



The Dalits: Walking in Their Shoes

By Karen Hardin and Nancy Fritz

Goal: To help the students learn about the plight of the poor, specifically the Dalits, and how to respond as Christians to them and those who hurt in other parts of the world.

A note to the teacher: There is enough material here for a fast paced 60-70 minutes. Feel free to pick and choose if you feel that you don't have time to do everything. The Global Cookies Demonstration will not make or break the lesson, so you could do that independently at another time. That is a seven to ten minute element that might make a difference for you if you are pressed for time.

Arriving and Receiving Identities for the Event

As students arrive, they will **be given a bracelet to wear**. Approximately 25 percent of them will receive distinctive bracelets to represent the upper castes in India. The majority of the children will receive other colors of bracelets to signify that they are representing the outcastes of India--the Dalits, or Untouchables. The bracelets can be a simple cotton string tied around their wrists or colored friendship bracelets that can be ordered from the U.S. Toy catalogue. Only two colors are needed to accomplish the distinction between the 25 percent upper caste children and 75 percent Dalit children for the simulation, but a mixture of colors might make it less easy for them to know what is happening and manipulate the color they are receive. The bracelets will set the stage for some situations during the lesson that demonstrate for the children the unfairness of the caste system.

The Big Revelation- Upper Caste vs. Dalits

After whatever opening you usually do, **introduce the lesson:** *The Dalits: Walking in Their Shoes*. Explain to them that, depending on what color string or bracelet they have on their wrist, for the next hour they will be either a high caste Indian (from India) or an outcaste Dalit.

Water Simulation

Upper caste kids may have water out of a clean pitcher from clean, preferably clear cups (paper cups would be OK, but you want the clarity of the water to be obvious) on a table or counter any time they want. They can just help themselves. **Dalit kids** can help themselves to water from a large soup or stock pot or from a clean plastic bucket. Prepare this water by adding vinegar (enough so that the water doesn't taste good) and food coloring to make it look muddy. Have a ladle hooked to the inside and supply small paper bathroom cups or something similar that doesn't look fancy at all. Have all this on the floor in an inconvenient place, and set it on a towel to protect the carpet if you need to. Assure the kids that the water is not unhealthy, but

for a Dalit child, it could be polluted and have diseases in it. Several times during the lesson, remind the children that **they can drink all they want from their designated water source.**

Explain that Dalit kids often have to walk a long way for water. Some villages expect the Dalits to drink out of clay cups and when they are done drinking, they are supposed to smash the cups so that there is no danger of an upper caste person accidentally drinking from a “contaminated” cup.

Opening Activity

Send the upper caste and Dalit kids to either side of the room to **do a large group assembly activity.** Any group assembly activity would work. A Kids of the World puzzle from Constructive Playthings works well, or you could write a Bible verse in large letters on several large pieces of poster board firmly taped together and then cut it into puzzle shaped pieces for them to put together. The verse could be one of the ones included in the lesson.

The upper caste kids will be able to talk and appoint leaders for the job, and there will be fewer of them. The teachers in the room can offer them suggestions. Let the Dalit kids to do this without any help from the teachers at all. Their experience will probably be much more disorganized and frustrating. Bring them back together to ask about the process of doing a project like this in a big group with no leader designated and no help being offered. Were they able to cooperate and get themselves organized? (Note: An extra challenge could be given by not allowing the Dalits to talk at all while they do this.)

Afterwards, explain that the Dalits as a group want a change from the caste system that has held them down for so long, but it is extremely difficult for them to get themselves organized. They lack the resources to come together to plan for change in their status. They are busy just surviving. Explain to the children that they will be learning things throughout this lesson that will help them understand the Dalits’ situation.

Briefly **overview the 10/40 Window** (see Supplies and Preparation section below), and locate India on a world map. Directions for making a 10 x10’ map of India are included with this lesson.

Children At Risk: What it is like to be a Dalit

Talk about the main issues of hardship for kids who are at risk and Dalits specifically. Use the following list. Enlarge and print the facts onto one 8 ½ x 11” paper each, and hang them in the front of your teaching area (see “Children at Risk Signs to Print” attachment).

