

Leader's Guide

Lesson Overview: This lesson will help students understand the very real challenges facing Haitians on a daily basis and presently in light the earthquake on January 12, 2010. Students will reflect on how our faith calls us to respond amidst such challenges and discern how they may respond individually and collectively to this specific crisis. The session will end with a group prayer written by everyone gathered.

Materials/Resources:

- Copies of the Handouts (one per student) at the end of this packet
- One copy of the Answer Key that corresponds to Handout #1
- Newsprint & Markers
- Pens/pencils for each student
- Bible

Session Outline:

Introduction

- Introduce the session as one that will focus on the country and people of Haiti. You might introduce the session by putting the following into your own words:
 - In our gathering today, we are going to take some time to look at the challenges facing the people of Haiti. Haiti has faced a devastating earthquake which only adds to the challenges this tiny country in the Caribbean is already facing. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and a disaster of this magnitude has enormous implications for a country that is already struggling so greatly. So, we will examine some of the realities facing Haiti, prayerfully explore how God might be calling all of us to share in their struggle together and take some time to discern how God might be calling us.

Part I: The Challenges of Daily Life in Haiti

- Distribute *Handout #1: The Challenges of Daily Life in Haiti*. Invite students to take a few minutes to fill out the column for the U.S. Even though they may not know the answers, tell them to give their best estimates based on what they already know about the U.S.
- Once participants have finished, use the Answer Key to go over the correct responses with students. Ask students to correct their own papers as they go. Ask the students whether they are surprised by any of the indicators. Did they think they would be higher or lower? Elicit a brief discussion on their reaction to the correct indicators.

- Next, have students fill in the column for Haiti. Explain that they may want to use what they now know about the U.S. to estimate the indicators for Haiti and to remember what they may have heard recently in the news.
- When students are done, use the Answer Key again to provide the correct indicators and have students correct their answers as they go. Ask students to compare the two columns for the U.S. and Haiti. Elicit some comments from the students as to their reactions upon seeing this information side by side. Continue with either the optional activity below or skip to Part II.
- **Optional Activity:** If time allows and you want to explore further the daily challenges facing Haiti, share a recent article that helps students understand the challenges facing Haiti. Be sure to provide stories that weave in hopeful responses in order to give the full picture and tell the whole story. You can find stories of response on the Catholic Relief Services website (www.crs.org). Either read the article(s) aloud or invite students to read the article(s) silently to themselves. As a large group, discuss how these stories broaden their understanding of life in Haiti.

Part II: Putting the Challenges in Context

- Invite students to add to the list of daily challenges by exploring what they have heard recently in the news about life in Haiti and about the aftermath and effects of the earthquake on Haiti. List their answers on newsprint that they might see the full picture.
- Distribute *Handout #2: Reflecting Further* and invite students to silently reflect on the first two questions: How does a large disaster affect the people in a country already facing great challenges? What additional challenges now affect their lives? After a few moments, invite their responses.
- Turn their attention to the next item on Handout #2 and invite students to complete the phrase: If I lived in a society with this many challenges ... After a few moments, invite their responses. Acknowledge their feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, concern, sorrow as well as their motivation to respond and rebuild. Invite students to consider that by putting themselves in the shoes of our Haitian sisters and brothers, they gain a small understanding of their experience and realities.

Part III: A Faithful Response

- Ask students to hold onto what they may be feeling as a result of their reflections and what they have learned.
 - It is overwhelming when you consider the challenges the people of Haiti face every day and how those challenges are magnified in light of this earthquake. It is difficult, if not impossible, to make sense of such disasters and poverty. Yet, as people of faith, we are reminded to turn to Jesus for comfort, hope and guidance. We are called to live in solidarity with the people in Haiti and people all around the world facing similar challenges. Let us explore what this means as we listen to God's Word in the Gospel of John and to a reflection from our bishops.

