



# Hungry for the Kingdom



## Youth Ministry Curriculum Leader's Guide

**By Kara Powell  
and the Fuller Youth Institute  
In coordination with World Vision**

## *If you wanted to motivate the students in your youth ministry to get engaged with the crisis of poverty and hunger throughout the world, what would you do?*

Maybe you'd try the strategy of **ALARMING STATISTICS**. Any one of these stats might get your students' attention:

- Each day, over 29,000 children die from malnutrition and preventable diseases such as malaria, diarrhea, and acute respiratory infections. Malnutrition is associated with over half of those deaths.
- In developing countries, one child in ten dies before his fifth birthday. By comparison, in the United States, one child in 165 will die before turning five years old.
- Of the 6.39 billion people in today's world, 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 per day.
- In the United States, one in ten households experience hunger or the risk of hunger.<sup>1</sup>

Don't get us wrong—those figures *are* alarming. The “crisis of hunger” is called a “crisis” for good reason. However, every day our students swim around in a sea *full* of sound-bite tragedies, so tossing more scary stats at them will barely make a ripple.

Perhaps you'd try a second path: **PITY**. You could tell stories—true stories—about children whose hunger forced them to serve as slaves and prostitutes, all in the name of getting a few bites of bread for themselves or their families. Or you could talk about pastors who have numerous church members die each week from malnutrition, changing their primary roles from equippers to funeral directors.

Stories like these are nauseating and troubling. We at the Fuller Youth Institute have lost sleep over them. Literally. But if stories are what we rely on to motivate students, then their commitment will only be about an inch deep, evaporating when the next pitiful story crosses their paths.

When alarming stats and pity fall short, there's one method youth pastors have relied on for decades, that ol' faithful: **GUILT**. Maybe bombarding your students with comparisons between how much they have and how little teens in developing nations have will motivate them to care. After all, how dare your students splurge on mocha lattes when that \$3.85 could buy enough food for some African children to eat for days?

Maybe we all need to feel a bit guiltier about our careless spending habits. But the gospel isn't about packing our bags for a guilt trip. It's about life—abundant life—that pours through us and transforms others.

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<sup>1</sup> These and other statistics about hunger and poverty can be found at: [http://www.30hourfamine.org/portal/pages/about/world\\_hunger.html](http://www.30hourfamine.org/portal/pages/about/world_hunger.html).

## The Birth of a Deeper Curriculum

In regard to our collective lack of theological understanding, Dallas Willard warns us in *The Divine Conspiracy*, “Should we not at least consider the possibility that this poor result is *not in spite of what we teach and how we teach, but precisely because of it?*”<sup>2</sup> (*emphasis added*).

If Dallas is right—and we think he is—we need to do more than fine-tune our teaching about world engagement. We need a major overhaul.

At the invitation of World Vision, we at the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI) have done extensive study and reflection to figure out why youth ministries aren't generating the number of world-concerned Christians we'd like, and how we might catalyze students to respond to hunger through the 30 Hour Famine.

First we asked World Vision, Vision Youth, the Urban Youth Workers Institute, Compassion International, the National Network of Youth Ministries, the Center for Student Missions, Amor Ministries, and Presbyterians for Renewal to nominate a handful of youth workers who really get what it means to engage students in service and social justice. Then we contacted these “exemplar” youth workers and carefully interviewed and surveyed 25 of them.

Next we asked 35 youth workers who are part of our Los Angeles Youth Ministry Network to help us answer questions such as: *When it comes to service and missions, what do you wish were happening in your students overall that isn't happening? If FYI could put a resource into your hands to help you motivate your students to respond to social problems, what would you like to have and what would you actually use?*<sup>3</sup>

As we compiled the insights of all 60 youth workers, the goals for this 30 Hour Famine curriculum became clear:

- 1. Alarm, pity, and guilt won't create long-term change in students.** The more students embrace what it means to follow Jesus, the more they'll care about His world and His people.
- 2. This curriculum alone won't be enough to sustain long-term change in students.** The themes of social justice, missions, and service need to be woven through a youth ministry year-round.
- 3. The difference between service and social justice is that students serve when they give water to someone in need; they engage in social justice when they figure out and address why that person needs water in the first place.** Not many youth ministries are diving past service into the deeper, and often murkier, waters of social justice—into places where they can find lasting solutions to systemic problems.
- 4. A good curriculum is easy to use but it's also customizable.** After all, we know students, but we don't know *your* students. We know something about youth ministry, but we don't know *your* youth ministry. You're the expert on the kids and families in your community, and you should have a curriculum you can adapt to what God is doing in your ministry.

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<sup>2</sup> Dallas Willard, “The Divine Conspiracy” (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 40.

<sup>3</sup> Originally those discussions, as well as this entire curriculum, was geared to responding to HIV and AIDS through the World Vision One Life Revolution. At the request of World Vision, and thanks to generous funding received by FYI, we have adapted that One Life Curriculum for 30 Hour Famine. For more ideas and group activities directly related to HIV and AIDS, please check out that curriculum at <http://fulleryouthinstitute.org>.

