The Hunger Experience
Journey of a Starving Child
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 the Journey of a Starving Child, 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
  o Inform Church of Upcoming Activities
    ▪ Invite church to participate through prayer, pledges, and volunteering
  o Deliver Message (Recommended: James 1:27)
  o Explain Concept of Hunger Experience to Youth Group
    ▪ Present hunger statistics (p. 6)
    ▪ Describe upcoming events
    ▪ Explain fasting and pledging process
    ▪ Set date and time for fasting
  o Pray for Hunger Experience and Pledges

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

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

• WEEK 4
  o Fast, Then Take the Journey of a Starving Child (Collect Pledge Money and Announce Total)
  o Deliver Message and Explain Upcoming Meal Marathon
  o 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 two dollars 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 Journey of a Starving Child. 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 Journey. You may want to encourage the students to get contributions upfront so the collection process will be easier for them.

On page 23 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!**

**Journey of a Starving Child: Overview**

Set up stations around the room with any props you may want to use for decoration. It is not necessary to make the stations elaborate. Print the children’s stories found on pages ten and following (it may be easier to print each child on a different color of paper), cut them into story sections (being sure to keep the story section together with its questions and prayer), and set each section at the appropriate station.

Divide the participants into up to eight groups (one for each child’s story you will use). Group members will follow the story of the child they are given through each station. The Journey of a Starving Child is meant to motivate the group to get actively involved in saving the lives of hungry children, encouraging them to find their pledges and participate in the time of fasting, the Famine Feast, and the Meal Marathon.

The students will begin their journey, following the directions to each part of their story. Before moving from one station to the next, they should discuss questions and pray as directed by each card. A group leader can be assigned for each group to facilitate the discussion and prayer. When the journey has ended for a group, it should remain at its final station until all groups have completed their journey. Before gathering the entire group together again, be sure to survey the crowd and note who lived, who died, and who is still waiting. Then come together to discuss your experience as a group and pray together.
Materials Needed:
- Slices of Bread (for Kitchen)
- Loose change (for Marketplace)
- 8 Stations (table at each one for journey cards)
- 1 cup of dirt (for Marketplace)
- 1 cup of uncooked rice (for Marketplace)

Stations:
- Hospital
- Marketplace
- Kitchen
- Home
- Children of the Nations
- School
- Rebel Camp
- Grave

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 Journey of a Starving Child, 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 fasting and collected and announced at your Journey go directly toward your Marathon. The total should be reported to Children of the Nations as soon as possible 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 Journey of a Starving Child. 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.

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 percent 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).

Journey of a Starving Child: Stories

Vikki (Uganda)—Step 1: Home.

My name is Vikki, and I’m fifteen years old. I live in Uganda. Today, my father went to the doctor. Something is wrong with him. He has been complaining of stomach pains in his lower abdomen. He cries out at night from the piercing sharp pain. With Father not working and Mother feeling sick, we don’t have very much. Mother is very scared. My sisters, Gloria and Catherine, and my brother, Joseph, are hungry today. We have been looking for scraps everywhere. Joseph is 5 years old. He likes to hang on me, and I tickle him. My sisters are 13 and 8 years old. They like to play with me and Joseph too. I love my family. I came home today to find mother crying. She told us that Father would not be coming home. He was too sick, and the doctors could not help him. Now it’s just mother and us. Travel to the Hospital with Mother and get a check up.

Discussion Questions
What would happen to you if you lost your family? Who would care for you?
Imagine that no one would take you in. Could you take care of yourself all alone? Could you take care of all your siblings at your age?

Prayer
Poverty and lack of access to food are the primary reasons why malnutrition occurs in the developing world. Without a proper diet, the body’s ability to fight off sickness is compromised. In turn, sickness and infections such as diarrhea, which occurs commonly in impoverished areas with poor sanitation, accelerate nutrient loss and intensify malnutrition. Pray for those who are sick and dying in Uganda because of the lack of nutrition and medical care.

Vikki (Uganda)—Step 2: Hospital

It’s been a year since I lost my father, and Mother is still very sick. She has HIV/AIDS, and we don’t have money for good medicine. I have to bathe her and feed her because she can’t get out of bed anymore. Joseph tries to play with me, but I can’t because I have to find work so we can eat. My aunt says that Mother won’t be with us very much longer. I will miss her. My sisters and brothers are scared to be alone. Today I held my mother’s hand as my siblings sat beside her. She told us she loved us and closed her eyes. That was the last time I saw my mother. My aunt said we could live with her now. There are times when my dreams are haunted by memories of my mother’s passing. I recall her last breath as life left her. I woke up screaming one night and found no comfort in the arms of my aunt. Travel to the Marketplace to try to find work.

Discussion Questions
Vikki has nightmares, but has no one to run to. Instead, her siblings run to her. Have you ever had to be the one people came to when they were scared and didn’t know what to do? How would you comfort them? If you were Vikki, what would you say?

Prayer
In 2005, it is estimated that 1 million Ugandans were living with AIDS. Pray for the AIDS victims in Uganda, that they would experience the salvation that is only found in Jesus and find comfort as they face death.
Vikki (Uganda)—Step 3: Marketplace
We’ve lived with our aunt for a year now. My sisters and I have to walk 2.5 miles to the nearest town to find odd jobs to make money for food. Sometimes we are hired to cook or wash clothes. The most I’ve ever made in one day is $0.50. We sleep on the floor because there are no beds, and we eat pieces of rice from the ground to stay alive. Today my aunt had a stroke. She began to shake, and her eyes rolled to the back of her head. We held her down until she stopped. It has left her unable to walk or speak very well. Now it’s up to me to care for my family. I don’t know if I can do it alone. I got home from work today, and my feet hurt. Joseph is pawing at me, and my sisters are whining about being hungry. I work hard; I bring home what I can, but they still cry, they still scream. They need more. I don’t know how much longer I can take this. Travel to the Kitchen to see what you have left.

Discussion Questions
Tell the group about a time when you wanted to just give up. What happened? How did you overcome that?

Prayer
It is estimated that there are 1.5 million orphans in Uganda. Pray that the Lord would become a Father to the fatherless and that He would strengthen children who are now in charge of their households.

Vikki (Uganda)—Step 4: Kitchen
I rationed out the small piece of white bread we had left. I took the smallest portion for myself. (Take some bread.) On the way to the marketplace, I could hear the cries of my siblings, and the burden felt too great to bear. I just wanted to keep going, leave my responsibility, and try to fend for myself. But the guilt would not let me do that. I’m feeling tired, and my stomach is aching. I try to make it just one day at a time, but it’s getting harder. I can hardly sleep at night because of the dreams, and my body feels so weak without food. Even my tears are drying up. Travel to Children of the Nations.

