

## Children's Lesson Plans

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**The following Children's Lesson Plans are designed for a one-hour class. They may be used in a variety of ways:**

- Use the lesson plans instead of your regular curriculum on the Children's Sabbath;
- Incorporate parts of the lessons into your regular curriculum;
- Use the lessons during a special Children's Sabbath weekend; or
- Use the lesson plans on a weekend or weeknight preceding the Children's Sabbath.

The lesson plans for middle and senior high school are based on Joel 3:28 and Luke 4:16–21. The plans for young children, early elementary children and older elementary children use Mark 10:13–16. If your church has a multi-age Sunday school, read over the plans for all ages of children and choose activities that best fit the ages of the children in your group.

Each lesson plan includes more activities than most teachers will have time to include in one hour. As you make plans for the session, feel free to tailor your plan to the group of children or youths you will be leading, your time frame, and the learning space available to you.

Most of the lesson plans have activities whose end result is a product that can be shared with the entire congregation or in some cases can be shared with a larger audience, such as the readership of a newspaper. Decide in advance how and when these results might be shared. Will you

present them after the education hour or after worship on the day of the Children's Sabbath? Could you use them as part of the Children's Sabbath service of worship? Will you extend the focus on children in need and share the creative end products the following week? Or you may want to use these lessons the week before the Children's Sabbath so you can incorporate them into the Children's Sabbath celebration.

The 2008 presidential election seems to have sparked in many people a sense of hope and a renewed commitment not only to seek change but to be a constructive part of that change. At the same time, the dire economic situation in which the country finds itself has engendered fear and anxiety for the future. In this time of stark contrasts, it seems equally possible that we Christians will respond to this sense of urgency with a new passion for justice and compassion for all, or that we will get mired down and overwhelmed by the comprehensive challenges we face. More than ever, we need to find ways to spark a new vision in our young, and then to nurture that vision to fruition. As you prepare, spend time in prayer. Seek discernment so that you may plan the most constructive ways to help children, youth and adults alike to confront these issues in ways that will move your congregation to action on behalf of children.

# Young Children's Lesson Plan: Jesus Loves Me and You (Ages 3–5)

## Scripture Passage: Mark 10:13–16

**Focus:** Jesus welcomed all children, not just some. All children need the same things we need so that they can grow up to be the people God intends them to be. We can learn what all children need, and we can find ways to help.

### Lesson Objectives

Children will:

- Hear the story of Jesus welcoming and caring for all children, not just some.
- Learn about the things that all children need and what we can do to help.
- Imagine what it would be like if all children were welcomed, loved and cared for.
- Find ways to let others know about the needs of children.

### Materials

- Copy of *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene Peterson (*optional*)
- Curriculum picture of Jesus and the Children (*optional*)
- Paper or index cards for nametags, colored felt-tipped markers
- Multicultural construction paper (available at school supply stores) or white poster board and crayons in a variety of shades of “face” tones: various shades of brown, pink, black, orange and so forth; hole punch, scissors, yarn, white poster board rectangles
- Healthy snack, water, cups, napkins

### Teacher Preparation

- Read the scripture passage, one of the gospel accounts of Jesus welcoming the children. Try to imagine the scene with Jesus welcoming the children. How do you picture the children? Pray for yourself, the children in your group, and children everywhere.
- Review the lesson plan.
- Gather materials listed above.
- Obtain a large mirror or two or three small hand mirrors. If you're able to get a large mirror, attach a small blanket or length of cloth at the top to cover it.

For the face mobile, cut the construction paper or poster board into ovals. On a rectangle of poster board, print the following in large letters: “Nobody Else Is Just Like Me, but Everyone Needs...” With a hole punch, make evenly spaced holes across the bottom of the poster board from which you will hang the faces with yarn. With a large group, you may need two poster board headings.

If you prefer, prepare paint and poster board for a Handprint Mural (see below).

Choose a healthy snack to serve the children, like vegetable sticks or cut-up fruit.

### Overview

- Activity for Early Arrivers
- Opening (5 minutes)
- Introduction to the Message (10 minutes)
- Exploring the Message (20 minutes)
- Responding to the Message (20 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)

### Activity for Early Arrivers

As children arrive, make simple nametags for them. Print the child's first name with a colored felt-tipped marker. Pin or tape the nametag to a child's clothing.

Invite the children to look at themselves in the hand mirrors, or encourage them to pull aside the fabric or blanket over the large mirror to see themselves. Help them to describe themselves – blue eyes, freckled skin, straight brown hair; light brown skin, deep brown eyes, curly black hair, dimple, and so forth. Play a simple game. Say: “Riddle, riddle rhee, I see someone you don't see, and he has green eyes.” Let the children guess who you are describing.

### Opening

When most children have arrived, invite them to join you in the circle. Play a simple game. Say: “If you have blue eyes, stand up... if you have brown skin, stand up... if you like pancakes, stand up... if you have a teddy bear, stand up...” and other similar statements. As children stand up for each statement, repeat their names aloud: “Jamal, Jamie and Abe like pancakes.”

When everyone has had at least one chance to stand up, say:

**Children like different things to eat, and they play with different toys. Each of us looks just a little different from everyone else. But we all need some things to grow up strong and healthy. Some children don't have all the things they need and it's not right! Today we are going to find out what we can do to help.**

### Introduction to the Message

Say:

**Today is a special day called Children's Sabbath. Our church is learning more about what we can do to be sure all children have the things they need to live and grow.**

### Hearing a Bible Story

Show the children where the story of Jesus and the Children is found in Mark's gospel. Also show the picture of Jesus and the Children if you were able to obtain one.

Say:

**Jesus cared about children. Today we will hear a story about a time when people brought children to see Jesus.**

Jesus had been traveling around the country, teaching his followers about God's love. Let's pretend we're following Jesus, too. (*Encourage the children to stand up and walk in place.*)

Lots of people had come along with him—in fact, it was a whole big crowd who sat down to hear Jesus' words. Let's pretend we're looking around at all the people. (*Encourage the children to shade their eyes with their hand and look all around. Then have them sit down.*)

While Jesus was teaching, some people came up. These people wanted Jesus to bless their children. But the disciples, Jesus' special friends, didn't like that! They didn't want anyone bothering Jesus, so the disciples tried to keep the people away from Jesus. Let's pretend to be the disciples, trying to keep the children away from Jesus. (*Encourage the children to shake their heads and make pushing gestures.*)

But this made Jesus mad, and he let them know it. "Don't push these children away. Don't you ever get between them and me," said Jesus. Let's pretend to be Jesus speaking to his disciples. (*Encourage the children to shake their index fingers as if scolding the disciples.*)

Then Jesus gathered up the children in his arms and blessed them. Let's pretend to be Jesus hugging the children. (*Encourage the children to wrap their arms around their bodies, hugging themselves.*)

### Exploring the Message

Invite the children to help you with this story poem by repeating the line, "But nobody else is just like me!"

