

A Children's Activity Guide on HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Our faith traditions teach us to love one another not only in word but in our actions. Yet no matter how much compassion we feel for the homeless, or how badly we want to help, it can be difficult to know where to begin. Fortunately, we can look to our scriptures for guidance. This activity guide focuses on the New Testament passage Matthew 25:34-40, yet the activities presented here can easily be altered to apply to other texts. We've provided a short list of relevant scripture near the end of this guide.

TO BEGIN

Read Matthew 25:34-40 and discuss the importance of helping those who are hungry, thirsty, alone, without proper clothing, or sick. The activities below will help children explore the message further.

ACTIVITIES



- Have children draw or paint pictures of people helping someone in need. Or invite children to create pictures of a child or family who doesn't have their own house yet are still surrounded by love and respect for their worthiness. What could this look like?
- Create word art! Make outlines of words that represent the basic needs mentioned in Matthew 25. Ask children to color, paint, or decorate the words in some way. Display the word art as a reminder of the basic things that all people deserve.
- Ask children to reflect on a time when they were hungry, thirsty, or lonely. Who helped them? What sort of help did they receive? How did they feel? What did they want most at that time?
- Try some playacting! Divide the children into pairs. Ask one child in each pair to play the part of someone who is lonely, hungry, sick, or homeless and ask the other child to play the part of being a good listener and friend. Then ask them to switch roles. Invite them to think about how each one of us sometimes needs help while at other times we can offer help. Everyone has something they can share with others, and everyone has something they can receive.
- Hold a bake sale or car wash to raise money for faith organizations that work to fight homelessness and social injustice, such as Bend the Arc, Catholic Charities, Christ House, Islamic Relief USA, The Lutheran Volunteer Corps, The Presbyterian Hunger Program, United Methodist Open Door, and The Washington Interfaith Network. Many local faith communities also serve people who are homeless. Check for programs in your area!
- Contact a local homeless shelter and ask if "goody bags" would be helpful and, if so, what items are needed. Ask children to pack bags and reflect on how each item might help meet one of the needs described in Matthew 25: 34-40. Below are some examples of the kinds of items bags could contain.

PROBLEM	ITEM
Hunger	Peanut butter or cheese crackers
Thirst	Bottle of water or juice
Lack of clothing	A pair of socks
Loneliness	A hand-made card, perhaps with an invitation to the church

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ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Other texts that teach the importance of caring for one another:

- Deuteronomy 15:7-11 – being open-handed for those in need
- Leviticus 19:9-18 – loving our neighbors as ourselves
- Isaiah 58:7 – sharing with the hungry and homeless
- Matthew 6:19-21, Luke 12:32-34 – storing up treasures in heaven
- Mark 6:30-44 – feeding the hungry
- James 2:14-18 – our good works show our faith
- 1 John 4:19 – loving others because God loved us first
- Qu’ran 2.274 – the importance of giving to charity
- Qu’ran 3.92 – sharing the things that you love

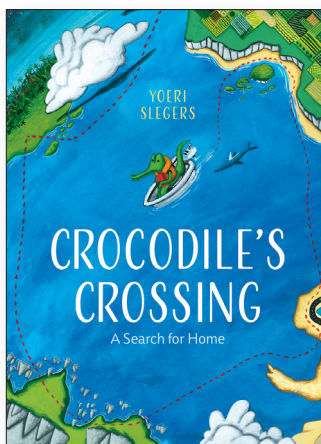
READ TOGETHER



THE COAT

Séverine Vidal

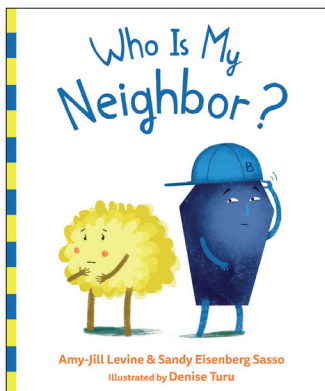
The Coat offers a glimpse at the hardships confronting those who are experiencing homelessness, inspiring us to treat them with compassion and respect. A downloadable discussion guide is available at www.flyawaybooks.com/resources.



CROCODILE'S CROSSING

Yoeri Slegers

Featuring bright artwork and playful details, this thoughtful tale introduces the complex topic of immigration, sensitively portraying the challenges faced by refugees and other newcomers. A downloadable discussion guide is available at www.flyawaybooks.com/resources.



WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Amy-Jill Levine

This creative reframing of the parable of The Good Samaritan encourages new ways of seeing our neighbors and ourselves. A note for parents and educators is included.

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