Discussion Questions
Have you ever woken up and felt so hungry because you ate dinner really early the night before? Did you get to eat breakfast and make the hunger pains go away? Imagine the hunger you feel now, after fasting, being with you every day. What would you do to get through it, knowing that you would not get food today?

Prayer
852 million people across the world are hungry. Pray that God would provide food for all these hungry people in the world.

Vikki (Uganda)—Step 5: Children of the Nations
My siblings and I were taken to a displacement camp to live. It’s really scary here. I don’t like to walk around alone because girls are often taken and raped. We still have to walk far to work, but we are alive. I have been feeling very sad for a long time now. I cry myself to sleep at night while I hold onto my brother. I don’t have any hope. Today, some people from Children of the Nations came to my home. They brought hot food and sat on my mat to talk. They asked me questions about my life and how I was feeling. They hugged me and told me they would help. I started going to a school with Children of the Nations. They give us lunch every day. I’m so glad they found me. I don’t have to scrounge for food anymore, and my sisters and brother have full bellies. I talk to a counselor about my bad dreams, and I feel a lot better now. We have a chance to make it.

Discussion Questions
It’s amazing that Children of the Nations found Vikki. But what happens to the children they don’t find? What can we do to help the kids that are still hungry?

Prayer
COTN is bringing food, education, and the good news of Jesus Christ into Uganda, Sierra Leone, Malawi, and the Dominican Republic. Pray that God would use you to bring hope to those who have none.
José (Dominican Republic)—Step 1: Home

My name is José. I live in Los Robles in the Dominican Republic. I am fourteen years old, and I have no family. I don’t remember my mother or father; they died when I was a baby. Some kids that lived around my neighborhood raised me. The closest I have to a dad is Miguel. He is nineteen years old and taught me how to pick-pocket and beg for things on the streets. I have to give half of what I make to him so that he will let me sleep on the floor in his hut. It’s better than being outside with the stray dogs. Four other boys live in Miguel’s hut with me. They are all older and like to cause mischief in the town. Yesterday, they broke into a house and stole four bags of rice from an old woman. They didn’t even share it with me. But, hey, they are the only family I have. It’s been three days since I’ve eaten, so today I guess I’ll go and see what I can get from begging. Travel to the Marketplace.

Discussion Questions
What would life be like for you if you grew up on the streets without parents? What kind of disadvantages do you think you would face as an orphan?

Prayer
30% of the Dominican Republic’s citizens live below the poverty line, making less than a dollar a day. Pray that the Dominican Republic’s economy would continue to get better, allowing for more people like José to find honest work.

José (Dominican Republic)—Step 2: Marketplace

I saw a young girl trying to sell some bread at the marketplace. She looked very thin and hungry but did not eat her food. She was a slave to her guardian, who watched her from the side of the road. She would look back at him as he leaned against a wall with a beer in his hand and a stern look. I feel like that sometimes. I feel like I am trapped by my friends, who make me give them everything so that I can have a roof over my head—a roof that has holes in it and no door in the wall. I’m a little excited today because a man threw me some of his change when he walked out of the market. (Take some change.) I don’t think Miguel saw it, so if I keep it hidden, I can buy some bread or rice for myself. Travel to the Kitchen to buy food.

Discussion Questions
José stated that he feels trapped because he has to give everything to his friends for so little in return. Briefly explore José’s options. Is there anything he could do to get free and still survive?

Prayer
Pray for children like José who feel trapped in their circumstances and have little, if any, hope. Pray that children like José would find the hope that is only found in Jesus.

José (Dominican Republic)—Step 3: Kitchen

I must have been seeing things when I thought Miguel and the other boys weren’t looking when I got those coins. They came up behind me just as I was buying some bread. “How selfish, José!” they said. They knocked the bread from my hand and grabbed the money. I bent down to pick it up; I’ll eat it even if there is dirt on it. But Miguel kicked me in the stomach, and it knocked the wind out of me. I felt like I could not breathe. As I lay on the ground gasping for air, Miguel bent down and put his face so close to mine I could feel him breathing. He said, “You do that again, and we’ll kill you.” He put his hands around my neck and started to squeeze. I could feel my face turning blue and my eyes getting bigger. I was really scared. Then he and the other boys high-fived and laughed as they walked away, leaving me there on the ground. How could they do this to me? They are my family, they are supposed to look out for me, take care of me. I don’t want to go back there. But I don’t know where else to go. Travel to the School.

Discussion Questions
How does losing his “family” affect José’s current circumstances?

Prayer
Pray that the oppressed will cry out to God and that God would hear their cries and come to their defense.
José (Dominican Republic)—Step 4: School
I limped over to the nearby public school. I held onto the chain-link fence to keep myself up and watched the children play. Although there was no playground, the kids were happy—they were fed. The school provided lunch for the students every day. I wish I could go to school! I wish there was room for me, but they don’t have enough rooms or food to take in any more. I always hear the other kids talking about their sponsors. Some Americans on the other side of the world care about them and send clothes and food. I wish someone cared about me like that. I’ve never even been given a hug. My stomach hurts very badly now. It’s been six days since I ate real food. Miguel kicked me so hard that it’s still hard to breathe. I’m so tired and hungry. Watching these happy kids has made me sad. I want to go home. Travel Home to try and rest.

Discussion Questions
Children just like José can barely imagine a life filled with love and care. It always seems just out of reach. What can you and your family do to help children like José?

Prayer
Pray that God would show us in America how we can make sure that kids like José find Jesus, food, and an education.

José (Dominican Republic)—Step 5: Home
I have to stop every few steps to catch my breath. I look down at my stomach where my ribs show clearly. There are black and blue marks from when I was kicked. I’m feeling dizzy, which happens a lot when I haven’t eaten for this long. I close my eyes for a moment and pray for help, and I try to keep going. I go a few more steps before I can’t walk anymore. My legs give out, and I sit on the side of a brick building, just yards from my home. It is getting hard to breathe, and I’m so dizzy now I can’t see which way is up. My eyes fill with tears; I’m so tired and alone. I can hardly whimper now. My stomach has stopped growling, it’s even too tired to do that anymore. My body is pulling me down to the ground, and I lie on the road and close my eyes. I’ve lost. Go to the Grave.

Discussion Questions
José died before ever hearing about Jesus. Why is it important not just to feed people but to share the Gospel, as well? Do you think God will hold his followers responsible for not taking care of the poor and needy?

