

Harvest Youth Group Activity- Impossible Decisions

Aim of this session

The aim of this session is to get young people thinking about the injustice of hunger and poverty and being generous with what we have. It could be used around the time of a Harvest festival celebration or at any other time. The resource highlights the work of the Trussell Trust, a charity supporting 1,300 foodbanks across the UK and working towards a future where food banks are no longer needed. Find out more about their work at www.trusselltrust.org

Length of session

About 30-40 minutes, depending on how long your discussions take.

What you will need

- Copies of the 'Impossible decisions' activity sheet
- Items for the 'Impossible decisions' activity
- Pens
- Access to a calculator (eg on a phone)

Icebreaker - The things I can't live without

Invite the young people to divide into small groups (3-4 is ideal).

Then invite each individual to think about four items they absolutely cannot live without. These might be possessions (eg mobile phone), services (eg Netflix, Wifi), activities (eg football), even friends, family and/or pets!

Once everyone has come up with four items, invite them to tell everyone in their small group what these are.

Then tell them that they must now decide ONE of these items to give up. Which one is it going to be? Discuss together in the groups.

Come back together as a wider group, and ask them to reflect on what it was like to have to give up one item - was it easy, difficult? Were there any unusual decisions to report back on?

Activity - Impossible Decisions

This is a game/discussion about spending money, intended to give the young people an idea of how it might feel to not be able to afford items in a weekly household budget. As ever, you will need to exercise discretion in using this if there are young people in your group whose family is struggling in this way.

NB The costs given for each item are taken from figures for 2021, with some adjustments for increases in food and fuel prices in 2022. Figures taken from 'Average UK household budget 2021', accessed at <https://www.nimblefins.co.uk/average-uk-household-budget>, with some figures rounded up or down and adjustments made for the increase in food and fuel prices in 2022.

Beforehand: if you wish to include a visual representation for this game, have a display table of objects representing different items of weekly household spending, eg a lightbulb representing electricity costs, a woolly jumper or scarf representing heating costs, cans (eg of baked beans, soup) representing food costs, etc., along with labels showing how much the items being represented cost per week (see the figures on the 'Impossible decisions' activity sheet)

Divide your group into three smaller groups.

Give each group a copy of the 'Impossible decisions' sheet. This includes a list of items that would normally be included in a weekly household budget, eg mortgage/rent, heating, travel, food, entertainment.

Then give each group a different amount of money to spend:

Group 1: You are a single parent with two children. You receive Universal Credit of the maximum amount of £384.62 per week. You have no other sources of income and your former partner does not give you any financial support. Both children are at school.

Group 2: You are a couple with two children. You are both in work. One parent works full-time and the other part-time. Your combined income is £800 per week. One of the children is in full-time childcare.

Group 3: You are a 73-year-old pensioner. You are a widower (your wife died a few years ago). You receive a state pension of £185.15 per week.

After they have agreed on their decision, ask each group to feed back on the experience.

- Were you able to afford all the items on the list? Which ones did you have to go without?
- Are there any items not on the list that you needed to add?
- After you had covered all the essentials, was there any money left in your weekly budget?
- How did it feel to not be able to afford some of the items?

Explain to the group that many people who visit food banks are having to make these impossible decisions all the time, and share some of the following facts and figures:

- The Trussell Trust reports that 94% of people who visit food banks are destitute, that means that they do not have enough money to afford the essentials of life.
- In 2021-22, food banks provided more than 2.1 million food parcels.
- There are more food banks in the UK than McDonald's restaurants.
- Many parents will go without food so that their children can eat: if you wish, share these quotes from food bank users:
- 6 in 10 people who need a food bank are disabled.

'I do skip meals. The kids don't, but I do. I can go three days without eating. When I first started doing it, it was like, oh my goodness, I feel ill. Now I'm used to it.'

'We will have to prioritise food so will be cold in our own home and I am eating less and less to ensure my daughter has what she needs as she is only 6. I already walk to work and back every day because I cannot afford transport.'

Bible Study - Share your treasure

Read together Luke 12.13-21 (we have used The Message version as it's quite powerful but do use whichever version you prefer).

Luke 12.13-21 (The Message version)

The Story of the Greedy Farmer

13 Someone out of the crowd said, 'Teacher, order my brother to give me a fair share of the family inheritance.' 14 He replied, 'Mister, what makes you think it's any of my business to be a judge or mediator for you?' 15 Speaking to the people, he went on, 'Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot.'

16 Then he told them this story: 'The farm of a certain rich man produced a terrific crop. 17 He talked to himself, "What can I do? My barn isn't big enough for this harvest." 18 Then he said, "Here's what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll gather in all my grain and goods, 19 and I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well! You've got it made and can now retire. Take it easy and have the time of your life!"

20 Just then God showed up and said, "Fool! Tonight you die. And your barnful of goods - who gets it?" 21 That's what happens when you fill your barn with Self and not with God.'

Then discuss your responses to the passage, using the following questions:

- What do you think of the rich man's actions? Was he right to do what he did?
- What would you have done in these circumstances?

- Why do you think God calls the man a ‘fool’? (v.20)
- Jesus told this story in response from the person’s request in verse 13. Why do you think he did this? What point was he trying to make?
- What do we store up in our ‘barns’? Are we right to do so?

At the end of the discussion, make a link to the work of the Trussell Trust and food banks. We live in a wealthy country (the 5th wealthiest in the world, according to some lists), a place where everyone should have enough money to afford the essentials we all need.

Yet, after the covid pandemic and as the cost-of-living crisis bites, more people are being pushed to the doors of food banks. The Trussell Trust is working to highlight this need and also to change things so that food banks are a no longer needed. Explain that at the end of the session, there will be an opportunity for the young people to decide what actions they would like to take to help.

Prayers

If the young people are confident about praying out loud, invite them to do so, praying for:

- People who are struggling to put food on the table and need to turn to food banks
- For the government to make wise decisions so that people have enough money and food banks are no longer needed
- For any local food banks and their particular needs
- For ourselves to be agents of change

Or use this prayer:

Generous God,

thank you that everything we have comes from you.

Forgive us for times when we have been like the greedy farmer and stored up things for ourselves.

Open our eyes to see the need around us.

We pray for those who do not have enough to eat.

We thank you for the work of food banks in meeting immediate needs,

but we pray for things to change so that food banks are no longer needed.

We pray for the work of the Trussell Trust in making that happen,

And for ourselves that we might be the change we want to see in the world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Sending out action

As your session draws to a close, take a few moments to reflect on what you might do as a group to support food banks but also to work towards a future where food banks are not necessary. Explain that while the cost of living crisis means increased need for the services of food banks, donations have been falling.

Ask the group for suggestions and together agree on one or two things that you might do to help.

Some ideas might be:

- Fundraising activities for the Trussell Trust or a local food bank, eg car washing, a sponsored run or walk, a bake sale, etc
- Contacting your local food bank to find out what help and support they would appreciate.
- Finding out more about the work of the Trussell Trust and getting involved in campaigning for an end to food banks. See <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/>
- Ask the young people to report back on the actions they have taken at your next session.

If you have found this resource helpful and want to receive updates from our Church Engagement team including new resources to help you and your church join the fight against hunger then sign up here:

www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/church-support/join/