There are many children in the world:  
Some have black hair, some have brown  
Some is short and some hangs down.  
Some is braided, some in corn-rows,  
Or curls that tickle some kid's nose.  
**But nobody else is just like me!**

There are many children all around:  
Blue-eyed, black-eyed, hazel, green,  
Seeing all that can be seen!  
Some have freckles, some brown skin,  
Some like to giggle, some to grin.  
**But nobody else is just like me!**

There are many children in my town:  
Some like to jump, or skip or run,  
Others think that hopping's fun!  
Some like to take a long, long nap,  
While others sit on mama's lap.  
**But nobody else is just like me!**

(*If time allows, invite the children to name things they like to do or eat or play, and repeat the line, "Nobody else is just like me!"*)

Now say:

**It's true that nobody else is just like you. Children look very different, and like to play different things, and live in different places. But all children need some things.** (*Continue the poem, inviting the children to join in on the line, "Everyone else is just like me!"*)

There are many children in the world:  
All like breakfast, supper, lunch  
And healthy snacks that they can munch,  
When they are tired, and need to rest,  
All children think that bed is best!  
**Everyone else is just like me!**

There are many children all around:  
All need a place where they can play

## Christian Resources for the Children's Sabbath

To build strong muscles every day.  
All children need, when they are sick,  
Medicine to get better quick.

**Everyone else is just like me!**

There are many children in my town:  
All need a family, you know,  
To help them live and learn and grow.  
All need a home, with people there  
Who show the children that they care.

**Everyone else is just like me!**

### Snack

Have the children wash their hands or use hand wipes.  
Say that before eating a snack, you will thank God for it. Ask the children to bow their heads and say a brief blessing, such as the following:

**Thank you, God, for this snack, and thank you for the cold water we'll drink. We know some children do not have good food to eat or cold water to drink. Some do not have a warm bed to sleep in. Help us to find ways to help other children. Amen.**

Distribute the snack, water and napkins. As children eat, talk about how healthy snacks help to build strong bones and muscles so children can grow up healthy.

### Responding to the Message

#### Make a Face Mobile

Let each child choose either an oval shape in a color of construction paper that they think best matches their skin tone, or a crayon (or two) they can use to color a poster board oval. Children can use crayons to add eyes, nose and mouth or hair. Most 3-year-olds will probably just use the crayons to scribble over the oval.

Encourage the children to think about things that children need. When they have finished coloring, print their name on the back of the oval, along with one thing all children need. Use yarn of varying lengths to attach the "faces" along the bottom of the poster board heading, and display it where adults in your congregation can see it.

#### Handprint Mural *(alternative)*

Mix tempera paint in a variety of skin tones that would match those of the children in your group. Let the children make handprints in the shade closest to their skin tone on a sheet of mural paper headed, "Nobody Else Is Just Like Me, But All Children Need..." Ask each child to name something all children need and print it under his or her handprint.

#### Closing

Tell the children that there are many ways to help children who do not have all the things they need. One way children can help is to let adults know about what children need to grow up strong and healthy. Tell the children that you will display the mural or mobile where the adults in the church can see it.

Close by praying the following:

Dear God, we are so glad that you love us! We know that Jesus loves us, and that he loves all children and wants them to be safe and healthy and cared for. Help us to find ways to help children get what they need. Amen.

# Early Elementary Lesson Plan: Welcoming and Caring for All Children (Grades 1–2)

## Scripture Passage: Mark 10:13–16

**Focus:** Jesus welcomed all children, not just some. As Jesus' disciples, we can work to see that all children grow up to be the people God intended them to be.

### Lesson Objectives

Children will:

- Hear the story of Jesus and the children, and consider that Jesus welcomed and cared for all children, not just some.
- Learn about the things that too many children need, and what we can do to help.
- Imagine what it would be like if all children were welcomed, loved and cared for.
- Take action to let others know about the needs of children.

### Materials

- Copy of *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene Peterson (*optional*)
- Curriculum picture of Jesus and the Children (*optional*)
- Prepared index cards (see Teacher Preparation)
- White paper plates (the inexpensive kind on which a child can draw with a felt-tipped marker or crayon), craft sticks or thin dowel sticks, heavy tape, felt-tipped markers or crayons, yarn (*optional*), fabric scraps, white glue
- Character responses for the story (see Teacher Preparation)
- Heavy paper or tag board in pieces about 10" x 12" for each child, folded in half to make two facing "pages" that are about 6" x 10"
- Cloth tape or colored masking tape
- Children's reading primer (*optional*)

### Teacher Preparation

- Read the scripture passage, one of the gospel accounts of Jesus welcoming the children. Try to imagine the scene with Jesus welcoming the children. How do you picture the children? Pray for yourself, the children in your group, and children everywhere.

- Review the lesson plan.
- If possible, borrow a children's reading primer from a local school or from a teacher in your congregation.
- Gather materials listed above.
- On individual index cards, print the following: disciple, child, person bringing child to Jesus, person in the crowd who came to see Jesus. Depending on how many children you have in your group, you will need to make several of each card. In a very small group, you might make only one card for each character.
- You might want to make one or two extra paper plate puppets for children who arrive late. (See instructions for making them below.)
- Print on a chalkboard or a sheet of newsprint the character responses for the story.
- Prepare the pages for the ABC Zigzag book. Cut heavy paper or tag board into pieces about 10" x 12". Fold the pieces in half to make two facing "pages" that are about 6" x 10". (You can adjust these sizes according to the size of the paper you are using.) The completed pages will be taped together from the back to make an accordion-style book.

### Overview

- Activity for Early Arrivers
- Opening (5 minutes)
- Introduction to the Message and Hearing the Bible Story (20 minutes)
- Exploring the Message (10 minutes)
- Responding to the Message (20 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)

### Activity for Early Arrivers

As children arrive, tell them that they will be hearing the story of Jesus and the children today and invite them to choose one of the cards you prepared with character names to begin making a paper plate puppet of that character. Encourage them to use the entire plate to make the character face with crayons or markers. If you like, they can glue on yarn to make hair and beards or add cloth scraps for headdresses. Tape a dowel or craft stick securely to the back to form the handle for the puppet.



## Opening

When most children have arrived and have had a chance to make a puppet, invite them to come and sit in a circle on the floor. Play a simple variation of the familiar game “Duck, Duck, Goose.” Invite one child to be “it.” Ask the child to think of something children need to grow up strong, like good food, a safe home and so forth. Then “it” goes around the circle saying “children need” as he or she touches each child’s head. When “it” touches the head of the child being chosen, “it” calls out the thing children need and the chosen child chases “it” around the circle, trying to catch him or her before the child reaches the space in the circle. That child then becomes “it.” Continue until everyone has had a turn. If you are not familiar with the children in the group, or they don’t know one another well, ask each child to give his or her name.