- Distribute *Handout #3: Called to Prayer and Solidarity*. Invite someone to read John 15: 1-13 from the bible. Invite someone else to read the quote on solidarity on Handout #3.
- Invite reflection by saying the following:
 - In the reading from John, Jesus shares an image that he is the true vine and we are the branches. Our bishops, in defining the principle of solidarity, speak about our inherent unity as one human family. How do these readings speak to you today as we reflect upon the challenges facing the people of Haiti?
- Invite responses. Reiterate the inherent connection that we all by virtue of God’s creation and the call to Jesus to love all people. Ask students to consider that when we truly live in love and respond to each other in love, especially in such challenges, it is in then that hope and new life is truly born. It is when we share in such challenges and struggles together, searching for hope and meaning, that we live in solidarity, that we live as one human family.
- Ask students to name how they have already seen hope in the world’s response to Haiti. Remind them to also name how they have seen hope in the stories and responses of the Haitian people themselves.
- Tell the group that they, too, will decide how they can contribute to these hopeful responses. Direct students to get into small groups of four or five. Draw their attention to the quote from Frederick Buechner and share the following in your own words:
 - The situation facing the people of Haiti represents one of the world’s greatest needs. It is a moment that calls for people to give of themselves and to share together the journey of rebuilding and restoring hope. Let’s read aloud together the quote from Frederick Buechner on Handout #3.
 - *“The kind of work God usually calls you to do is work that you need most to do and that the world needs most to have done ... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”* Frederick Buechner, “Vocation,” from *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. New York: Harper and Row. 1973. p. 95.
- Invite students to explain this quote in their own words, especially in light of the current challenges facing Haiti.
 - Indeed, God calls us to respond in love to the world’s needs by giving of ourselves. Now in your small groups, consider the talents, gifts and blessings of your lives, that which gives you such gladness. How can we give of ourselves – using our talents, giftedness, and blessing – to meet the needs of our sisters and brothers in Haiti in a way that fosters hope and gladness in others? Take a few moments to brainstorm some ideas.
- After the groups have completed their brainstorm, invite each to share their ideas. List these on newsprint. Discern with the whole group what they can do as an entire group and what they can do individually. Wrap up by determining a group plan of action and next steps. Be sure to delegate responsibility accordingly.

Part IV: Journeying in Prayer

- Invite the same small groups to re-group and give the following instructions.
 - One way that we can profoundly join our sisters and brothers in Haiti during this time is through prayer. Each person take a moment to write down on the back of Handout #3 a person, word, or phrase that captures what you would like to bring to prayer. *(Allow a couple of minutes for individuals to write their prayer on the back of Handout #3.)*
 - Now, in your small groups, I invite each of you to share your prayer reflection. After doing so, as a small group, join your prayers together to write a group prayer. *(Allow 5-7 minutes for each group to write their prayer. When they have finished, invite the group to determine how the prayer will be recited. Designate the order the groups will recite their prayer during the session's closing prayer.)*
- Begin the closing prayer by saying:
 - Our God invites us as individuals and as a community to deepen our love for God and for each other. Prayer helps us to enter more deeply into that loving relationship to which we are always called. So, let us pause for a moment and remember that we are now and always in God's loving presence. *(pause)*

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God, You call us to love. It is in loving each other that we come to know of your great love for us. In this moment of great need, give us the compassion and courage to bring your love to our brothers and sisters in Haiti. With confident hope that You journey with all people at all times, we lift up to You our prayers ...

(Each small group shares its prayer.)

Hear our prayers, gracious God. May we join in solidarity as one human family, loving one another as you have loved us. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our brother and friend who stands as our model of love. Amen.

Extension Activities:

- Encourage students to research the work of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) (www.crs.org) in Haiti and to explore how they might be able to join their efforts with those of CRS in responding to the earthquake.
- Encourage students to research how the U.S. government is currently funding in Haiti (through USAID -- the United States Agency for International Development -- and non-governmental agencies such as Catholic Relief Services). If it is difficult to do this research in a class, you may want to find out the information in advance from www.usaid.gov and present this to the class. Encourage students to compare these activities with what they identified in class as the major

challenges facing the country. Do they agree or disagree with these activities as priorities for Haiti? Encourage them to defend their answers.

- If the large group hopes to rally the support of their wider school or parish community, encourage students to develop an awareness and information booth so that all may learn and see the progress of any projects undertaken.

General Indicators of Quality of Life

	United States	Haiti
Per Capita Annual Income		
% of population below poverty line		
% of population unemployed		
Life expectancy		
Literacy rate		
Primary school enrollment rate		
Infant Mortality		
% of population that is HIV-positive		
% of population that uses the internet		
% of the land that is forested		

General Indicators of Quality of Life

	United States	Haiti
Per Capita Annual Income	\$37,600	\$380
% of population below poverty line	12%	80%
% of population unemployed	4.8%	70%
Life expectancy	78 Male: 75, Female: 81	57 Male: 55, Female: 59
Literacy rate	99%	53%
Primary school enrollment rate	99%	65% (but of these only 30% complete primary school)
Infant Mortality	6 per every 1,000 infants die	118 per every 1,000 infants die
% of population that is HIV-positive	0.6%	5.6%
% of population that uses the internet	68%	6%
% of the land that is forested	33%	1%

Data gathered from the CIA World Fact Book, the World Bank and USAID/Haiti.

How does a large disaster affect the people in a country already facing great challenges?

What additional challenges now affect their lives?

If I lived in a society with this many challenges ...

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

John 15, 1-13

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice." The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

How do these readings speak to you today as we reflect upon the challenges facing the people of Haiti?

"The kind of work God usually calls you to do is work that you need most to do and that the world needs most to have done ... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Frederick Buechner, "Vocation," from *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. New York: Harper and Row. 1973. p. 95.

How might God be calling us to respond?

How can we give of ourselves – using our talents, giftedness, and blessing
– to meet the needs of our sisters and brothers in Haiti?



My prayer ... our prayer ...



Photo: David Snyder / CRS



Photo: Rebecca Janes / CRS