The Hunger Experience

Family Survival Event
About Children of the Nations

Children of the Nations (COTN) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising children who transform nations. Founded in 1995, the organization currently provides holistic care to orphaned and destitute children in Sierra Leone, Malawi, Uganda, and the Dominican Republic. By partnering with nationals, they establish full-care residential Children’s Homes (for orphans) and Village Partnership Programs (to benefit orphans and children living with destitute families or caregivers who are unable to properly provide for them). The programs and services they provide include education, feeding centers, medical services, and community development initiatives such as agriculture, sanitation projects, micro-enterprise, and much more. Children of the Nations believes that true, lasting, and meaningful change to a nation begins with the children, and so they are their mission. Children of the Nations stands apart from other organizations in their goal, not to provide relief, but rather to come alongside nationals, empowering them to a life of self-sustainability. For more information visit www.cotni.org.

About the Meal Marathon

A Meal Marathon is a food-packaging event facilitated by COTN but funded by the participants, who also volunteer their time to package meals to send to our children in Africa and the Dominican Republic.

What is the Hunger Experience?

The purpose of the Hunger Experience is to give students an opportunity to experience and understand hunger firsthand and motivate them for action based on their new understanding. Over the course of four weeks, students will be exposed to the facts about hunger in our world, and they will also hear what God has to say about hunger. At the end of the four weeks, the students will have the chance to fast, serving orphaned and destitute children in Africa and the Dominican Republic by raising funds through pledges for the time they abstain from food. Their Hunger Experience will then culminate in a Family Survival Event, an event designed to provide a new perspective on the effects of extreme poverty on the children of the world.
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**Hunger Experience Outline**

- **WEEK 1**
  - Inform Church of Upcoming Activities
    - Invite church to participate through prayer, pledges, and volunteering
  - Deliver Message (Recommended: James 1:27)
  - Explain Concept of Hunger Experience to Youth Group
    - Present hunger statistics (p. 9)
    - Describe upcoming events
    - Explain fasting and pledging process
    - Set date and time for fasting
  - Pray for Hunger Experience and Pledges

- **WEEK 2**
  - Deliver Message (Recommended: 1 Samuel 2:1–10)
  - Distribute Pledge Cards and Explain Pledging Process
    - Explain “why” as well as “how”
    - Address safety precautions, as students may go door-to-door
  - Establish Group Goal
    - Pray for Holy Spirit’s guidance, then set group’s pledge goal
    - Divide group goal by participants for individual goals
  - Pray for Hunger Experience and Pledges
  - Announce Pledge Goal to Church
    - Invite church to participate through prayer, pledges, and volunteering

- **WEEK 3**
  - Deliver Message (Recommended: Isaiah 58:10)
  - Check Status of Pledges
    - Raise goal if necessary
    - Encourage church to participate through prayer, pledges, and volunteering
  - Pray for Hunger Experience and Pledges

- **WEEK 4**
  - Fast, Then Hold Family Survival Event (Collect Pledge Money and Announce Total)
  - Deliver Message and Explain Upcoming Meal Marathon
  - Watch COTN DVD
**Hunger Experience Teaching**

The Hunger Experience is meant to give students an opportunity to hear what God’s Word has to say about hunger, both spiritual and physical. In the Hunger Experience Outline, specific passages are recommended, but there are many others that could be used. You are encouraged to make this experience your own by prayerfully considering what passages to use for your teaching. Some verses that you might consider include Genesis 3:17, Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 25:31–45, John 6, and James 2:14–17.

**Fundraising**

Students get the opportunity to act on their new perspectives of hunger by raising money that will be used to fund your Meal Marathon, where you will package food for children in Africa and the Dominican Republic. Without funding, meals cannot be packaged. Students will raise support in the form of pledges. The students will be given pledge cards to hand out in their community (e.g. family, friends, and neighbors). Each supporter will commit a specific amount of money for each hour that the student fasts.

For example, Crystal asks her grandmother to support her during a 12-hour fast by contributing to feeding hungry children around the world, giving a donation for every hour that she abstains from eating on the date the youth group has set for fasting. Her grandmother gladly agrees to give $2 for every hour that Crystal fasts. That money—$24—can be handed directly to Crystal in the form of cash or a check at the time of pledging, to be collected at the youth group before the Family Survival Event. Crystal’s grandmother may also choose to wait to fulfill her pledge until after Crystal has fasted. In that case, Crystal will need to get in touch with her grandmother again to collect the money after the Family Survival Event. You may want to encourage the students to get contributions upfront so the collection process will be easier.