Say that children need many things to grow up strong, things like the ones the children thought of for the game. In this session, children will learn about children who don’t have all the things they need and will imagine what it would be like if all children did have the love, care and help they need.

Pray:

**God, we thank you that we can learn more about the things that many children need. Help us to think of ways to see that all children can be cared for and learn and grow. Amen.**

## Introduction to the Message

Say:

**Today is a special day called Children’s Sabbath. Our church is learning more about what we can do to be sure all children have the things they need to live and grow.**

## Hearing the Bible Story

Show the children where the story is found in Mark’s gospel. Then say:

**Listen to hear what happened when people brought children to see Jesus.**

Read Mark 10:13–16 aloud, preferably from *The Message*.

Invite the children to help you retell the story using the paper plate puppets. Say that they will make the following responses at the appropriate times in the story. When they hear their character named and see you raise your hand, they will put their puppet up and respond.

**People bringing children:** Please, Jesus! Bless my child!  
Please, Jesus! Bless my child!  
Please, Jesus! Bless my child!

**Children:** Jesus! Jesus! Here I am! Jesus! Jesus!  
Here I am! Jesus!  
Jesus! Here I am!

**Disciples:** Go away! Don’t bother Jesus!  
Go away! Don’t bother Jesus!  
Go away! Don’t bother Jesus!

**Crowd:** Let’s follow Jesus. Let’s Go!  
Let’s follow Jesus. Let’s Go!  
Let’s follow Jesus. Let’s Go!

Practice saying the responses once or twice.

Then tell the story:

Jesus and his disciples had been traveling around Galilee, teaching his followers about God’s love. They had been to Capernaum, and now they went to a part of Judea across the Jordan River. Lots of people had come along with him—in fact, it was a whole big crowd!

*(Gesture for the “crowd” to respond)*

While he was teaching, some people came up. These people wanted Jesus to bless their children. *(Gesture for the “people bringing children” to respond)*

But the disciples didn’t like that! They didn’t want anyone bothering Jesus, so the disciples tried to keep the people away from Jesus. *(Gesture for the “disciples” to respond)*

But this made Jesus mad, and he let them know it. “Don’t push these children away. Don’t you ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in God’s realm. Pay attention to this: Unless you accept God’s realm the way a child would, you’ll never get in.” Then Jesus gathered up the children in his arms and blessed them. *(Gesture for the “disciples” to respond)*

## Exploring the Message

### Which Children?

If you were able to get a curriculum picture of Jesus and the Children, show it to the group. Ask:

- **How do these children look to you? Do they look clean? Do you think they have enough to eat and a safe place to sleep?**

- **What if the people who brought children to see Jesus had brought children who were skinny or had a cold or looked hungry or sad? Do you think Jesus would have welcomed those children, too?**

Tell the children that even though the pictures we see in church school of this story usually show happy, healthy children who have had enough to eat and are clean and happy-looking, the children Jesus gathered into his arms probably included children who didn't have the things they needed to grow up strong and healthy. Say:

- **Jesus welcomed all children, not just some. He wants us to help all children to grow up to be the people God intends them to be.**

### Responding to the Message

#### Make an ABC Zigzag Book

If you obtained a children's reading primer, show it to the children and ask them if they know what it is. Say that this is a beginning reading book, one with simple words that helps children to learn how to read. Say that the children will make a special primer for the adults in your church, one that will help them to understand some of the many things that too many children in our country need.

Down the side of a sheet of newsprint or on a chalkboard, print the letters of the alphabet. Invite the group to try to think of things children need to live that begin with the letters of the alphabet. It could be part of a phrase, like All children need a safe home, or a single word, like "**Care.**" If your group is small, you might concentrate on just the letters ABC. You could have one or more things for each of the three letters. Print the children's suggestions next to the appropriate letter and invite each child to choose one word or phrase to work on. Distribute the prepared folded heavy papers. Tell the children to print the assigned letter (A, B, C and so forth) on the folded section on the left. Next to the letter they can draw a picture of their word or phrase. On the right-hand side, they can print the word or phrase, for example, "All children need enough **food.**"

Following the session you can assemble the zigzag book by taping the sections together accordion style on the back side. Stand up the zigzag book on a table where adults in your congregation can see it.

#### Snack

Serve a snack, such as cut-up fruit or vegetable sticks and water. Talk about how many children in the U.S. do not get enough fresh fruits and vegetables to eat because they are not for sale in the stores in their neighborhoods or are too expensive for their parents to afford. Say a short blessing, such as "Thank you, God, for crunchy carrots and celery and sweet juicy grapes. Help us to find ways for all children to have such good food. Amen."

#### Closing

Invite the children to join in a simple litany (below). Tell them that at your signal, they may join you in saying, "Jesus said, 'Don't push these children away!'"

God, we know that Jesus welcomed all children, not just some.

All children, not just some, need good food.

**Jesus said, "Don't push these children away!"**

All children, not just some, need to visit a doctor when they are sick.

**Jesus said, "Don't push these children away!"**

All children, not just some, need a safe place to live.

**Jesus said, "Don't push these children away!"**

All children, not just some, need people who love them and take care of them.

**Jesus said, "Don't push these children away!"**

All children, not just some, need good schools where they can learn.

**Jesus said, "Don't push these children away!"**

Jesus said, "Don't push these children away! Don't ever get between them and me!"

Help us to gather all children into Jesus' loving arms, and help children and adults to work together to see that all children, not just some, grow into the people God intends them to be. Amen.

# Older Elementary Lesson Plan: Including All Children in Jesus' Name (Grades 3–5)

## Scripture Passage: Mark 10:13–16

**Focus:** Jesus welcomed all children, including them in the circle of his love and warning against those who would exclude them. As Jesus' disciples, we can work to be sure that all children have access to the things they need so that they can grow into the life God intended for them.

### Lesson Objectives

Children will:

- Hear the story of Jesus' inclusive love for all children, and the message that children are an important part of God's realm.
- Look at what children and youths are facing today, and explore where change is needed.
- Imagine what it would be like if we could create the change children need.
- Take some simple steps to make their voices heard to make a difference for other children.

### Materials Needed

- Bibles
- Copy of *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene Peterson (*optional*)
- Curriculum picture of Jesus and the Children
- Magazine pictures of children (News magazines and parenting magazines may be good sources.)
- Scissors, glue, sheets of white poster board, pencils
- Prepared sheets of newsprint (see Teacher Preparation)
- White drawing or copy paper, hole punch, yarn, colored felt-tipped markers or crayons
- Envelopes and stamps
- "Big Picture" handout from senior high lesson plan
- Large pillar candle, votive candles, matches or lighter (if your congregation permits lighted candles in the classroom)

### Teacher Preparation

- Read the scripture passages. Pray for yourself, the children in your group, and children everywhere.
- Read through the lesson plan.
- Gather materials listed above.
- For the opening activity, set up chairs in a circle. If

your group is small (less than 10 or 12), choose the alternative activity.