Prayer
Pray that there will be those who will share Jesus with the dying. Pray that God would use you to serve those who are dying.

Alex (Sierra Leone)—Step 1: School
I’m Alex. I’m eleven years old, and I live in Sierra Leone. I like to play soccer on the beach with my friends. I haven’t done that in a while, though. I have an older sister named Mattu, and we live with our grandmother in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. I go to school and try to learn. But we don’t have enough money for the books, and sometimes there isn’t enough food for all the students. It’s a long walk to school, and sometimes I go there and back without anything to eat all day. It makes me dizzy. My shoes are worn and too small, and the ground has sharp rocks that cut my skin. But the hope of a meal keeps me going. A few days a week, I have to go to sleep hungry. It’s hard to dream when your stomach is so loud! Tomorrow I can’t go to school. Grandmother needs me to sell vegetable leaves and earn money. Mattu doesn’t go to school anymore. She stays home and watches grandmother and sells in the marketplace. But she is a mean sister to me. We will go to the market together in the morning. Travel to the Marketplace.

Discussion Questions
How much do you value being able to go to school? When you eat lunch do you get a wide variety of choices? How do you think your attitude would change if you went to school and had to try to focus on school work with an empty stomach?

Prayer
Only 41% of children attend primary school in Sierra Leone, and of that, thousands go without food every day. They want to go to school and learn, but can’t. Thank the Lord for providing a way for you to attend school, and pray that our brothers and sisters in Sierra Leone would get the same chance. Pray for kids like Alex, who get to go to school, but can barely concentrate because they are starving. Ask God to sustain them and bring them through it.
Alex (Sierra Leone)—Step 2: Marketplace

Last night before bed I ate a little bit of rice, but I still woke up hungry. I carried a large plate of leaves on my head into the market today. Carrying this food on top of my head—within reach—makes my stomach hurt even worse. All I have to do is reach up and grab some. But Mattu is nearby. She would be very mad if she caught me eating our only way to earn money. So I just keep working. We walked by the beach and passed the other kids playing soccer; I wish I could be playing with them instead of selling these vegetables. The sun is beating down now, and the heat is making it hard to keep working. Mattu sits on the curb watching me while she talks to her friends. I look down at my skin, which really itches today around my ankles and knees. I can’t help but scratch it. There are red bumps all over, and it’s spreading. I am trying to balance the plate on my head while my legs burn. I want the itching to go away! I grit my teeth so hard I can hear them grinding. It’s the only way to stop thinking about my rash. The vegetable plate is almost empty. We can go home soon. It was a good day of selling. I am glad to have made some money for the family.

Travel Home with your sister.

Discussion Questions

Have you ever seen something that you really wanted but it was just out of reach? What was it? What did you do about it? Imagine you are Alex for a moment. What options do you have for your life?

Prayer

Many children in Sierra Leone, like Alex, have to leave school to work. They sacrifice their education to take care of their families. Pray that God would restore the country and allow kids to experience childhood.

Alex (Sierra Leone)—Step 3: Home

Mattu handles the money we make from selling in the market. I wish she didn’t. She hordes most of it, buying food and jewelry for herself. Even Grandmother begs her for just a little more to eat. She gives us scraps, but what can we do? She is the only family I have, and I love my sister. But I hate being treated like a slave. My rash has turned into open sores. There is pus coming from them, and they ache. Mattu makes me fetch water in the stream for her laundry. I am happy to do it so I can dip my legs in to soothe them. When I bring back the water, Mattu says she will give me some bread if I launder her clothes. I can’t remember when I ate last, so I don’t care what I have to do! Finally, I finish and use the remaining water to wash myself. But I’m ready for my dinner now! I am starting to shake; I can’t tell if it’s in anticipation for food or my growing stomach that is causing it. I come to Mattu and even get on my knees to receive my reward. She looks at me and smirks. “Did you really think I would give you food for that poor of a job? My clothes are still dirty. Get out of my sight!” I can’t fight the tears. Why is she doing this? Go to the Marketplace.

Discussion Questions

Sometimes it seems that our own family, the people who should love us the most, treat us worse than anyone else. How have you seen your loved ones treat you or other family members wrongly? How have you treated your loved ones wrongly? Why do you think that Alex loves his sister?

Prayer

Siblings treating each other badly isn’t just a problem in Sierra Leone. Pray that brothers and sisters, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ, would recognize the importance of loving each other.

Alex (Sierra Leone)—Step 4: Marketplace

Mattu has made me so upset. I don’t understand how my own sister can treat me this way. I’m dizzy and tired; my legs are pulsing with pain and itch. If I could just get one morsel of food. I’ll eat anything. I check the dirt for pieces of rice... nothing. (Dig through the dirt to find rice.) I don’t know how much longer I can hang on. I kneel on the ground and close my eyes, trying to regain some strength. The world is spinning, I can hear people passing by, pretending not to notice a little boy crying on the sidewalk. Then I hear a voice. I look up and see a strange figure with white skin and blonde hair. Is it an angel? She reaches her hand out to me. “I will take care of you,” she whispers. I take the angel’s hand, and she whisks me up into her arms. I must have passed out from the hunger because the next thing I know, I wake up in a bed with a plate of bread and rice next to it. Am I dreaming? Travel to Children of the Nations.

Discussion Questions

Is it hard for you to focus on something when you are hungry? What about when you are in pain? Have you ever had an infection from a cut or bug bite? Alex’s rash and sores could have been caused by a simple scratch that went untreated. What kinds of things do your parents or doctors do for you when you get injured?
Prayer
Alex is one of the thousands of children in Sierra Leone who don’t have access to proper medical care. Simple illnesses like a cough or rash can quickly turn deadly. Many children have terrible diseases, too. Polio runs rampant and forces children into wheelchairs for the rest of their short lives, even though the vaccine has been around for years. Pray that these sick children will call upon the Lord for healing. Pray that they would experience the healing of their souls through faith in Jesus Christ. Pray that God would provide medical care to his sick children, somehow.

Alex (Sierra Leone)—Step 5: Children of the Nations
I quickly eat the meal placed before me; my stomach starts hurting because I’ve never eaten that much at once. The woman tells me to slow down. I look around the room and see several other children in beds, eating away. They all look just as sick and sad as I do. But they are smiling, too. The woman explains to me that she is from Children of the Nations. She has come all the way from America to help me. I can’t believe it. My own sister doesn’t care about me at all, but someone from around the world is thinking of me? They have nurses who are cleaning my legs and giving me soothing ointment, and they give me new clothes and food to bring home for my family. I am so happy! They tell me I have a sponsor who will help me go to school and learn and eat every day. I was so close to death; I thought there was no hope for me. Then Children of the Nations came and saved me. Thank you so much!