**5. The more students' senses are engaged in the crisis of worldwide hunger, the better.** We've incorporated videos and other experiential elements to help students grasp all that hunger and poverty entail.

**6. The kids who really "get" service and social justice usually have families who get it also.** Parents generally have more influence with students than youth workers do. So do the math: we have their kids for a few hours a week and for a handful of years; parents have them the rest of the time and they also share life—the good, the bad, and the ugly—with them every day.

To make sure we were on the right track, we sent a rough draft of the entire curriculum to youth workers in six test sites around the country. These leaders—who serve in ministries like yours—experimented by using portions of all four modules with their kids to help us identify what worked and what didn't. We then incorporated their input into this final draft.<sup>4</sup>

## Getting the Most out of this Curriculum

Here's what we suggest:<sup>5</sup>

**1. Join in our Focus on the Kingdom of God.** As we prayed and surveyed Scripture, we couldn't think of a better framework for considering poverty and hunger than the kingdom of God. While we wrote this curriculum with the entire backdrop of Scripture in mind, we paid special attention to the Gospels and their descriptions of Jesus' model and teachings.

**2. Not Either-Or, but Both-And.** As we studied the kingdom, we were repeatedly struck by its complexities. When the gospel is reduced to simple buzz phrases or either-or methods, we usually miss out on half of the fullness of Jesus' teachings. Just as Jesus was BOTH fully God AND fully human, as you'll soon see in this curriculum, He also calls us to serve others BOTH spiritually AND physically. In all we do, we live with a sense that God is the ultimate Worker (with a capital "W") AND yet God chooses to involve us in kingdom work.

**3. Don't Turn the Page Yet.** Our 25 exemplars told us that youth ministries are able to change when youth workers lead the way. Perhaps the greatest lesson students will learn about social justice won't come from what you say, but from the way you live out social justice in your community, in your own way. So the first page of every module gives you a chance to wrestle with the deeper questions about living out the "both-and" kingdom of God perspective until you pin down some answers.

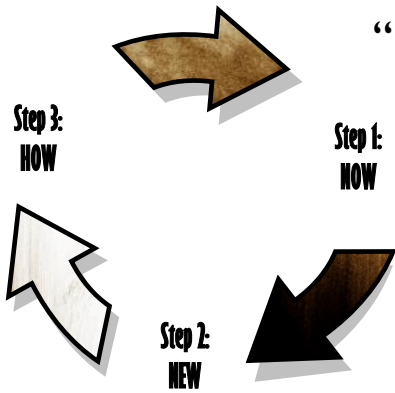
**4. Doing the Three-Step.** In a model similar to what's in our book, *Deep Ministry in a Shallow World*,<sup>6</sup> each of the four modules has three steps: Now, New, and How.

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<sup>4</sup> Youth worker consultants for this testing phase included: Linc Ashby, Sean Cooper, Rob Douglas, Connie Lannom, Mark Maines, Damien O'Farrell, Nathan Reeder, and Esther Wu.

<sup>5</sup> FYI is especially grateful to Chap Clark, Cheryl Crawford, Brad Griffin, Connie Lannom, Mark Maines, Jeff Mattesich, Albert Tate, Missy Griffin, Cari Jenkins, and J.R. Rozko, and Meredith Burns for their many hours of input, research, and brainstorming to make sure we all "get the most out of this curriculum."

<sup>6</sup> Chap Clark, Kara Powell, and the Fuller Youth Institute, *Deep Ministry in a Shallow World: Not-So-Secret Findings about Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).



“Now” helps you and your students consider the realities around the world and your ministry by posing the question, **What’s going on now?**

“New” provides a biblically based perspective that brings new insight and perspective to those realities by asking **What’s the kingdom perspective?**

“How” invites you and your students to commit to making a difference, both locally and globally, by raising the question, **How can we live this out?** Then every time you engage in “How” you think God wants you to respond, you create a new reality—or a new “Now.”

Just as with life, we continually assess where things stand “Now,” what “New” insights will serve God’s kingdom work, and “How” we should respond.

Here’s a sneak peek at the four modules and their “Now,” “New,” and “How” themes.

### Module One: *THE KING AND I*

**NOW:** We EITHER take on full responsibility ourselves for helping others, OR we fail to act, leaving all the responsibility to God.

**NEW:** God is the King, AND yet we are part of God’s kingdom work.

**HOW:** As members of the kingdom, God invites us to act on His behalf.

### Module Two: *THE UN-DIVIDED KINGDOM*

**NOW:** We tend to focus EITHER on social justice OR on individual salvation.

**NEW:** The gospel invites us to focus on people holistically and expands our categories of “spiritual” needs.

**HOW:** We can all play a part in kingdom work that focuses BOTH on people’s souls AND their bodies.

### Module Three: *MONEY – YOURS, MINE, OR OURS?*

**NOW:** We EITHER tend to view our money as “ours” to do with as we please, OR we think that to have money (especially a lot of it) is evil.