On page 9 of the manual, a master copy of a pledge card is provided for you to make copies for your youth group. Students should receive their pledge cards in the second week of the Hunger Experience to give them plenty of time to go out and get pledges. It is important that your students leave the second week with an understanding of how the pledge cards work, what they are raising money for, and the deadline for turning in the pledge money.

It is also important that your group comes to a consensus as to how much funding you believe God will enable you to raise. This group goal will allow you to set individual fundraising goals more easily. Simply
divide the goal evenly amongst participants, who can divide their individual goal by contributions per hour. For example, your group may decide to raise $2,000. If your group contains forty participants, each one must raise $50. If your group opts for a 20-hour fast, each participant must collect $2.50 per hour. This is totally attainable and will probably be able to raise more. This division sets an attainable goal for each member of the group.

This goal also enables Children of the Nations to plan more accurately for your Meal Marathon. If your group has committed to raise $2,000, COTN knows to prepare for your group to package 8,000 meals (and will prepare a bit more in case you exceed your goal). Remember, 10 people can package 1,000 meals every hour!

You will need to sign up for packaging the food months before and turn in the money raised one month before the Meal Marathon so COTN can prepare for the event!

Hunger Statistics

- There is enough food in the world today for everyone to have the nourishment necessary for a healthy and productive life.

- “Under-nourishment” is used to describe the status of people whose food intake does not include enough calories (energy) to meet minimum physiological needs for an active life. At present, there are above 1 billion undernourished people worldwide, most of them in developing countries.

- “Malnutrition” means “badly nourished” and is characterized by inadequate intake of protein, energy, and micronutrients and by frequent infections and diseases. Starved of the right nutrition, people will die from common infections like measles or diarrhea. Malnutrition is measured not by how much food is eaten but by physical measurements of the body—weight or height—and age.

- “Wasting” is an indicator of acute malnutrition that reflects a recent and severe process that has led to substantial weight loss. This is usually the result of starvation and/or disease.

- “Stunting” is an indicator of chronic malnutrition that reflects the long-term nutritional situation of a population. It is calculated by comparing the height-for-age of a child with a reference population of well-nourished and healthy children.

- “Underweight” is measured by comparing the weight-for-age of a child with a reference population of well-nourished and healthy children. An estimated 146 million children in developing countries are underweight.
• 1.02 billion people do not have enough to eat—more than the populations of USA, Canada, and the European Union.

• The number of under-nourished people in the world increased by 75 million in 2007 and 40 million in 2008, largely due to higher food prices.

• 907 million people in developing countries alone are hungry.
• More than 60% of chronically hungry people are women.

• 10.9 million children under five die in developing countries each year. Malnutrition and hunger-related diseases cause 60% of the deaths.

• The cost of under-nutrition to national economic development is estimated at $20–30 billion per annum.

• One out of four children—roughly 146 million—in developing countries are underweight.

• It is estimated that 684,000 child deaths worldwide could be prevented by increasing access to vitamin A and zinc.

• Under-nutrition contributes to 53% of the 9.7 million deaths of children under five each year in developing countries. This means that one child dies every six seconds from malnutrition and related causes.

• Lack of Vitamin A kills a million infants a year.

• Iron deficiency is the most prevalent form of malnutrition worldwide, affecting an estimated 2 billion people. Eradicating iron deficiency can improve national productivity levels by as much as 20%.

• Iron deficiency is impairing the mental development of 40–60% of children in developing countries.

• Vitamin A deficiency affects approximately 25% of the developing world’s preschoolers. It is associated with blindness, susceptibility to disease, and higher mortality rates. It leads to the deaths of approximately 1–3 million children each year.

• Iodine deficiency is the greatest single cause of mental retardation and brain damage. Worldwide, 1.9 billion people are at risk of iodine deficiency, which can easily be prevented by adding iodine to salt.

All statistics taken from the World Food Programme, an agency of the United Nations (www.wfp.org).

The Meal Marathon
The Hunger Experience is meant to get students excited about stepping out to serve those who hunger. The Hunger Experience culminates in the Family Survival Event, but it does not end there! The program is designed to be followed shortly by a Meal Marathon, so students have an opportunity for hands-on service while the Hunger Experience is still fresh in their minds.

As stated on page one, there are two responsibilities for participants in the Meal Marathon. First, they must raise funds to cover the cost of the food. Each meal costs twenty-five cents, so $100 will cover 400 meals! The funds raised during your time of fasting and announced at your Family Survival Event go directly toward your Marathon. The total should be reported to Children of the Nations one month before the Meal Marathon so that an accurate amount of foodstuffs can be acquired for packaging—the second responsibility of participants.