- On newsprint, print some of the facts from the "Big Picture" handout from the senior high lesson plan. If you have a fairly large group, you might want to print most of the facts in all three categories. If necessary, read each fact and simplify the language somewhat to make it clearer for elementary children.
- Make one or more copies of the role play card sheet and cut apart the cards.
- If possible, borrow a children's reading primer from a local school or from a teacher in your congregation.
- Get the address of the local newspaper and print it on a sheet of newsprint. Make copies of the handout "How to Write a Letter to the Editor."

### Overview

- Activity for Early Arrivers
- Opening (5 minutes)
- Introduction to the Message (15 minutes)
- Exploring the Message (15 minutes)
- Responding to the Message (20 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)

### Activity for Early Arrivers

As children arrive, invite them to begin working on the poster "Jesus Welcomed All Children." They can cut out magazine pictures of all kinds of children and glue them around the center caption, or they can draw pictures of children or write sentences or phrases describing the children Jesus welcomed. Depending on the size of your group, you might need to provide two or three sheets of poster board.

### Opening

When most children have arrived, invite them to join you in the circle of chairs. Choose one child to be "it." He or she goes to one of the seated children and asks, "Do you love your neighbor?" If the reply is "yes" then everyone must change chairs, and "it" tries to get into one of the chairs, too. If the answer is "no," then "it" asks again, "Who do you love?" Now the child must make up a



response such as “people who have short hair,” or “people who are wearing blue” or “people who are nine years old,” and so forth. Whatever the reply is, only the children who fit that category change chairs, and “it” tries to get a chair. Whoever is left out is now “it.” If the children in your group don't know one another well, ask them to precede each question or reply with “My name is \_\_\_\_\_.”

When everyone has had a chance to have a turn, say that when we're being serious, most of us would say we do love our neighbor, but sometimes we act as if we don't actually care at all. Say that today there are far too many children living in situations where they don't have the things they need. In this session, the children will learn more about what they can do to bring hope for children and youth who need it.

If your group has fewer than ten children, you might choose to use a beanbag or a soft playground ball. Sit in a circle. Say: “My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and you're my neighbor,” then toss the ball or beanbag to a child. The child says the same thing and tosses the ball to another child. Continue until everyone has introduced him or herself.

### Prayer

Pray the following, or a prayer of your own choice.

God, we know there are many children in our country who need things to change, and change right now. There are just too many things that too many children need in order to grow up to be the people you intend them to be. We know that Jesus wanted all children to be included, not just some. Help us to be a part of changing things for the better. Amen.

### Introduction to the Message

Tell the group that today's lesson is part of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® celebration. Say that congregations of many faiths celebrate Children's Sabbaths all across this nation on the third weekend in October. (If your congregation is observing the Sabbath on a Sunday other than the October date, point out that, like yours, many congregations choose to celebrate the Sabbath at another time.) The purpose of the Sabbath this year is to call attention to the kind of change children just like them need. It is a time to think about what God is calling us to do, and to decide how we might respond on behalf of children in need and their families.

### Hear the Bible Story

Read Mark 10:13–16 aloud to the group. If you were able to get a curriculum picture of Jesus and the Children, show it to the group. Then ask:

- **What do you suppose those children were like? Do you think they looked clean and well-fed like these children here in the picture?**

Tell the group that in the time of Mark's gospel, the people of Palestine were under the rule of the Romans. They were living in an occupied nation, and times were really tough. Many people had to leave their homes and travel great distances to find work. Sometimes children were left to take care of themselves. So it's likely that at least some of the children being brought to Jesus were hungry or were wearing worn or tattered clothing. Maybe one of them had a runny nose or a cough.

Distribute the role playing cards to the children. If there are children who are reluctant to take a part, invite them to take the role of people in the crowd watching. Give the children a few moments to read over their role and decide how they might respond, then act out the story. At intervals where the characters are mentioned, allow time for the children holding that role card to make a response. For example, when the scripture says people were bringing children to Jesus, first the people bringing children should respond, then the children.

### Exploring the Message

#### Add to the Poster

Look together at the poster of Jesus and the Children started by the early arrivers. Say that Jesus welcomed all children, not just those who were clean and happy and came to him with both their parents. Ask:

- **What kind of children do we need to add to this poster? Are there children with particular needs whom we have left out?**

Allow a few minutes for additions to be made to the poster.

#### Make a Children's Needs Primer

Ask the children if they know what a primer is. Show them a children's reading primer if you were able to obtain one. Say that a primer has the most basic information a person needs to know about a subject. For example, this reading primer has very basic words children can either sound out easily or that are on a basic sight word list.

## Christian Resources for the Children's Sabbath

Call the attention of the group to the newsprint sheets you prepared using the "Big Picture" handout in the senior high lesson plan. Say that they will prepare a primer about the things children need to help adults to understand how urgent it is to make changes for children.

If your group is large, you might make three primers, one about poverty, one about health care, and one about the pipeline to prison. A small group might put together one primer. Assign one fact to each child and invite them to print it clearly on their sheet of white paper. Then they can illustrate the fact using markers. When the children complete their pages, assemble them into primers by punching holes in the pages, threading yarn through the holes and adding cardboard or poster board covers, displaying them as part of a Children's Sabbath service of worship. Later you can present it to your church's governing board.

### Responding to the Message

#### Write Letters to the Editor

Tell the group that letters to the editor are one of the most widely read sections of a newspaper. Big city papers may have as many as a million readers—sometimes more. Small town newspapers are an important way that citizens get information about their towns. Whether the paper has millions of readers or only a few hundred, many people will probably read letters to the editor. Members of Congress even use newspapers in their district or state as a way to find out what people think.

Invite the children to think about what they might want to say about the change needed for children and youth in need. Go over the tips in the handout, "How to Write a Letter to the Editor." Distribute scrap paper, writing paper, and pens and pencils and encourage children to write a letter.

#### Closing

Invite the children to join you again in a circle around the pillar candle. Light the candle. Tell the group that children can do many things to help children in need. In this session the group made primers to educate the adults in their congregation about what children need, and they wrote letters to the editor of the newspaper. Praying for children is also an important way to make a difference.

Say, "Today, we pray for children." Invite children who wish to do so to come forward, light a votive candle and place it next to the large candle, and pray for a particular need children have. For example, a child might say, "Today, I pray for children in foster care."

Close the prayer by saying, "In the name of Jesus, who welcomed and included and valued all children. Amen."

