosts?

Close in Prayer

Unit Six (Unit 8 in book): Making it Count

Say: The video in this unit takes the perspective of having just returned from a short term trip. We may not have just returned from a short term trip, but I encourage us to engage with the video’s suggestions on how to help the effects of Helping Without Hurting last. As Christ followers, part of our fundamental calling is to our brothers and sisters in poverty and today’s video helps us know how to move forward in partnership practical ways.

Watch the video

Ask:

1. What is an idea that struck you from the video? What questions do you have after seeing the video?
2. Take a moment to read Philippians 2:4-13. What might this passage be saying about how we should view obedience and the process of change in our lives?
3. In light of these truths, take a moment to review the list of possible avenues for long-term engagement:
 - Pray faithfully
 - Advocate
 - Financially Support the ministries and/or missionaries you visited through Faith Promise
 - Support effective ministry in your own community
 - Support the Leadership of your church as they work to develop healthy partnerships locally and around the world.
 - Be a loving voice in your congregation
4. Can you think of anything you would add to the list? If so, what?
5. In light of the list, video and discussion, what are some specific ways you might more deeply engage with what God is doing?

Unit Seven: Faith Promise at First United Methodist Church

Open by asking:

1. Has anyone heard the words Faith Promise before? What comes to your mind when you hear about Faith Promise?
2. Has anyone made a Faith Promise? Would you be willing to share your Faith Promise experience?

Say:

At FUMC, all of our global outreach partnerships and efforts are supported by Faith Promise.

The definition of a Faith Promise is “A Faith Promise is (1) a promise you make to the Lord under prayerful consideration. It is (2) a promise to do, or to give something that is clearly above your personal resources, and it requires you to acknowledge the impossibility of achieving the outcome on your own. A Faith Promise (3) requires patience and hope in God’s provision, and (4) recognition of the provision as God’s answer to your Faith Promise. The last step in faith promise is a test of integrity... (5) Will you have the courage to surrender God’s provision for the purposes you originally pledged?”

Go Through Faith Promise Booklets together

NOTE:

There are two booklet options for your Sunday School – you can choose either or both to go through with the remainder of your time. The first booklet is called, “Join the Story” and includes stories and graphs of how Faith Promise is used to support our partners around the world. There are also Faith Promise stories from our own congregation as well as the process and covenant used by the Global Outreach Team to discern resource allocation.

The second booklet is a gift catalog of sorts, with a small sample of gifts your Faith promise has made possible for our ministry partners around the world. This booklet is a bit shorter, and features vibrant photos as well as short stories of Faith Promise at work through global partnership. Both of these booklets are available in the Missions Department.

