

Week #1: Privilege

Session Focus:

1. Assist students in thinking about the idea of privilege in their lives.
 2. Explore how God wants us to respond to the power of privilege in our lives.
- *I tried to keep it very age-appropriate which led many of our conversations to their "arena" of life – school, church and neighborhood

OPENING: 2 optional activities (We did both of them and found it worked b/c of the age range.)

#1: Candy Activity:

Distribute the candy:

To some, distribute a baggy with 12 candies – all different colors.

To some distribute a bag with 12 candies – all one color.

To some give a bag with 6 candies - different colors

Extend different invitations:

- Students with one color invited to come to my party at Craig's Cruisers (they decided collectively on a location that would make for a GREAT party – a desirable invitation).
- Students with 12 mixed colored candies invited to my party AND I'd give them some tokens to spend.
- Students with 6 candies would be welcome to see pictures from my party.

Reflection:

- How would you feel if you were able to come to my party? What if you were able to come AND given some extra tokens? What if you were only able to look at pictures?

Students first shared with friends sitting by them and then we asked for some to share out with the full group. Because of the age range we found it helpful to do the partner sharing first...especially for the young ones.

- Did any of you do anything differently to get these different invitations? I wonder why some of you had some special privileges that others didn't have? How did I decide?

Chair Activity:

- As a group, we brainstormed what their "ideal school" would be like? They described things like a wonderful playground, lots of computers and technology, nice teachers, good lunch food, friends in their class, etc.
- Then I set up three chairs and a trashcans in a row, like diagram below:

Chair chair chair trash can

- I asked for 3 volunteers and posed the following challenge:
 - Take the paper-wad I give you and shoot it into the trash can. Making a basket will earn you the privilege of going to that dream school! Easy, right?
- After all 3 tried, the students then started asking questions – good questions.

May I stand on my chair? My response: Oh, can you try to get the privilege in a different way? Can the other people lean to the side so I can see the target? My response: Oh, so you can't even see what you're aiming at?

Reflection:

This activity led to some great conversation – my older students were really thinking, but even my young ones made some great observations. Students recognized that there was lots of inequity with this challenge. The person in the front chair was privileged while the person in the back didn't really have a clear idea of what he was "aiming for" because he couldn't see the basket.

GROUP DISCUSSION OR WONDERING: (They are used to the wondering language from Children's Worship)

Does anything like this (above two activities) ever happen in Grand Rapids? At school or church? Are there some people who have privileges that others don't? Do some kids "get to do things" even though they haven't done anything differently than other kids?

Visual prompt: I showed a few photos/images on my computer of a group of kids leaving some others out.

The students had lots of ideas and we started recording them on chart paper

- *Some kids get invited to parties and not others*
- *Some kids get "special" privileges in class and not others (Stories of being the helper or the team captain...)*
- *Some kids always have someone to play with on playground, not others.*
- *Some kids go to the special things at church – bowling, Wednesday night, etc. Others don't b/c they don't have rides... Very interesting that they brought this one up!*
- *Some people sit on the edge of the Fellowship Hall, others have circles of friends to talk to*
- *Some people get asked to do special things in church like read or act, not others*

I shared with them that I have actually been in some schools that are close to their "dream" school, but also some schools very close to us where kids don't have any of these resources (computers, nice playground, a teacher – some have only substitutes, people they know, etc.) They were quite astonished by this.

We moved to thinking about WHY this happens and whether this is a choice or not.

This is when things became interesting b/c the students started to describe students or kids who are left out – those with disabilities, those who talk/act differently than the other kids, those who aren't athletic, older people (I think they were thinking about the people who sit on the edge of the Fellowship Hall), kids who can't afford the privileges, etc.

How does Jesus respond to this issue?

- Does he always pick the people with all the special things to do His work?
- Does he hang out with the popular people?

Again, we allowed students to talk with a few neighbors first and then we shared out as a big group.

- Talk about some of the people that Jesus/God used in His story:
 - Moses: a man who had trouble speaking, led the Israelites to the Promised Land
 - Disciples: the fisherman, very common, ordinary people
 - Mary & Joseph: young girl and a carpenter

The students were able to tell me what was common/ordinary about each of these people. They made the link to our lesson focus.

