

Poverty

... 'for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:35-40)

Supplies Needed

- Three decks of cards
- Video watching technology
- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- Pencils, erasers, pens



Game: Stack the Deck

Directions

Ask for three volunteers: a banker, and two teens. Give each volunteer their own full deck of cards that are stacked in order and have them stand at the front of the room, with the banker in the middle. Read aloud the scenarios below and follow the instructions for each example:

Introduction

"The two decks held by the "teen" volunteers represent each teens' potential earnings/salary based on circumstances of growing up, their background, experiences, choices and opportunities in life. One teen has been born into poverty, and the other into an affluent family."

Teen 1

You live in a neighbourhood plagued by gang violence and you are not allowed to play outside. You stay inside all day when not at school, making few friends and getting little exercise.

Action: *Give the bank all your aces, and they will give you back sevens.*

Teen 2

You live in a safe neighbourhood and play outside with friends almost daily. You join sports teams and get to travel to nearby towns making many friends.

Action: *Give the bank all your twos and they will give you back nines.*

Teen 1

You live in an area where public schools are bad and tuition plus bus fare to private schools is unaffordable.

Action: *Give the bank all your Kings and they will give you back sixes.*

Teen 2

You begin preschool at the age of three and entered grade school already reading. The schools in your area are well-funded and you have everything you need to succeed.

Action: *Trade the bank your threes for tens.*

Game: Stack the Deck (continued)

<p>Teen 1</p> <p>Your family struggles to get by on a minimum wage income and is on and off food stamps. However, food stamps don't always last until the end of the month and you sometimes are forced to come to school without breakfast. It is difficult to concentrate on school when you are hungry.</p> <p>Action: <i>Trade your Queens for fives.</i></p>	<p>Teen 2</p> <p>You always have three meals a day, usually with nutritious snacks in between, and you always know where the next meal will come from.</p> <p>Action: <i>Trade your fours for Jacks.</i></p>
<p>Teen 1</p> <p>You want to go to college, so you begin to work part-time to save. Your family needs help paying bills though, so you increase your hours to work full-time right after high school and put college off.</p> <p>Action: <i>Trade your tens for twos.</i></p>	<p>Teen 2</p> <p>You enroll in the International Baccalaureate program in your high school to prepare you for university. You apply to all your top choices of schools and get to choose your favourite since you were accepted to all.</p> <p>Action: <i>Trade your sixes for Queens.</i></p>
<p>Teen 1</p> <p>While talking with some coworkers, you realize you are making less than some of your non-marginalized colleagues. You try to talk to a manager about it, but they just responded with, "you signed the contract!"</p> <p>Action: <i>Trade your nines for threes.</i></p>	<p>Teen 2</p> <p>Out of university, you get offered a higher-than-average starting salary at your dream job and negotiate 5% more.</p> <p>Action: <i>Trade your sevens for aces.</i></p>

Ask the group:

- How do you think each teen is doing for their potential salary?

Instruct the two volunteers (minus the banker) to shuffle their deck and pick out the top four cards. Ask each volunteer to add up a total of those four cards. Number cards two through 10 are worth those numbers. Jack is worth 10, Queen is worth 15, King is worth 20, and the Ace is worth 25. After each person adds their four cards, add three "0"s to the end. For example, if Person 1 draws a 2, a 5, a 6, and a Jack, then their earning potential will be \$23,000.

Ask the group:

- What were the scenarios that make the deck stacked against or for each teen?

Intro: Web of Poverty

On a large piece of flip chart paper or chalk/white board, invite the group to brainstorm the causes of poverty – and their causes. For example, if one cause of poverty is high rent, its causes could be: lack of affordable housing, lack of government support for low-income households, market systems that disenfranchise low-income people, etc.

Some main causes will have the same root causes so connect those points when you can, and as your examples grow, you will have an interconnected web on your page.

Discuss

- 🗨️ How many causes of poverty are interconnected?
- 🗨️ What are the ways we can be involved in change for some of these causes of poverty?

Activity adapted from Justice, Peace and Human Development of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.⁴

4. <https://www.usccb.org/offices/justice-peace-human-development/stack-deck-illustration-root-causes-poverty>



Activities

Activity 1: Victimization of Street Youth

Directions

- Watch [this video](#) on research in how street youth are more often the victims of crime rather than the perpetrators.

Discuss:

- 🗣️ What surprised you about this information?
- 🗣️ What stereotypes have you been given about homeless people, and homeless youth?
- 🗣️ How does this information change your mind?

Research the services available in your community for teens living in poverty. Are there any? What do they offer? Does your group feel they adequately meet the needs of teens in poverty that are stated in this video? Can your church community do anything to add support or services?

Activity 2: Perspective

- Watch [this video](#) on Ben DeSoto's "Understanding Poverty" exhibit.
Ben says that when you're in poverty you need a replacement family, community, purpose, and work.
- Split the group up into two teams and give one team pencils and the other team erasers and pens. Place a large newspaper on a table and have everyone stand around it.
- Instruct the team with the pencils to draw or write what comes to mind when they think of images of poverty. Instruct the team with the erasers and pens to follow the pencil team around and erase any negative image or word and replace it with a positive, empowering message or image that reflects the agency of individuals in poverty as well as hope for change.
- Those with erasers might only need to erase parts of drawings or words to change them into something positive or empowering. See how fast moving the group can be by drawing and erasing each other's images!
- Once your paper is covered or time has run out, debrief as a group what that experience felt like and what they see left on their page.



Closing: Homeless Jesus

Read aloud Jesus' words from Matthew at the beginning of this section while looking at the sculpture, "[The Homeless Jesus](#)," that the words inspired.

Homeless Jesus, also known as Jesus the Homeless, is a bronze sculpture by Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz depicting Jesus as a homeless person, sleeping on a park bench. This sculpture is a representation that suggests Christ is with the most marginalized in our society.

Discuss

- 🗣️ What does this image stir in you?
- 🗣️ How do you think you'd react if you saw this on the street?
- 🗣️ Have everyone think of times they were offered: food, drink, clothing, welcome, and a visit when they needed it by a loved one or community member.

Close in contemplative prayer, however your group chooses.



Tip:

If your group is interested in learning more about and exploring topics related to homelessness, visit www.claygathering.ca/nyp to download activities and resources from the previous National Youth Project, "Welcome... Home".



More Precious is the National Youth Project of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

www.claygathering.ca/nyp