## Handout

### How to Write a Letter to the Editor

- Decide on one topic or subject to write about. It is best if you can connect your letter to an article that recently appeared in the newspaper. Mention in your letter that you are responding to it, by saying something like “Your recent article about houses in our town, ‘Home Foreclosures Up,’ didn’t say what it is like for children who have to move out of their homes.” Or, you can mention something that just happened or will happen in your town. “My church was part of the National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths to make a difference for children who are having a hard time.”
- Begin by telling your readers who you are: “I am a ten-year-old girl who goes to Liberty School.” Letters from children often catch the reader’s attention.
- Jot down your letter on scrap paper first. Keep it short—one to two paragraphs (200 words) is usually best.
- If you have a story about the issue, include that in your letter.
- Say why you are concerned about this subject. Let people know what you think.
- When you are satisfied with your letter, type it carefully or write it, using your best handwriting. Use “spell check” to be sure there are no misspelled words or ask an adult to read it over for you.
- Sign your name and include your address and phone number. Most papers will only publish your name and the town you live in.

## Role Play Cards

**Person Bringing Child:** Here's Jesus. I want so much for him to bless my child!

**Person Bringing Child:** There is so little for us to eat. But if Jesus would just bless my child, maybe things will be better.

**Person Bringing Child:** My child needs to be touched by Jesus so he will feel better.

**Child:** I want to see this Jesus everyone's been talking about.

**Child:** They say Jesus cares about everyone, even children.  
I wonder if that's true?

**Child:** Will Jesus see me? The crowd is so large, and I'm not very tall.

**Disciple:** I wish these people would just take the children away. Some of them are dirty, and they don't look very healthy.

**Disciple:** We need to get these children out of here! Jesus is very busy—he doesn't have time for them!

**Disciple:** It's dangerous for people to crowd so close to Jesus. Besides, he has important things to teach the crowd, and these children take time away from teaching.

## Middle School Lesson Plan: Working Together to Build a Better Life for Children

**Scripture Passage: Joel 2:28;  
Luke 4:18-21**

**Focus:** With our ideas, passion and energy, we have a contribution to make to creating a better life for all America's children. Our vision can help change their lives for the better.

### Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Look at what children and youths are facing today and explore where change is needed.
- Imagine what it would be like if we could create the change children need.
- Hear how as Jesus' disciples we can bring hope for a better tomorrow.
- Take some simple action steps to make our vision reality.

### Materials Needed

- Prepared sheets of newsprint (see Teacher Preparation)
- Bibles – one per student (preferably a copy of *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene Peterson)
- Colored felt-tipped markers
- Pens or pencils
- Copies of the Handout, "Each Day in America"
- Placard materials: Heavy cardboard or poster board, yardsticks or sturdy dowels, heavy tape
- Copies of the flame commitment card (included in the senior high lesson plan) for each young person
- Large candle, smaller candles (such as those used for a candle lighting service) and matches or a lighter (if lighted candles are permitted in the classroom)

### Teacher Preparation

- Pray for yourself and for the leaders and middle schoolers in your group. Also pray for the children and youths in the United States who urgently need their lives to change for the better.
- Read over the entire lesson plan.
- Gather the materials listed above.

- Decide how your group will use the placards in the responding activity (below). If you decide to walk with your placards, check with your pastor or church governing body to obtain permission.
- Make one copy per student of the handout "Each Day in the Life."
- Prepare a "Graffiti Sheet" for early arrivers. On a sheet of newsprint, write the following prompt: "Imagine a World Where Kids... Post it and place a felt-tipped marker nearby."
- Prepare a sheet with the headings, "Each Day in America..." and "Some Day Soon in America..."
- On yellow or orange paper, make one copy per student of the flame commitment card (included in the senior high lesson plan).
- The closing worship is similar to that included in the senior high lesson plan. If you like, arrange to have a joint worship with both groups of youths together.

### Overview

- Activity for Early Arrivers
- Opening (5 minutes)
- Introduction to the Message (15 minutes)
- Exploring the Message (25 minutes)
- Responding to the Message (10 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)

### Activity for Early Arrivers

As youths arrive, invite them to respond to the graffiti sheet prompt, "Imagine a World Where Kids..." with words or phrases.

### Opening

When most middle schoolers have arrived, invite them to join you in a circle. If your group of youths is not normally together or if you do not know students in the group well, introduce yourself, giving your name and inviting each youth to quickly do the same. Then say that you will read some sentences, and they are to choose from the two alternatives. Read some of the following, alternating instructions for them to respond for their choice by standing up, moving to the left or right of the room, giving a thumbs up,



shouting “Yes!” or “Sweet!” or any other ways of responding that will mix it up a little and let them move around a bit:

- If I could, I'd change (1) hair color (2) eye color.
- If I could, I'd change (1) the way I laugh (2) the way I sneeze.
- If I could, I'd change (1) the time school starts (2) the time school lets out.
- If I could, I'd change (1) when I get up (2) when I go to bed.
- If I could, I'd change (1) the number of hungry children (2) the number of children who don't have health coverage.
- If I could, I'd change (1) the number of kids who have to be in foster care (2) the number of kids who are in detention centers.

Tell the group that in this session, they will be hearing about some changes that many children and young people in our country urgently need to have happen, and ways that they can make a real difference in making those changes.

### Prayer

Pray the following prayer, or one of your own choosing:

Gracious God, you created our world out of nothing, and it is very good. And yet, there is so much in our world that just doesn't work the way you intended it to work. So many children and young people are having a very hard time just getting by. For some, it may be almost impossible to imagine a better world and a hopeful tomorrow. So we need to imagine it for them. We need to find ways to communicate our vision to the people who can make a difference, and we need to step up and make a difference ourselves. Help us, by your Holy Spirit, to do it. Amen.

### Introduction to the Message

Tell the group that today's lesson is part of the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* weekend. Say that Children's Sabbaths are celebrated by congregations of many faiths all across this nation on the third weekend in October. If your congregation is observing the Sabbath on a Sunday other than the October date, point out that, like yours, many congregations choose to celebrate the Sabbath at another time. The purpose of the Sabbath this year is to call attention to the kind of change children and youths in our nation need. It is a time to think about what God is calling us to do, and to decide how we might respond on behalf of children in need and their families.

### Imagine

Call the attention of the group to the graffiti sheet to which the early arrivers added words and phrases. Encourage group members who did not have the opportunity to write anything to call out additional words and phrases. Chances are, there will be some responses such as “Imagine a world where kids can do whatever they want to... stay up all night... buy the latest iPod whenever one comes out... have enough money to download every song they want.” Point such responses out, and tell the group that it's normal for kids to want the freedom to do, say and buy whatever they want. But then ask:

- **Suppose you live in a family where your mother has to choose between taking you to the doctor and paying the electric bill? Or between buying you a school uniform and buying you the backpack you really want?**
- **Or suppose you don't have a choice about something very important, like which foster family you'll live in? Or suppose your family can't pay the mortgage and must leave your house and move into an apartment?**

Tell the group to close their eyes and imagine, for a moment, that this is the world they live in. Then ask:

- **Have you ever somehow found yourself a part of a group of kids at school that you don't really want to be a part of? Did you ever find yourself drawn into doing things you really don't want to do because you just can't seem to break out of that group? How did that feel?**

Say that many children find themselves in situations today that are really difficult to break free from simply because they are poor. Some of them end up in foster care or detention centers or failing in school because of poor health or parents who aren't there or other things that happen just because they are poor. For these children, it may be hard to imagine that they can have a better life. For some of them, it may be hard to imagine that they will even live to see tomorrow. [Note that many children who grow up poor do really well—they succeed in school, make good choices and stay on the right path, and become successful adults. Their achievements are all the more impressive because of the odds stacked against them. Our job is to *change* the odds so no child has to deal with the extra challenges that come from being poor.]