APPLICATION/TAKE AWAY:

So, what about school? How could we respond to some of the situations when we see people not being included or being left out or having access to certain privileges? **What about at church? Community?** Should we do more to help those in our community who don't have the privileges that we do?

- *Share what we have with them – if we have more _____, give them some*
- *Include them if they are left out*
- *Etc.*

Week #2: People in the Margins

Session Focus:

1. Identify why some people are “in the margins” *[Students noted that this was often not a choice by the people in the margins.]*
2. Consider challenges for specific marginalized populations (refugee & disabled)
3. Identify Biblical & personal responses to marginalized people we know

REVIEW OF LAST WEEK:

Show the picture of the group of kids with some being left out.

We had an amazing response – one of our youngest members raised his hands and articulated to the full group that we had played some games that helped us see that sometimes people are treated unfairly. I asked him to keep talking and his first example was ...that they are treated unfairly b/c of the color of their skin. Ironically, this had NOT come up in the previous lesson, but this 6 year old articulated it well!

We tried to remember why people sometimes are left out or don't have access to the same privileges. The following ideas were shared:

Special needs

People who look or talk differently than the others

People who don't have money to dress the same or buy the same things

Old people

Introduced the meaning of “people in the margins” using the visual.

BOOK READING IN SMALL GROUPS:

Children were split into 2 groups to read a book about people they had identified as being in the margins – refugees and child on autism spectrum. Each group read one of the books below and recorded their ideas/responses to the prompts.

Stepping Stones – a Refugee's Family Journey

Pre-reading:

- Define “refugee”: person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster
- Locate Syria

Focus Questions:

- Why did Rama and her family have to leave Syria?
- How might the characters feel left out or “on the margins” in their new home?
- What could their new community do to keep them from feeling this way?

My Brother Charlie

Pre-reading:

- Define “Autism”
- Does anyone know someone with autism?

Focus Question:

- How is Charlie like his twin sister? How is he different from her?
- How might Charlie feel left out or In the margin?
- What could you do to keep Charlie from feeling this way?

GROUP DISCUSSION OR WONDERING:

1. Each group **shared some of their observations** about the characters in their book.
2. Does the Bible have anything to say about these topics? Have example stories ready to share.

Students quickly started listing stories from the Bible about refugees, disabled people and went on to include, beggars/unclean, etc.

APPLICATION/TAKE AWAY:

We prompted students to think about what they could do differently in response to what we had talked about the last two weeks. They each recorded an idea on a sticky note and we encouraged them to talk with their parent(s) about this idea.

Ideas ranged from talk to a parent with questions, include a peer, talk to Crystal at church (a woman in a wheelchair), invite a friend to come with them to a party that wasn't invited, etc. Some wanted to read the book they didn't get to read in small groups today.

Week #3: Being a Godly neighbor

Session Focus:

Explore what it means to be a Godly neighbor, including connecting with people in the margins

OPENING:

- We gave students the opportunity to share how they did with their goal/take away from last week.
- A couple of students were so excited that during the service last week we watched a video about an organization for physically disabled people in Nicaragua which our offering money this week would support.
- **M & M demonstration:** I held up my bag of candies and asked them why they thought I may have brought these along as a visual.
They were quick – Though we may look differently on the outside, we have lots of similarities...may look more similar than we realize.

[Another option was to use a white and a brown shelled egg.]

GROUP READING & DISCUSSION: *I'm New Here.*

- As you listen, think about things we could do to help these kids (language & culture) be included and welcomed.
- What about kids that are left out for different reasons – ability (Charlie book)? Don't have the money/resources? Different family structure?
- We've talked a lot about people/kids who may feel "different" or left out because of their differences – come from a different country, speak a different language, learn differently, etc. **How would Jesus respond to these people?**
- I had a few verses marked in my Bible and asked students to read these verses which talked about caring for each other.

APPLICATION/TAKE AWAY:

How can we respond or continue to work to be inclusive?

- We listed a number of ways that were age appropriate for being inclusive.
- **Kid's Food Basket Activity:**
I showed the video that talks about the number of children locally who fight hunger daily. We also talked about how this organization tries to help respond to this challenge. Many of the kids knew of the organization and had helped pack sack suppers before. We spent the remaining time coloring lunch sacks for these dinners.