Discussion Questions
How would it feel if you found out that someone on the other side of the world has been praying for you in your time of need? Is it hard to remember that there are children out there just like you that are on the brink of death? How can you remember to pray for them more regularly? What are some ways that you can help them even though you can’t see them?

Prayer
Children of the Nations cares for over 8,000 orphaned and destitute children. Praise God for the children He has protected and brought into knowing Jesus and being fed! But there are still over 3 million children in Sierra Leone that are hungry and waiting. Pray that people here in the U.S. would understand their responsibility to care for God’s children across the world. Pray that we, and even you, would find ways to help.

Moses (Uganda)—Step 1: School
Hi, my name is Moses, and I am seven years old. I was born in Arum, which is 80 kilometers from Lira, in Uganda. I love to play soccer, climb trees, and pick mangoes. My toes can grip a branch, and I hang upside down! Soccer has to be one of the greatest sports in the world! My friends and I play in tournaments with other children. My father taught me to play, but he is unable to play anymore. He is too old and works all day so that I can go to school and have food to eat. I love my father; I look up to him a lot and want to be just like him when I grow up. Sometimes he helps farmers in their fields or fishermen mend their nets. My mother works all day too. She finds odd jobs around the community. Overall, we do pretty well. Go Home.

Discussion Questions
Can you imagine going to school without food, text book, and family support? How do you think the lack of these three things would affect your education and future?

Prayer
Thank the Lord that Moses had a pleasurable beginning to his childhood, playing soccer and eating mangoes. Many children aren’t as fortunate. Pray that many more children would experience joy in life.

Moses (Uganda)—Step 2: Home
I slept well last night! Mother made Father and me some rice for breakfast. We have rice for every meal. After eating I left early in the morning to get to school on time. On my way to school, a group of men with guns stopped me. They were rebels. They asked me where I was going. “Why go to school?” said one of the soldiers with a scar across his cheek. “So the government can brainwash you? You will come with us. We will teach you. You will learn to be a free thinker.” As they approached, I turned and ran. They chased me. It wasn’t long before my legs started to cramp and exhaustion strangled my lungs, so I fell to the ground. Frustrated, the rebel soldiers beat me. However, the man with the scar stopped the others. He pulled me off the ground, dusted off my shirt, smiled, and said, “You will be okay.” With an expression of endearment on his face he continued, “Don’t you worry, Little Brother; I will take care of you now.” Go to the Rebel Camp.
Discussion Questions
Moses’ life has changed in an instant. Have you ever experienced a big change in your life? What was it? How did you deal with it? Moses is being told that he will be taken care of by the rebels. What do you think is going through his head right now? Would you believe them?

Prayer
Since the war in Northern Uganda began in 1996, UNICEF estimates that roughly 10,000 children have been abducted into the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). Pray that children would find protection from the LRA, and that many would rise to their defense.

Moses (Uganda)—Step 3: Rebel Camp
The scar-faced man carried me four hours on his back, telling me stories of death, glory, and freedom. He told me to forget about my old family; starting today, he was to be my brother. He took me into the camp and set me down in a small tent with a dimly lit lamp. Off in the distance I saw young boys my age with guns and alcohol. They were laughing. These young soldiers were killing anonymous men whose faces were covered. It was the first time I saw an execution, but not the last. I lived with the rebel army for a year. Unlike the other children, I wasn’t forced to carry a gun, heavy bags, or to kill people. When I got tired from marching, “Big Brother” would carry me. They treated me like family. Walk around the room barefoot and come back to the Rebel Camp.

Discussion Questions
It seems like Moses has found a ‘family’ in the rebels. Do you see anything wrong with this? Do you think that he is confused about right and wrong? What would you be thinking if you were him in this situation?

Prayer
90% of the Lord’s Resistance Army is made up of children—most of these children are forced to become child soldiers and sex slaves. Pray that these children who are made to do horrible things will be delivered from the Lord’s Resistance Army and would find forgiveness from God for the crimes they were forced to commit.

Moses (Uganda)—Step 4: Rebel Camp
The rumors of war were spreading. The government troops were aware of our location. Gunshots rang loud in the air like a crashing cymbal in a symphony of war cries. Bullets fell like rain and bodies like hail. The government troops were overwhelming the rebels. I knew that now was the time to escape. I darted off at full speed into the night, never looking back, always looking forward, in the hope that my parents were still alive. My flight led me into the government camp. The soldiers grabbed me and held me down, telling me not to scream. I could do nothing else but scream. “Big Brother” had told me of their crimes against Uganda. Eventually, I calmed down. The government sent me to a rehabilitation center. Weeks later, my parents found me. They took me to a displacement camp, and we have now been living there for three years. I am not sure if death runs more rampant here or in the service of the rebels. Hundreds of people are dying from starvation. Go to the Marketplace.

Discussion Questions
What do you think would have happened to Moses if he hadn’t been taken by the government?

Prayer
Nearly two million Ugandans, out of a population of 24.7 million, now live in displacement camps for fear of being attacked and killed in their villages. Pray for the Lord to be their true refuge and their Rock. He is the only one that can truly restore. Pray that knowledge of Him will sustain them as they have no earthly home, remembering that Heaven is the home they can look forward to.

Moses (Uganda)—Step 5: Marketplace
Life in the camp is hard, and food is scarce. When we go to the feeding center, sometimes the only thing we get to eat is a piece of bread and a few grains of rice. I wish there were trees to climb and mangoes to eat. My mother and I eat first because we are still able to work. My father eats what is left because he is too old and sick to work. Every day he grows sicker. I hope he will be okay. Today some Americans visited the camp. They showed us a lot of love and fed us. They read stories of boys like me who were taken by the rebels and how these boys found forgiveness by God. They explained that it wasn’t our fault that so many Ugandans had died and that we need to forgive ourselves. They taught us how to pray and live. Thank you. Travel to Children of the Nations.
Discussion Question
What can we do to make sure that children like Moses find the help they need?

Prayer
Pray that people with much would give to those who are in need. Pray that God would use you, the church, and agencies like COTN to provide the Gospel, food, education, and health care to millions of children in need.