**Note to the teacher:** You will want to be sensitive, of course, to the likelihood that some of your students are experiencing the kinds of challenges discussed in this session. Be attentive to the feelings that this session generates and keep the tone of the discussion thoughtful and supportive.

## Exploring the Message

### Put Yourself in the Picture

Set the context for the Bible reading:

Imagine that you are living in the town of Nazareth in Galilee. Today at the synagogue, you notice a young man who looks familiar. That's right—it's Jesus, the son of the carpenter Joseph, and of Mary. He grew up right here in Nazareth! Some others have read from the scrolls, and now Jesus is standing up. He begins to read the words of Isaiah.

Invite the group to put themselves in the picture, and to imagine they are someone listening as Jesus reads.

Read Luke 4:18–19, if possible from *The Message*.

Now you notice Jesus is rolling up the scroll and sitting down. Everybody in the synagogue is looking at him. Suddenly he speaks again.

“You just heard scripture make history. It came true just now in this place.”

Ask:

- **Who were you in the picture, and where were you? One of the men sitting listening to Jesus? A woman standing near the group? A child playing within earshot? Someone who played with Jesus when he was a little boy? An older woman who knows Mary?** (*Invite each youth to describe his or her place in the picture.*)
- **What do you think about Jesus' words that God's Spirit is on him?**
- **How do you think people in our church would react if you said something like this?**

- **Do you think adults who know you take you seriously? Do you think you have something to contribute to solving difficult problems like those children and youth are facing today?**

Now read Joel 2:28. Point out to the group that in this passage the Holy Spirit isn't just poured out on adults. Young men and young women are seeing visions, too. The prophet is saying that young people can receive the gift of God's spirit, and that they can act as disciples, too.

### Each Day in America... Some Day Soon in America

Distribute copies of the handout “Each Day in America” to the group. Read over the statistics that describe how many children and families are affected by poverty every day in America. Invite each student to choose one of the statistics, imagine what it would be like to change it to something positive, and make a placard to show the transformation. For example, for the statistic that tells that every day two mothers die from complications from childbirth, someone might make a placard showing that all pregnant women get prenatal care. Point out the headings you printed on newsprint: “Each Day in America” and “Some Day Soon in America.” Say that children need change to happen right now—they really can't afford to wait. What is happening to them really needs to change today. To make that happen, we have to be sure people understand the facts and are prepared to act to make a difference.

When the group has completed work on the placards, help them attach sticks to the backs with heavy tape. The group can walk through the halls or outside your building (with permission from your church governing body) to display their placards, or process in the service of worship. If walking with the placards is not an option, they could be propped up in the area leading into worship or stuck in the ground outside.

## Responding to the Message

### Being Primers

Ask the group to define the word “primer.” Say that one meaning of the word is an “igniter,” a small amount of powder that when lit, sets off a much larger fire or explosion. Say that middle schoolers can be primers. Tell the group that they have lots of energy and passion about things that need to be changed. Once their passion is ignited and they put their energy behind something, they can be the change agents that can set off a much larger movement.

## Christian Resources for the Children's Sabbath

- **Igniting Friends.** Divide the group into pairs and have them create text messages they might send their friends to encourage them to take action for children.
- **Igniting Adults.** Invite the group to brainstorm ways they might be primers to create change in your congregation. If the adults in your congregation have already identified a particular project that will benefit children, such as a tutoring or after-school project, encourage the group to brainstorm ways they can contribute to that project. Or the group might identify something they think the youths or children in your community need that they might suggest as a project to the adults. Jot these ideas down on newsprint or a chalk or white board.

Encourage the group to commit to at least one concrete action they can take as a group, and one thing they might commit to as individuals to create change. Distribute the flames you made. As a reminder of their commitment, ask them to write it on the flame and take it home. In a month, send them a message reminding them that they committed to taking a specific individual action. Make plans to implement the group action at a later time.

### Closing

#### Flames of Commitment

Ask the group to form a circle around the large candle. Remind them that the prophet Joel tells us that the dreams and visions of young men and women do not arise out of a vacuum, but rather as a result of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, in the words that began his ministry, speaks of the Spirit being upon him. So we can also

depend on the Holy Spirit to ignite our passion and to provide the fuel to keep the fires of commitment burning. In silence, light the large candle. Light your own small candle from the large one (modeling how to tip the unlit candle down to the flame, rather than tipping the lit candle toward the unlit candle, which would spill hot wax), pass the flame to the youth next to you and invite the group to continue spreading the candle light in silence. (If your congregation does not permit lit candles in the classrooms, omit the candle-lighting and simply share the message while students contemplate their paper “flames of commitment.”)

#### Praying Together

Engage the middle schoolers in a group prayer. Say that you will pray a brief prayer, ending in the word “today.” After you say the word “today,” the young person to your left will join you as you repeat the word “today.” Continue repeating the word as each youth around the circle adds his or her voice to repeating the word “today” until everyone is saying it together.

God, we ask that you pour out your spirit on us as we commit to making a difference in the lives of children and youth. We know that for children, we can't say, “Wait till tomorrow.” For children, we need to act **today**.

## Handout

### Each Day in America

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| 2      | mothers die in childbirth.                       |
| 4      | children are killed by abuse or neglect.         |
| 5      | children or teens commit suicide.                |
| 8      | children or teens are killed by a firearm.       |
| 33     | children or teens die from accidents.            |
| 78     | babies die before their first birthdays.         |
| 201    | children are arrested for a violent crime.       |
| 404    | children are arrested for a drug crime.          |
| 928    | babies are born at low birthweight.              |
| 1,154  | babies are born to teen mothers.                 |
| 1,240  | public school students are corporally punished.* |
| 2,224  | babies are born without health insurance.        |
| 2,367  | high school students drop out.*                  |
| 2,479  | children are confirmed as abused or neglected.   |
| 2,583  | babies are born into poverty.                    |
| 4,184  | babies are born to an unmarried mother.          |
| 4,520  | children are arrested.                           |
| 18,493 | public school students are suspended.            |

\* Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each)

From the Children's Defense Fund website, [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

# High School Lesson Plan: Primers of Change

## Scripture Passage: Joel 3:28; Luke 4:18-21

**Focus:** We can be a part of creating and making real a new vision of what life can be like for all America's children. We can be the change agents, the "primer" for a new day.

### Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about three urgent areas where change is needed: ending child poverty, ensuring access to health coverage, and ending the pipeline to prison crisis.
- Reflect on Jesus' call to ministry and our response of discipleship.
- Create a vision of what a child's world can be.
- Commit to simple action steps that can help move that vision toward reality.

