

Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table

Middle School Version

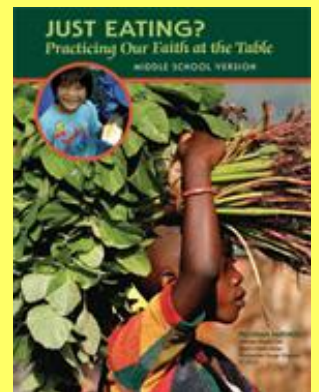


Middle schoolers just love to eat. (Well so do I, and I haven't been middle school age in a *very* long time.) Some days, it seems like they never stop eating. Because they will be getting so much practice, this is a good age to teach our youth how to eat better and eat kinder.

Kinder? Yes, we could all eat kinder. This means paying attention to how much we eat, how what we eat affects our environment, and how we affect other people when we eat. The Presbyterian Hunger Program of PC(USA) along with Church World Service, and Advocate Health Care have come together to create a curriculum to teach these things. It is a free, downloadable curriculum, but we have a super-deluxe version in the Resource Center that you can check out and use with your own middle schoolers. In fact, we have two copies of this super-deluxe printed version.

There are five sessions with detailed lesson plans and plenty of help for teachers. Here are the themes for the five sessions:

- 1) **Take Care of Yourself!** – Reminds us that God's love for us includes our bodies and that what we put into our bodies can have a positive or negative impact on our health. This session has one of my favorite "openers." It teaches middle-school youth (and us) that we should eat all the colors of the rainbow to get the nutrients we need, so we are asked to provide a snack for this day's opening. Our snack should be a platter of fruits and/or vegetables that come from every color of the rainbow. Each participant is then asked to take one food from each rainbow color. Nobody is allowed to eat until a particular color has been named. Then, as participants eat, the leader reads why that color is important to our diets. For instance, red food has lycopenes that help prevent prostate cancer and protect against heart disease. What a great way to learn! There are games, prayers and even little jobs to do every day of the week. Some days, we're asked to watch a video and others to read or write something short.



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- 2) **Are You Starving?** This is the name of Session 2. This day, we are taught that hunger is both a global and a local problem. We learn some of the root causes of hunger and how some people are working to alleviate hunger. This session reminds us of what God and Jesus had to say to people who ignore the hungry. The main scripture studied this week is Matthew 25:31-40.



- 3) Session 3 is titled, **“Earth to People – Hello?”** This week’s lesson focuses on the environment, with activities to help your group learn about the environmental impact our food choices make on the Earth. How do we know that God even cares about the Earth? To close this week’s session, we’ll share the story **OLD TURTLE**. We have it in the Resource Center. Spoiler alert – Old Turtle is the Earth.
- 4) **Feast and Celebration!** Explore the connections between food and celebration, and food and community. Food can be sacred and sacramental; each of us has memories connected with food and people we love. There are stories like that in the Bible. Guess who’s coming to dinner? This session includes the skit “Jesus is Coming to Dinner.”
- 5) The final session is **So What? Now What?** This week includes activities to help your group wrap up what they have learned and to consider what to do with this knowledge. The scripture this week is Romans 12:1-2. The closing of this session includes an exercise around watching the Dr. Seuss movie **THE LORAX**. We have this video in the Resource Center available for you to check out.

Doesn’t this sound like a thorough and interesting curriculum for your middle school youth? I think it would also go over well for high schoolers and even adults. I know that I, myself, should pay close attention to some of the lessons taught in this curriculum. We have two copies in the Resource Center, and if you need more for other adult leaders, you may download it. The curriculum includes updated, timely links to games, videos, and other resources that you may get from the internet. Students should have access to the internet also. So come on in to the Resource Center in the Presbytery office, or send me an email and I will get the material to you. It would make a good summer program or for use anytime during the year.

For more information, email Nellie Howard at the Resource Center: resourcecenter@wvpresbytery.org or call her at 304-744-7634.