Angelique (Uganda)—Step 1: Home
Hi, my name is Angelique. I am sixteen years old. I live with both my parents in a mud hut in Uganda. My father is unemployed, and my mother cleans houses. They work very hard and love us so much. My mother’s hands are worn from brutal work, but still she embraces me tightly when the day is done. Both my mother and father are gone most of the day working or looking for work. I stay home, taking care of my brother and sister. They are a handful! My parents wish they could send me to school, but they don’t have the money. Plus, they need my help at home. Sometimes, I wish I could just be a normal kid and play outside with friends without a care. Today, my brother and sister are crying because they are hungry and miss our mother. Sometimes I take them to the market to look for food. There have been rumors of war in the area, but it hasn’t reached us yet. Go to the Marketplace.

Discussion Questions:
How do you think it makes Angelique feel to see her parents struggling? Angelique tries to help by watching her siblings. Do you help your parents get things done around your home? What do you do?

Prayer
In Uganda, a woman’s average income is about $30 per month. Rent for a one-room, dirt-floor dwelling with no running water or electricity in the city of Kampala is about $25/month. But most families have to build mud huts to save money. If you had three kids to feed, how long do you think $30 would last? Pray for those who don’t make enough to provide for their family’s needs.

Angelique (Uganda)—Step 2: Marketplace
The loud sound of salesmen rings in our ears; we can barely hear each other. People walk quickly back and forth, sometimes brushing our shoulders. We hold hands tightly to stay together. It’s exciting to see the fast-paced atmosphere! To make the day a little more fun, we pretend to be mice looking for food. Over by the rice stands, children carry rice on their heads, trying to sell it, and at times, small amounts fall to the ground with little notice. My brother, sister, and I sneak up behind them and pick up the rice to eat. We make squeaky noises and pounce around. (Pick the rice out of the dirt and eat it.) As we play, I overhear men speaking about rebels coming near and killing and burning homes. It scares me a little, but I quickly forget about it when a salesman notices us taking his scraps...Run! Run back Home.

Discussion Questions
We have video games, bicycles, board games, dolls, and so many other things to play with and keep us occupied. Could you have fun without those things? Angelique pretended to be a mouse when looking for scraps. Do you ever play pretend so that what you are doing doesn’t seem so bad?

Prayer
Pray that children who have to pretend their lives aren’t as bad as they are to get by would find true satisfaction from Jesus.

Angelique (Uganda)—Step 3: Home
After a long day of scavenging for food, the dark night has crept up. We can hear gunshots in the distance. Mom and Dad should have been home by now, but something must be keeping them. I hope they’re okay. I decide it would be best if we all snuggled together and tried to get some sleep; at least in our dreams we won’t worry. Both my brother and sister have fallen asleep, and my eyes are heavy, when all of a sudden my uncle runs into the house yelling, “Come! Now! We must go!” The gunshots now sound like they are in the next hut, and the screams are short-lived and blood-chilling. My uncle grabs my brother and sister and turns to leave the hut. As he turns, a rebel soldier enters and hits him with the butt of a gun. I watch him fall to the ground like a tree in a wind storm. Two other rebel soldiers enter the house and grab my brother, sister, and me. I remember little else but the butt-end of a gun coming down on my forehead. When I awake, I am downtown, sitting in a fenced-off area with ten other children my age. No one sleeps that night. Go to the Marketplace.
**Discussion Questions**
Do you feel safe when you go to bed at night? What makes you feel safe? In America, children are precious and protected—that’s why we have social workers and family support services. But in places like Uganda, children are seen as things. What are the benefits of being an American child?

**Prayer**
Since the war in Northern Uganda began in 1996, UNICEF estimates that roughly 10,000 children have been abducted into the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). Pray that children would find protection from the LRA, and that many would rise to their defense.

**Angelique (Uganda)—Step 4: Marketplace**
The next morning, tall men in army suits point their machine guns at us, demanding that we pick up their bags and start walking. There are some other kids from outside the village there. The straps cut into my skin, and my knees ache. After walking for miles at a time, I can bear it no more. I drop to my knees and start to cry. *[Walk around the room barefoot, and return to the Marketplace to finish the card.] A rebel soldier starts to yell, threatening my life if I don’t get up. He says, “If you want to rest, I will make it so you will rest forever.” I get to my feet. He breaks off a branch, starts hitting me with it. It stings like a thousand bee stings. I cry out and hear a voice. It is my uncle. He jumps the soldier and starts choking him. My uncle’s struggle is short-lived; soon other soldiers pull him off and tie him up. They force me to watch him get beaten. When I can no longer recognize his face, they put a gun into my hand and tell me to shoot him. I refuse, but they place a gun to my head and say that if I don’t shoot him, they will shoot my uncle, the children around me, and then me. I have to do it. Gun in hand, I raise it toward my uncle. The last words he speaks are, “I love and forgive you.” A BANG rang loud through the air, and blood covered the ground. My uncle was dead. Go to the Rebel Camp.

**Discussion Questions**
Ugandan children are forced to grow up so early. They have to make very hard decisions. Can you imagine being placed in this situation? What do you think Angelique was feeling after this day in her life?

**Prayer**
90% of the Lord’s Resistance Army is made up of children. These children are forced to become child soldiers and sex slaves. Pray that these children who are made to do horrible things will be delivered from the Lord’s Resistance Army and will find forgiveness from God for the crimes they were forced to commit.

**Angelique (Uganda)—Step 5: Rebel Camp**
A month goes by. One night, I am awoken by the sounds of gunshots. I am happy to hear the sound of war and conflict. These violent sounds bring hope to my heart! Maybe the government will save me. The shots continue through most of the night. I close my eyes to sleep, though in vain. Who could sleep in such a situation? The rustling of the bushes catches my attention. I am scared. Who could it be? “Angelique, Angelique, have you seen her?” asked a shadowy figure. “Daddy?” I force the word out. I start to cry. My father grabs my hand and tells me to be quiet. He leads me through the wooded jungle. Finally, after what seems like miles, in the distance I see a faint fire. At it sits my mother. “Mama!” I yell. As I draw nearer, she looks up. She drops my brother and sister from her arms, runs toward me, and embraces me. We are together again at last. That day we travel, but when we arrive at our destination, there is heavy fighting between the government and the rebels. We are forced to split up. My mother and I remain together, and my father takes the other children. We make it out alive and arrive safely at a displacement camp. Travel to the Hospital.

**Discussion Questions**
Can you think of a time when you went through something that was really hard? What was it? We long to be held by our parents or loved ones when we are afraid or in pain. Who can you think of that would be there for you?