### Materials Needed

- Bibles
- Copy of *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene Peterson (*optional*)
- Soft fabric ball or playground ball
- Flip chart paper and tape
- Large sheets of drawing paper, pencils or pens and colored felt-tipped markers
- Yellow or orange paper and the flame commitment card found on page 22
- Large candle, smaller candles (such as those used for a candle lighting service) and matches or a lighter (if your congregation permits lit candles in the classroom.)

### Teacher Preparation

- On three separate sheets of flip chart paper, print "The Big Picture: Children in Poverty"; "The Big Picture: Children Without Health Coverage"; and "The Big Picture: Children in the Pipeline to Prison." Post these on the wall at three locations around the learning space along with colored markers.
- Make copies of the three snapshots of children in Section 2 (pages 14, 20 and 23). Cut the three snapshots apart to distribute to the three small groups.
- On yellow or orange paper, make copies of the flame commitment card for each young person.

### Overview

- Activity for Early Arrivers
- Opening (5 minutes)
- Introduction to the Message (10 minutes)
- Exploring the Message (25 minutes)
- Responding to the Message (15 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)

### Activity for Early Arrivers

As youths arrive, invite them to read over the facts on the three "Big Picture" sheets you posted. Ask them to make the following notations next to the facts:

- For facts with which they are already familiar, a **check mark**.
- For facts that come as a surprise, an **exclamation point**.
- For facts about which they have a question, a **question mark**.

### Opening

When most youths have arrived, invite them to join you in a circle. Introduce yourself, saying something like, "I'm \_\_\_\_\_, and one thing I'd like to change about myself is \_\_\_\_\_. One thing I'd like to change in the world is \_\_\_\_\_. Then toss the ball to a teen and invite him or her to give their name and respond to the same prompt. Continue until everyone has had a chance to respond. If your group of youths do not know one another well, you might continue this exercise by slightly altering the prompt: "I go to \_\_\_\_\_ school, and one thing I'd like to change about my school is \_\_\_\_\_... I like doing \_\_\_\_\_ with my friends, and one thing I'd like to change about *them* is \_\_\_\_\_... I live with \_\_\_\_\_, and one thing I'd like to change about my family is \_\_\_\_\_."

When the group seems comfortable with one another, ask the following:

- **Have you ever heard anyone say, "Nothing ever changes around here" or "The more things change, the more they stay the same"? What about something like "If you don't like things, stick around for a minute, they'll change" or "The only thing constant in this world is change"? What other sayings have you heard about change?**



## Christian Resources for the Children's Sabbath

Tell the group that in this session, you will be exploring the kind of changes children in the U.S. need in order to ensure that they have a better tomorrow.

### Prayer

Pray the following prayer, or one of your own choosing:

God, we come together to learn more about what needs to be changed so that the children of our country can grow up to be healthy, whole and strong. So much needs to be changed—and changed right now! We know that we can be the ones to help make that change happen. Help us as we learn more about what to do, how to do it, and why we must do it. Amen.

### Introduction to the Message

Tell the group that today's lesson is a part of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® celebration. Say that congregations of many faiths celebrate Children's Sabbaths all across this nation on the third weekend in October. If your congregation is observing the Children's Sabbath on a Sunday other than the October date, point out that, like yours, many congregations choose to celebrate the Sabbath at another time. The purpose of the Sabbath this year is to call attention to the kind of change children and youths in our nation need. It is a time to reflect on what our faith is calling us to do, and to decide how we might respond on behalf of children in need and their families.

### Look at the Big Picture

Call the attention of the group to the "Big Picture" sheets. Look at the statistics marked with exclamation points. Ask:

- **What surprised you? Why?**

Now look at facts youth marked with question marks.

Ask:

### What were your questions?

Make note of questions and add additional information, but encourage the group not to get bogged down debating any statistic.

Ask:

### Do you see patterns? Connections? What kind of Big Picture is emerging as you look at these separate pictures?

Invite the group to respond, popcorn style, to the following:

**When I see the Big Picture here, I feel . . .**

Record their responses on a sheet of newsprint.

### Put a Face on the Picture

Divide the group into three smaller groups. Assign to each group one of the snapshots. Ask each group to read its assigned snapshot and decide where in the vignette they saw signs of crisis and where they saw signs of hope. After allowing a few minutes for groups to work, invite each to briefly share their snapshot with the total group. Ask:

- **Think about the places where you saw signs of hope. What or who made a difference?**

### Alternative Activity

Ask each group to read its assigned snapshot and decide on a way to present its story to the total group. Youths might decide to draw a picture of the face of the child in their snapshot, present a first-person monologue, write a short rap or poem, do a statistical chart, or otherwise present the "face" in their snapshot.

### Exploring the Message

#### Hear and Explore the Biblical Message

Distribute Bibles to the group and invite a volunteer to read aloud Luke 4:14–21. Ask the group to reflect silently on the following:

- **What do you think would be good news for poor children and their families?**
- **What kinds of things need to happen so children and youths can be released from the systems that keep them captive and from the oppression of poverty?**
- **In what ways do you think we in our country are blind to what is happening to our children? How can we regain our sight?**
- **What needs to happen so that the coming year can be "the year of the Lord's favor"?**

Now read aloud for the group Joel 3:28. Emphasize that the prophet is telling us that not only will it be older people who can have a vision for the future; it is young men and young women who will prophesy and see visions. In response to the Holy Spirit, young people can begin to imagine how the Big Picture can be transformed, and how they can be the change agents.

### Imagining a Better World

Remind the group that where they saw signs of hope, there were people working to make things better. Say that sometimes adults get discouraged when moving forward seems to take such a long time, for example, when getting the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) reauthorized was such an uphill battle. That's where the energy, passion and commitment of young people can make a big difference.

Distribute drawing paper, colored felt-tipped markers and pens or pencils to the group. Ask them to imagine a child today mired down in poverty, stunted by a lack of affordable health care, and trapped in the cradle to prison pipeline. Then ask them to imagine that same child as he or she might be in five years if we have succeeded in becoming change agents beginning to transform the situations that seem so hopeless. Invite them to draw a picture or write a paragraph depicting that child. Encourage them to create as detailed a picture as possible. After allowing time to work, ask the youths to post their papers on the wall and to walk around reading or viewing the work of their friends. These visions can be displayed later where the congregation can see them.

### Responding to the Message

#### Being Primers

Ask the group to define the word "primer." Say that one meaning of the word is an "igniter," a small amount of powder that when lit sets off a much larger fire or explosion. Say that youths can be primers. Once our passion and commitment are ignited, we can be the change agents that can set off a much larger movement.

Invite the group to brainstorm ways they might be primers to create change in your congregation. Encourage them to consider ways to educate themselves and the adults in your community of faith, ways to lift up concerns in worship, acts of direct service in your community, and issues around which they might advocate with your city council, the school board, state legislators or members of Congress. Jot these ideas down on newsprint or a chalk or white board.