**NEW:** God wants us to make wise, ethical decisions with the money given to us, which often means making sacrifices.

**HOW:** Through 30 Hour Famine, we can use our money in meaningful ways to see God’s kingdom advanced among those affected by worldwide hunger.

## Module Four: *A VICIOUS CYCLE: HUNGER AND AIDS*

*(an opportunity for you to focus on the connections between hunger and AIDS worldwide)*

**NOW:** We are paralyzed by our ignorance, our denial, or our despair about hunger and/or AIDS.

**NEW:** Jesus invites us to participate in His kingdom work by serving those affected by hunger and AIDS.

**HOW:** We can participate in God's kingdom work through our giving, prayers, and advocacy.

**1. Lots of Options.** In each module, we've given you a suggested outline of Now, New, and How that your group can complete in 45-75 minutes. But we've also given you one additional option (available FREE online at [www.30hourfamine.org](http://www.30hourfamine.org), or <http://fulleryouthinstitute.org>) for a grand total of six options per module. Some of you will want to simply use the recommended three-step progression in each module to walk your students through four weeks of study before, during, or after the Famine. Others may want to extend this study over several months or draw from the well of options all year-round, as appropriate. On the other hand, your students might feel overwhelmed after just a few weeks, so you might want to craft a shorter series. Given the tone of the meeting time and the personalities of your students, you might find that one of the steps makes a pretty good lesson all by itself. We'd love it if you'd experiment and come up with even more creative ways to present this material.

**2. AIDS Focus.** In the midst of the 30 Hour Famine's overall emphasis on hunger, there is now a sub-focus on AIDS. Because of this, the fourth module helps your students connect the dots between hunger and AIDS, two issues they regularly hear about on the news.

**3. Small Group Friendly.** Some of us have youth groups with six kids. Others have 106 kids and rely on small groups to care for and train our students. Either way, look for the "Small Group Friendly" icon for ideas that work especially well with five or 10 kids.

**4. Family Pages.** On page 7, we've included a letter that you can adapt and send to your students' parents at the start of your 30 Hour Famine series, just so parents are prepared and feel connected. In addition, each module comes with one "Family Page," which we've designed as a half-sheet so parents can easily slide it into their Bibles or church bulletins. You might also consider e-mailing the "Family Page" to your students' parents to help facilitate family conversations that will serve as a good follow-up to the provocative discussions you're having with their kids.

Theologian Karl Barth (pronounced "Bart," as in "Simpson") proclaimed there was wisdom in preaching with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. We think he was right. If every kid in every youth group (including yours!) lived with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other, there could indeed be a revolution that would end hunger as we know it.

Dear Parents,

Would you like to see your son or daughter become more aware of others' needs? Would you like your son or daughter to feel empowered to care for the poor and needy, not only in the U.S. but also around the world?

Given what we know about you and your kids, the answer to both questions is probably a big "YES."

We hope the next several weeks in youth group will help raise our students' awareness about one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time: worldwide hunger. Here are some of the facts about hunger and poverty:

- Each day, over 29,000 children die from preventable diseases such as malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and acute respiratory infections. Malnutrition is associated with over half of those deaths.
- In developing countries, one child in ten dies before his fifth birthday. By comparison, in the United States, one child in 165 will die before turning five years old.
- Of the 6.39 billion people in today's world, 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 per day.
- In the United States, one in ten households experience hunger or the risk of hunger. (These and other statistics about hunger and poverty can be found at: <http://www.30HourFamine.org>.)

Over the next several weeks, our youth ministry is using the *30 Hour Famine: Hungry for the Kingdom* curriculum to help students understand not only the vastness of the crisis, but also the potential that exists within each one of them to be used by God to help those affected by poverty and hunger. This curriculum represents two years of research conducted by the Fuller Youth Institute at Fuller Theological Seminary (see <http://fulleryouthinstitute.org> for more information) and has been tested and refined by a number of youth ministries just like ours.

In the face of worldwide hunger, the good news is that God's kingdom is still working, and God is bringing hope in the midst of despair. Thanks to 30 Hour Famine, an initiative of World Vision ([www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org)), we have the opportunity to invite your teenagers to participate in God's kingdom work through prayer, financial giving, advocacy, and many other creative ideas they're bound to come up with themselves.

We invite your partnership in this important 30 Hour Famine series in a number of ways:

- Please pray that God's will is done in students' hearts, souls, and minds.
- Feel free to come by our youth meetings any time to see what students are learning.
- Every week, we'll give you a "Family Page" sheet you can use as you talk with your own kids about being part of God's kingdom response to hunger.

Please contact me with any suggestions or input. It's a privilege to serve you and your family!

Sincerely,