**Prayer**
Though Angelique was fortunate enough to escape successfully, not all children are. Some child soldiers are forced to kill other children who attempted to escape. Pray that God will help these former child soldiers find forgiveness for the things they’ve done and hope for change.
**Angelique (Uganda)—Step 6: Hospital**

When we arrive at the displacement camp, my mother and I begin searching for my father. In one man’s small tent sit my brother and sister. They are crying. “Where is Dad?” I ask. The children speak softly, “He is in the hospital.” My mother grabs them into her arms and asks for directions to the hospital. The man points and grunts. We run. When we arrive at the hospital, it is too late. My father has passed. Months later, my mother gets sick and is taken to the hospital. She, too, dies at the camp. Now I, the oldest, am the head of my household. It is up to me to provide for my family. Life is difficult. But there are rumors of an organization called Children of the Nations that seeks to help children like me. I hope that they will come and visit me. And they do. They tell me that the crimes that were committed weren’t my fault. They tell stories of children just like me who were forced to do awful things but found peace, rest, and forgiveness. They provide necessary items for taking care of my family, and they help me to work and to provide for my family. Thank you so much COTN. I now have hope.

**Discussion Questions**

Knowing this true story of a child your age, what do you think about your own problems and struggles? How can you change your perspective about your hardships and the hardships of others?

**Prayer**

Nearly two million Ugandans, out of a population of 24.7 million, now live in displacement camps for fear of returning to their villages and being attacked or perhaps killed. Pray for the Lord to be their true refuge and their Rock. He is the only one that can truly restore. Pray that knowledge of Him will sustain them as they have no earthly home, remembering that Heaven is the home they can look forward to.

**David (Malawi)—Step 1: Hospital**

Hi, my name is David. I am twelve years old, and I live in Malawi. Both my parents died from AIDS. I can hardly remember what they looked like. My mother passed away when I was three years old, and my father a few years later. I miss them so much. I miss their love, care, and comfort. After my father passed away, my grandmother tried to take care of me the best she could, but she is much older now and can’t work or even walk. She can’t provide clothes, soap, and nutritious food for me. Now, instead of caring for me, I have to care for her. I must find food to feed her, clothes for her to wear, and I even have to bathe her. We ran out of rice again, and now I need to find work. **Go to the Marketplace.**

**Discussion Questions**

Rarely in the U.S. must a child care for a parent or grandparent. Would you know how if you were put in that situation?

**Prayer**

At the end of 2005, an estimated 91,000 children in Malawi were living with HIV, and over half a million children had been orphaned by AIDS. This devastating disease still runs rampant in Malawi. Many Malawians simply don’t know what it is. Pray for education about HIV/AIDS to be spread around the nation of Malawi. Ask the Lord to watch over the children who are left parentless by the disease and to keep them safe from it. Pray that God will bring treatment to the thousands of children with HIV/AIDS in Malawi.

**David (Malawi)—Step 2: Marketplace**

My grandmother has died, and I am on my own now. An elder in my village offered me a job taking care of cows. He seemed like a nice man, though dirty and with missing teeth, but it’s the only work I could find. He showed me around the fields—the cows were five times my size! At first I was a little nervous around these beasts. Today, the big, brown cow with a scar above his right thigh got spooked and charged me. Only by instinct and the hand of God was I able to jump out of the way. The landing was soft but stinky. I found myself face down in a pile of manure. For a long and hard day’s work, I get paid with bread and maybe some rice. It is never enough to make me feel full. Because of the long work days, I rarely have time to shower and never any time to wash my clothes. I don’t know who smells worse—me or the cows. **Go Home.**

**Discussion Questions**

David’s job might seem funny to us, but would it really be a good job for him? How do you think it makes him feel about himself? Would this job make you feel like a valuable person?
Prayer
What the U.S. and Europe spends on perfume each year could feed all of the starving children ALL OVER THE WORLD. Instead, Malawi’s children are forced into hard labor and atrocious conditions to barely make enough for the day. Pray that the government and citizens of Malawi would take responsibility for their children. Pray that the world would open their eyes to the pain of these innocent children.

David (Malawi)—Step 3: Home
The living arrangements at the farm are worse than the job. I sleep on a bed made from a sack and wood planks. I use my grandmother’s old sweater for a blanket. The sweater only covers half of my body and has more holes than a strainer. In the winter, I have to build a fire by my bed to stay warm. But I have to keep turning over to warm the other side of my body. That means that I only get a few hours of sleep at a time. The worst is when it rains. My shack leaks and floods with water. When it rains, I can’t sleep at all. I am tired of this. I am going to find another job. Go to the Marketplace.

Discussion Questions
What do you look forward to? What do you think David has to look forward to?

Prayer
Most of us sleep in a bed at night, safe and warm. We can look forward to the end of the day. Children like David dread the night. It’s uncomfortable and frightening. There’s nothing to look forward to. But they must make it through until the next day of work. Please pray for the children who don’t have proper places to sleep; that somehow God will give them comfort and strength. Pray that they would come to know the Lord and rest in His peace.

David (Malawi)—Step 4: Marketplace
Children just like me swarm the marketplace looking for work. Timing is everything. First come, first served is the law of the street. It took days to find work last time, and when I did, it paid almost nothing. I find food sporadically on the ground, mixed in with the dirt. (Dig through the dirt and try to find rice to eat.) A couple of friends and I spend the next several weeks sitting on the street corners, full of hopelessness. Then we see a guy selling bags on the streets, and we decide what we will do for our future. We start a plastic bag selling group. Some bags we find, others we steal, and still others we purchase with the little funds we manage to scrounge up by cleaning huts and other odd jobs. I spend all my days selling bags. It isn’t much profit, but it is better than smelling like cows. Go to Children of the Nations.

Discussion Questions
Do you ever say things like, “I’m so hungry I could eat a cow?” or, “I’m so hungry I would eat anything!”? Would you ever really consider eating rice out of the dirt in those circumstances?

Prayer
Imagine your only hope of food is mixed in with dirt. Imagine the humiliation of digging around for scraps while people walk by with their heads held high. Please pray that the hearts of the world would break for the destruction of its children. Pray that God would bend our heads down and force us to look at what has become of His creation. Pray that the Lord would be found in these hungry children’s hearts and that He would bring them to restoration, using us to do it.

David (Malawi)—Step 5: Children of the Nations
I am busy working when I hear of a group of people called Children of the Nations who work with orphaned children like me in our village. I watch them gather the children and feed them. They give the kids hugs—I’ve never been hugged before. I see one of the Americans spot me from afar. He comes up and asks me a few questions, including “Are you hungry?” Of course, I said, “Yes!” After a few weeks of slipping away to be with Children of the Nations, they accept me into their orphan program. I now have parents, friends, food, and school. COTN has given me hope for my future. And because of them I can dream to become a mechanical engineer.