Encourage the group to commit to at least one concrete action they can take as a group, and one thing they might commit to as individuals to create change. Distribute the flames you prepared in advance. As a reminder of their commitment, ask them to write it on the flame and take it home. If the teens in your group have access to email, get

their email addresses. In a month, send them a message reminding them that they committed to taking a specific individual action. Make plans to implement the group action at a later time.

### Closing

#### Flames of Commitment

Ask the group to form a circle around the large candle. Remind them that the prophet Joel tells us that the dreams and visions of young men and women do not arise out of a vacuum, but rather as a result of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, in the words that began his ministry, speaks of the Spirit being upon him. So we can also depend on the Holy Spirit to ignite our passion and to provide the fuel to keep the fires of commitment burning. In silence, light the large candle. Light your own small candle from the large one, pass the flame to the youth next to you and invite the group to continue spreading the candle light in silence.

#### Praying Together

Close with a simple prayer such as this one:

Gracious God our Creator, create the spark that will ignite our passion to be change agents.

By your Holy Spirit, fuel the fires of change we ignite, and keep them burning.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, make us disciples who will tend the flames for the long haul. Amen.

### The Big Picture: Children in Poverty Today

- A total of 13.3 million children, or one in six of all children in America, live in poverty.
- Almost half of those children—5.8 million—live in extreme poverty.
- The number of children living in poverty increased by 1.7 million between 2000 and 2007.
- Seven out of ten poor children are in families where someone works full- or part-time for at least part of the year.
- Black and Latino children are more likely to be poor than White children. One in three Black children and one in four Latino children are poor, compared with one in 10 White children.
- If children's parents are young, or if they live in a one-parent family, or their parents have not completed high school, or they live with a caregiver like a grandparent, they are more likely to be poor.

### The Big Picture: Children Without Health Coverage

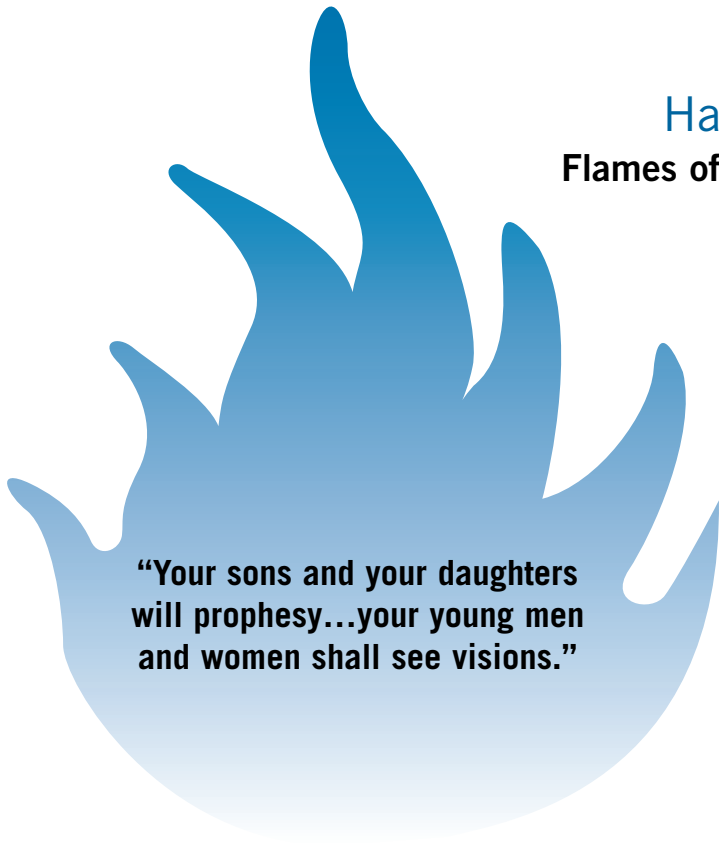
- Nine million children—one out of every nine—does not have health coverage.
- Uninsured children are almost five times more likely to go more than two years without seeing a doctor.
- When admitted to the hospital for general injuries, uninsured children are twice as likely to die as children with health coverage.
- Children need regular health screenings in order to identify and treat health problems that may interfere with their healthy development.
- Around 800,000 pregnant women are uninsured in America. In one state, data found infants born to uninsured mothers are more than three times as likely to die in their first year as infants born to mothers with private health insurance.
- Once uninsured children are enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program, their attendance in school improves. Children with CHIP coverage missed fewer classes and showed better performance when they were insured.
- Children born with low birthweight are less likely to be in good health all their lives. For example, at age 17 they are twice as likely to have serious behavior problems and 50 percent more likely to score below average in reading and math than their peers.
- Most uninsured children live in two-parent families, and almost 90 percent have one parent who works.
- Since 2001, health insurance premiums have risen more than three times as fast as wages. Fewer people have health coverage sponsored by their employers.
- Many people just can't afford health coverage. The average cost for employer-sponsored health coverage for a family of four in 2008 was over \$12,500. That's about what a full-time minimum wage worker makes in a year!
- It makes economic sense to cover children. They are the least expensive group to cover. For every dollar spent on vaccines, \$16 is saved in medical and social costs down the road. Prevention costs far less than illness.
- The annual funding needed to expand health coverage to include all children and all pregnant women would be less than what it costs in two months for the war in Iraq.

### The Big Picture: Children in the Pipeline to Prison

- A Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime. A Latino boy has a one in six chance, and a White boy a one in 17 chance.
- A Black girl born in 2001 has a one in 17 chance of going to prison in her lifetime. A Latino girl has a one in 45 chance, and a White girl a one in 111 chance.
- One in 13 White children, one in eight Black children, and one in five Hispanic children are uninsured. Most of these uninsured children have a parent who works full-time.
- Studies show that children who do not get the help and stimulation they need when they are preschoolers are more likely to act out and fail in school. The U.S. Department of Education found in 1998–99 that of 22,000 young children, Black and Hispanic children were already behind by the time they entered kindergarten.
- Eighty-six percent of Black, 83 percent of Latino and 58 percent of White fourth graders can't read at grade level. Eighty-nine percent of Black, 85 percent of Latino, and 59 percent of White eighth graders can't do math at grade level.
- Black children are more likely to be placed in special education programs. Black and American Indian children are twice as likely to repeat a grade.
- In 2006, only 59 percent of Black, 61 percent of Latino and 62 percent of American Indian children graduated on time with a regular diploma.
- Even Black children who graduate from high school have a greater chance of being unemployed and a lower chance of going to college than White children.
- Only 48,000 Black males get a college degree each year, but about one in every three Black males ages 20–29 is in prison or under correctional supervision (such as being on parole).

## Handout

### Flames of Commitment



**“Your sons and your daughters  
will prophesy...your young men  
and women shall see visions.”**