The meals are packaged by participants on the day of the Meal Marathon. Be sure to coordinate with the COTN Feeding Department when setting a time and place for the event. Plan it well in advance, and give students and their families plenty of notice to ensure as many as possible will attend. A great idea is to have a sign-up sheet available at all of your regular youth group meetings during the Hunger Experience, as well as at the Family Survival Event. If students’ families or other church or community members wish to help package meals (or provide funds in order to package more), COTN would welcome their partnership, but this is your event. It is up to your discretion whether or not to allow participants from outside your youth group.

Family Survival Event

Following your time of fasting, your youth group will meet for the Family Survival Event. In this event, students will be divided into “families” and given a set amount of money to be used to purchase food. When they have purchased this food, they will return to prepare it, and the entire group will eat together. Make sure your facility has an available kitchen, and please be sure to acquire the necessary space and permissions for outdoor cooking, as well. The money should have already been collected one month before the Meal Marathon and sent to COTN’s Feeding Department so that the necessary food packaging supplies could be purchased. The total amount raised should be announced again at the end of the event.

First, divide the youth group into economic classes. Students should not be aware prior to the event that this segregation will take place. Sixty-five percent of the students will be in the lower class, 30% of them
will be in the middle class, and the remaining 5% will be the upper class. Once your group is divided into classes, break these classes into “family groups” of four to six students.

Depending on available funds and the size of your youth group, provide each income class with a set amount of money. Each of the families representing the upper class should receive $10–20, the families representing the middle class should receive $5–10 each, and the lower class families should each receive $1–3. Keep in mind that most families in Third World countries survive on $1 or $2 a day; this exercise is only for one meal with the understanding that this income should cover the whole days meals. With the allotted amount, each family should go to local stores to try to buy enough food to feed their family.

To demonstrate the inequality in the availability of food and resources, it is recommended that you limit the options each economic class has for the meal. The high-income families should not have any restrictions. Give them the freedom to shop for a meal or order from a restaurant. Make sure they bring the food back, though, so they can eat with the rest of the group. Allow the middle-income families to shop for any food (avoiding restaurants), but restrict them to cooking their own meals in the kitchen. The low-income families should be restricted to buying items like rice, beans and cheap meat/hot dogs (pasta may be a better option because of its shorter cooking time but rice is the staple in low-income classes). Once they have returned, force them to cook their food on open fires outdoors. You may want to caution them against buying meat, as it may present a health hazard if improperly cooked.

Establish a time limit for the group, by which each family must be back and have their food ready. Keep in mind that rice can take up to an hour to cook, and beans can take even longer. It might be prudent to select a leader for each group to help maintain the flow of the activity.

At this point, have the families sit down in their own group to enjoy their meal. Impose a class-based system of segregation. Any interaction between classes must come from the top down. In other words, do not allow the low-income families to come near the high-income eating area, but give the high-income families the freedom to interact with the poor if they decide to either share food or taunt them. Make a note of their interactions for discussion. In many third world countries, the elders eat before the children. This is another detail you may consider using to make the experience even more realistic and powerful.

When everyone is finished eating, bring the whole group together to compare how each family felt. Have the families share what they were able to purchase and whether or not the food was sufficient for the entire family. What was it like trying to provide food for your family on such a limited budget? How did each group’s meal allotment compare to the others? How did it feel for the lower classes to watch those in the higher classes eat more food? Conversely, how did it feel for the higher-class groups to sit and eat in front of
the lower classes? When discussing with your families, remember: in reality this is a child’s life. In lower-class families, young children often do not get fed because there is not enough food for all of the family members.

After this time of sharing and discussion, it may be a good idea to have some food available for those families who did not acquire sufficient amounts to satisfy their nutritional requirements. When they have been able to satisfy their hunger, please show the Children of the Nations DVD. Then speak to the students about how they can continue to serve the hungry by participating in your upcoming Meal Marathon. Announce the total pledges collected, and encourage the students to sign up to package the meals that their collected pledges have provided for.
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<th>Hunger Experience Pledge Card: Church Copy</th>
<th>Pledge Card: Student Copy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Donor Name: ________________ Phone: ________________</td>
<td>Donor Name: ________________</td>
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<td>Donor Address: ___________________ City: ________________ State: ________________ ZIP: ________________</td>
<td>Donor Phone: ________________</td>
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<td>$___ per hour</td>
<td>Pledge Total: $___</td>
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<td>X___ hours</td>
<td>○ Pledge Collected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Name: ___________________ Donor Signature: ___________________</td>
<td>Keep this card to contact donors who choose to hold their pledges until after your time of fasting.</td>
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<td>$________ Total Pledge</td>
<td>Please pay by cash or check. Please consider paying in advance to aid in the collection process.</td>
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