Discussion Questions
What would it be like to go from working hard labor like an adult to being treated like a child again? David got help from Children of the Nations because people volunteer their time and money to fund it. There are still thousands of children who are hungry out there. What can you do to help?
Prayer
We all long for our Heavenly Father to wrap us up in His arms. Pray to the Lord and thank him for the people that showed the Father’s love to David. Pray for more people to display that security and comfort to the children of the fatherless.

Ethel (Malawi)—Step 1: Hospital
Hi, my name is Ethel, and I am thirteen years old. At the age of two, one of my three sisters died of malnutrition. A year later, my mother also died. Then, when I was only four years old, my father died of the disease known as AIDS. Now I only have my brother and two sisters for a family. Since my mother and father died, my brother takes care of my sisters and me. He is cruel, and his tongue is like a whip whenever he speaks. As I do the chores in the house, he yells at me, saying to hurry up and do a better job. My job is never good enough for him, so last week I woke up lying on the floor with dried blood to the left of my pounding head. My brother was diagnosed with polio a few months ago, and his anger has gotten worse since then. Now his body is starting to fail. He can’t take care of us because his legs and arms are weak. In some ways, I am happy because my brother can’t hit or hurt me or my sisters any longer. But at the same time, I am afraid of how I will take care of my two sisters. Go to the Marketplace.

Discussion Questions
How would you feel with sickness and death all around you? When someone passes away, what kind of things do people do for the family members of the deceased? What kind of household do you live in? Is it every man for himself, or do you all work together?

Prayer
This year in Malawi, some 80,000 people will die from AIDS. Pray that HIV/AIDS would decrease its presence in Malawi and that God would continue to heal the nation.

Ethel (Malawi)—Step 2: Marketplace
It’s been three weeks since the death of my older brother. My grandmother came to get my sisters and me. She took us to live with her. My grandmother is very poor, but she realized that she was our only hope. I was trying to be good for her, but I landed in a world of trouble. Last night, I left the mud hut and went to the nearby market, where I hoped to find some food that I could snack for free. I saw a man with a bowl of plantains over his head. I thought of a plan—I could steal enough for my whole family. I saw a boy with a soccer ball playing next to the market. I stole the ball from the kid and threw it near the man with the delicious food above him. The boy ran to get it. He accidentally tripped the man, and the man spilled all of the plantains on the floor. I ran as fast as I could to retrieve them! As I was picking them up, the man did not notice me. When I looked at how many I had gathered, I realized I had only picked up two plantains. So I ran as fast as I could back to get at least two more. As soon as I reached for the last plantain, I was picked up in a hurry and faced a tall man with an angry look on his face. The man took me to my grandmother’s home. She was very upset when she found out that I was stealing. Go Home.

Discussion Questions
It seems Ethel can’t keep from messing up. How do you think she feels right now? What kinds of responsibilities do you have at home? What kinds of things does Ethel have weighing on her shoulders?

Prayer
There are over 800,000 children who have lost either both or one of their parents. About 40 percent of them are due to AIDS. Pray that God would be a Father to the fatherless and that he would provide for those in great need.

Ethel (Malawi)—Step 3: Home
This morning I awoke to my sisters’ crying. I ran outside to see what was going on. My grandmother had a plastic bag full of everything she could fit into. They were crying because our grandma was leaving. She was yelling that I was a disgrace to the family. She said she can’t handle us. I don’t know if she is going to come back. We watched her trot away with what looked like the last of our bread. What are we supposed to do now? How can I possibly take care of us? I’m starting to feel very ill. What if I have polio like my brother? I do not want to leave my sisters all alone in this world. I am trying to think of my options to survive, but I can’t think of even one thing to do. My parents are dead, my brother is, too, and now my grandmother has deserted me. I feel like a horrible daughter, granddaughter, and sister. I just don’t think there’s any more hope for me. My sisters are tugging on my pants. Their eyes are bloodshot from the tears. They are hungry. I will gather them in the hut and see if there is anything to scrounge to make it through one more day. Go to the Kitchen.
Discussion Questions
Ethel feels completely guilty and responsible for what has happened in her family. What would you say to her about how she is feeling?

Prayer
There are many children like Ethel who have to head up their households because their parents die. Pray that God would strengthen them to lead their family and to provide well for them.

Ethel (Malawi)—Step 4: Kitchen
It’s been two weeks since my grandmother left. We can’t find any more rice scattered in front of people’s huts. My stomach is starting to swell from not eating anything. My sisters hardly cry anymore because they are too weak to even make a sound. Then yesterday, out of the hole in the hut, I saw my grandmother coming back. She tried to make it on her own, but the guilt was too much for her. She has brought back some corn, enough for one day, and she has a job of selling plastic bags. But even with that, our stomachs still swell. There is no nutrition in corn. It is not enough. It seems like things get a little better—but never good. I will go out and look for work again, even though I am so tired. I know I am still a child, but I do not feel like one. When have I ever played around like that boy with the soccer ball in the market? When has my mother, grandmother, or brother tucked me in at night? I see children in their schools running around and laughing. I can’t remember the last time I laughed. Is this it for me? Barely making it until my body can’t hold on any longer? Travel to Children of the Nations.

Discussion Questions
What kind of life does a child deserve? What are important things that each child should get to experience? When hope was brought back into Ethel’s life she was excited. But what is still missing?

Prayer
Pray that children like Ethel would be able to experience a childhood, security, and unconditional love. Also, thank the Lord that there are those in your life that care for you.

Ethel (Malawi)—Step 5: Children of the Nations
Today, as I am walking to the market, my head down, staring at my filthy feet, I hear a ruckus. I look up to see a group of Americans surrounded by children. They are from an organization called Children of the Nations. I run as fast as I can to see what it is all about, but my body is so weak, I fall to the ground just a few feet away. Just then, a man bends down and looks me in the eye as he grabs my hand. He brings me to their station, feeds me, and gives me some new clothes, and all I can think about are my sisters. I bring the COTN people to our hut and introduce the family. Children of the Nations is able to take all three of us into their Children’s Home. I am enjoying it here a lot! We eat every day, and now I can go to school. I feel like I am living a normal life. They even build a basketball court to play on. I don’t have to worry about stealing food to survive anymore. What a weight off of my shoulders! I’m learning English now and imagining such a better future for myself. When I grow up I want to be a nurse. I also want to help my grandmother and relatives at the village. Thank you so much Children of the Nations.

