



The Puzzle of Poverty

THIS LESSON introduces a holistic approach to solving poverty, identifying the resources and values needed to help communities thrive.

TIME REQUIRED: 20-30 MINUTES | INTENDED FOR ALL GRADES

MATERIALS NEEDED

- » 1-4 small puzzle sets (100 pieces or fewer). Note: You can also do this activity with LEGO® sets.
- » Visit worldvision.org/lp/acsi-teacher-resources for a video you can show to support this lesson. (optional)

Preparation Needed

- » Divide students into small groups of four to eight students each. (If your class is large, you can increase the size of your groups.) You'll need one puzzle set per group. The younger your participants, the smaller the puzzles should be.
- » Remove a few pieces from each puzzle set before the lesson. Don't let students know there are pieces missing.

Activity Steps

1

BEGIN THE LESSON BY GIVING A PUZZLE SET TO EACH GROUP. Tell the groups they are competing to see who can complete their puzzle the fastest. Allow 10-20 minutes (depending on the size of the puzzles). Make sure they know that in order to win, they must complete every piece.

2

AS STUDENTS POINT OUT THAT THEY'RE MISSING A FEW PIECES, let them know they must compete with what they have. Do not offer any further assistance or explanation until time has expired.

3

ONCE TIME IS UP, LEAD EVERYONE in a brief discussion about their puzzles. Ask participants to share what they felt when they realized there was no way to win the competition. Allow for several responses.

4

SHARE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- » Solving poverty is a lot like putting a puzzle together: it's impossible unless you have all the right pieces.
- » Let's say someone is hungry. The first thing we need to do is give them something to eat, right? But what if that's all we do? What happens the next day and the day after that? They're still hungry.
- » What if someone doesn't have anywhere to go to school? We could build a school for their village, but what if there are no teachers? What if none of the children can go to school because they have to spend all day walking to the nearest stream to fetch water for their families to drink? What if they're forced to work like grownups, instead of learning?

5

WRITE THE FOLLOWING WORDS for all students to see:

Hunger	Food
Unsafe water	Clean water
Poor health	Healthcare
No schooling	Education
Economic poverty	Economic opportunity
Exploitation	Protection

Then share the following points:

- » The puzzle of poverty has many pieces. Communities need healthy food. They need clean water to drink. They need healthcare for when they get sick. They need education so their kids can learn and grow and have a better future. Parents need the opportunity to earn money and provide for their families. Children need to be valued and protected from harm.
- » Take a look at each of these needs, and the solutions. What do you think it might take for a community to solve each of them, for good? For example, what does it take for a community to have food—not just someone giving them food, but being able to feed themselves?

Allow a few moments for discussion. If time is short, focus on just one or two pieces of the puzzle. (For younger participants, focus on simpler pieces, such as food.) Here are some sample answers for each piece:

- » *Food: Communities need the ability to grow enough food for themselves. Farmers need seeds and equipment. They need training to help them grow bigger and better crops.*
- » *Water: Families need water that isn't dirty or contaminated. They need pumps close to home so they don't have to walk for miles to fetch water. They need the know-how to maintain their water pumps and fix them when they break down.*

6

- » *Healthcare: Communities need health clinics where people can get care. They need doctors and nurses who are trained to care for the sick. They need medicine and information to protect their children from disease.*
- » *Education: Schools need books and other supplies. Teachers need training and support. Kids need to be protected from child labor so they can go to school instead of work.*
- » *Economic opportunity: Parents need money to start small businesses to provide for their families. They need business training so they can grow their enterprise. They need to be able to save money for the future.*
- » *Protection: Children need to know their rights. They need to be kept safe from those who would abuse them or take advantage of them or make them work in harsh conditions. Kids need to be free to be kids—to play and go to school.*

OPTIONAL: If time allows, lead older participants (grades 6 and up) in a short discussion about the difference between resources and values. For younger students, skip to step 7.

- » Solving poverty is not just about having the right resources. It's also about having the right values—values that help people thrive. I'm going to read a list of some of the things it might take for a community to solve poverty. You tell me whether each item is a resource, a value, or both—and why you think it's an important piece of the puzzle.

Share the following list, giving students time to reflect on each item:

- » *Clean water wells*
- » *Equal opportunities for women*
- » *Health clinics*
- » *Irrigation for farms*
- » *The ability to get a small loan for your business*
- » *Fully stocked health clinic*
- » *Children protected from exploitation and labor*
- » *Men committed to their families*
- » *Textbooks for school*
- » *Equal access to school for girls and boys*

7

READ WHAT JESUS SAYS in John 10:10: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Then conclude the lesson with the following point:

- » Jesus wants people to have eternal life, but he also cares about their lives, right here and now. He wants people to have what they need—the resources and values—to thrive. When we help others solve the whole puzzle of poverty, we're doing more than just giving them things. We're helping them experience God's love.