Discussion Questions
What do you think it felt like to be so close to help but too weak to go that last couple of feet? Who in your life has been there for you, to pick you up when you could not make it on your own?

Prayer
Ethel almost didn’t make it. Thank God for the amazing thing that COTN has done in her life by not only bringing food, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray that God would meet the needs of thousands of kids who haven’t yet been reached by COTN through you and your church.

Kofi (Sierra Leone)—Step 1: Marketplace
My name is Kofi. I am 13 years old and am from Ngolala village, Upper Banta, Moyamba District. My father is a fisherman, and my mother does what she can to take care of the kids. Me, well, I distribute and sell alcohol for a friend of my father. My father got rid of me for a few bottles of alcohol and a guarantee that I would be taken care of. I work long hours and get paid with alcohol. I sneak a few bottles here and there for myself. I guess that is what got me here in the first place. I don’t remember much after I passed out on the beach. When I awoke, I had some doctor frowning and shaking his head at me—that arrogant, patronizing jerk. Go to the Hospital.
Discussion Questions
What kind of emotions would be going through Kofi’s mind after being sold by his father? Do you think some of these feelings will lead to future insecurities?

Prayer
We know that God is our eternal Father, and He gave the life of his Son, Jesus, as payment for us. Thank the Lord that He gave us Jesus, and pray that children like Kofi would hear the gospel and find comfort in it.

Kofi (Sierra Leone)—Step 2: Hospital
They look at me like it’s my fault. I can’t control this! I wanted their love and acceptance, but only found indifference. When I was little, I would try to help my father with the fishing nets. He’d smack me on the back of my head, curse a few times, and say, “You only screw things up. Leave the nets to the men.” My brothers were allowed to help, but I was told to help my mom. Can you imagine how my brothers teased me? Mom was hopeless and tired of life. If we had had money for alcohol, trust me, she would be in the hospital, not me. She spent most of her time staring at the wall, remembering my other siblings. They died from disease and sickness. At night she woke up crying and screaming their names. I felt like a ghost—like I was invisible, unwelcome, and haunting. I used to run off for days at a time. I usually found myself in front of a school, looking at the happy children from a distance. Why couldn’t I be them? **Go to the School.**

Discussion Questions
Imagine your own parents ignoring your existence when you desperately wanted to be acknowledged by them. Do you know what it is like to be ignored and neglected?

Prayer
So much anger toward the world comes from people do not feel loved. Pray that God would show children who are treated badly by their loved ones that He will never abandon them or forget about them.

Kofi (Sierra Leone)—Step 3: School
School was a privilege for the few and far between. I used to sit for hours in a tree looking over the fence at the children in uniforms. They had friends, teachers, and a family that loved them. Sometimes when they saw me watching, they would make jokes among themselves. I hated them. They didn’t know what it was like to be me. I thought I was better than them because of the hard life I lived. But it turns out they aren’t so bad, and I’m not any better than them. It just so happened that when I was in the tree, a branch snapped, and I fell hard onto the ground and broke my leg. I cried out in pain, and the students ran outside. They found me underneath the tree, crying. One of the older boys tried to comfort me with words and touch. I growled at him, “Don’t touch me!” They were persistent, and a little girl brought the school nurse. **Go to the Hospital.**

Discussion Questions
What is the purpose of education? Kofi is unable to receive an education. What kinds of disadvantages await Kofi because of his lack of education?

Prayer
Think about the privilege it is that you get a free education. Take a moment to thank God for the blessing He has given you in school.

Kofi (Sierra Leone)—Step 4: Hospital
They took me to the hospital and put a cast on my foot. The nurse had notified my parents, and they were on their way. My mother came running in. There was life and worry in her eyes. For the first time in a long time, she really saw me. She cared. My father, on the other hand, didn’t even look at me. He just kept grumbling, “How am I going to pay for this?” The joy I had from seeing my parents was extinguished immediately when my father yelled, “Boy, you will pay for this,” and walked out into the hallway. They took me home, and no one said a word. **Go Home.**
Discussion Questions
Kofi’s family is so poor they can’t afford to pay for both medical care and food to live on. If you were Kofi’s parents, how would you provide medical care for your children if it meant them coming home to no food?

Prayer
Thank the Lord that He has given us resources and technology to be able to heal people from sickness. Pray that we would be able to get medical care to sick children all over the world.

Kofi (Sierra Leone)—Step 5: Home
Father hadn’t spoken a word to me in days. He told Mother not to feed me until I repaid my debt. I cleaned the house, watched my younger siblings, and then went to the market to look for work. I was so hungry. It wasn’t long before my father grew tired of me. He stormed out of the house and returned drunk with a few bottles of alcohol and a man I had seen around town. My father simply said, “Take the boy.” The man grabbed my arm and pulled me out of the house. I didn’t know what to say. My mother wouldn’t even look at me. She pretended like nothing was happening. I heard that a few weeks later, she ran off. I don’t know what happened to my mother. Life went downhill from then on. The man who took me in gave me little food and little alcohol. At first, I hated the taste, but he forced me to drink it. He said, “You can’t sell what you don’t believe in.” Later, I became so fed up with life, I stole a couple of bottles, went to the beach, and drank myself unconscious. Briefly, I was awakened by the man I worked for. He hit me and told me not to return. When he let go of me, I fell back into darkness. Some people found me and took me to where I am now—the hospital. **Go to the Hospital.**

Discussion Questions
How hard is it to please your parents? What do they ask of you? Do you think Kofi’s father was being realistic in what he wanted him to do?

Prayer
Our Father in heaven knows exactly what is best for us. Trust Him to direct your path, and thank Him for loving you. Pray that children like Kofi would find themselves in a caring environment where they can grow and learn good habits and skills.

Kofi (Sierra Leone)—Step 6: Hospital
I heard the doctor say they’re discharging me today. What am I going to do? Where am I going to go? God, if you are real, send help, please!

Discussion Questions
Kofi is still hungry. This is the end of his story for now. How does it feel to watch his life progress? What do you want to happen to Kofi next? What can you do to help children like Kofi?

Prayer
Children of the Nations feeds over 8,000 children a year, but there are millions like Kofi who are still hungry. Pray that God would use you and your community to make a difference in children’s lives. Pray that God would provide for them like He has for you.
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Donor Address ___________________________

City ___________________________ State _______ ZIP _______

$____ per hour 

Student Name ___________________________

X____ hours 

Donor Signature ___________________________ 

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Donor Name ___________________________

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Keep this card to contact donors who choose to hold their pledges until after your time of fasting.

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