Education 130 million children worldwide lack access to education. The majority of children who do not attend school are girls.

Child Labor 246 million children around the world are child laborers. Of these, 73 million are younger than 10 years of age.

Health Care Every day, 30,000 children die from preventable diseases like measles, tetanus, and diarrhea. In developing countries 1 out of 7 children do not have access to doctors, dentists, or medicines.

Street Children/Homeless There are 100 million street children worldwide. If you counted 1 street child per second, it would take you 3 ½ years. (On the back or on a separate sheet also include) Street kids often use drugs to escape from the realities of street life. In the U.S. there are more than 1 million street children.

Children in Poverty The world has 6.5 billion people. 4 out of 10 live on less than \$2 a day.

Hunger The number of undernourished people in the world is larger than the population of every continent except Asia. In the U.S., children in 1 out of 10 households experience hunger or risk of hunger.

Water 4 out of 10 people in the world lack enough water for adequate sanitation and hygiene. Every 8 seconds, a child dies from a water related disease.

(Remind them that, even though the Dalit children here today have water that *looks* bad, it is actually safe to drink. We in the U.S. are privileged to have clean water every day. That is a huge blessing, and we should be thankful for it!)

Global Cookie Demonstration

Use directions in “Global Cookie Demo Directions” attachment and materials from “Global Cookie Demo Continent Signs to Print” attachment. Depending on the size of your group, you can use children or pictures to **represent the distribution of food in the world**. Animal crackers are available at most grocery stores and work well. When you are done dividing up the children as listed on the attached chart, move through the list with North America second to last and Asia last. That brings home the message of the imbalance of the world’s food supply. After letting it sink in for a few moments and the children start complaining about how unfair it is (in my experience, they always do!), let the children share the cookies so they each get one. After finishing, give a cookie to each of the children observing the demonstration as well.

A Tour of Their Lives vs. a Dalit’s Life

Ask the children to shut their eyes and **remember the food** on their table at Thanksgiving. Mention some Thanksgiving foods, talk about leftovers, and how full they feel, etc.

“Imagine being in your kitchen, getting a cup, and putting water in it from the sink or fridge door. You are a little hungry and want a snack. You go to the fridge, open it, feel the cool air, and pick out an apple. You go into your room in your house and look at your bed and see your clothes in your closet. You might play with your pet, ride your bike, play, or do homework on your computer. You might be on a sports team or play an instrument. If you are sick, you can go to the doctor. You have a parent or adult taking care of you. You have a school to go to. You probably have a lot of toys. You have this nice church to come to, and you know that God loves you and that Christ died for you. You are truly a blessed person; and compared to most people in the world, you are very rich.”

Have them open their eyes and describe the life of other, less fortunate, children. "Many children go to bed hungry every night, some without parents (remember the tsunami and AIDS), maybe without a roof over their head, with only dirty water to drink, and worst of all, without hope. A lot of Dalit children do."

The Body of Christ and How We Can Help

"Let's talk about what we can do about this. Imagine that you are all Dalits, and you knew you were being treated badly by your culture and religion just because you happened to be born Dalit. How could you organize such a huge group of people to make changes to your culture? One way is to cooperate and perhaps get others to help you. If you are a Christian, then you are part of the Body of Christ."

Have a discussion with them about the parts of the human body. Describe how the systems all tie together: digestion, muscles, nerves, bones, eyes, ears, mouth, etc. You can use pictures or posters if you want. Then get them to think about when they have gotten hurt. Ask if anyone has ever broken a bone or been sick in the hospital. Let several briefly tell what happened to them and how much it hurt. Let this go on just long enough to be able to say, *"Basically, it hurt so much that it was hard to think about anything else, right?"*

"There are many Dalits who are Christian who are just as much a part of the Body of Christ as we are. There isn't a North American Body and an Asian Body of Christ. We are all part of ONE Body of Christ. And part of our Body is hurting A LOT! The Bible says that 'every member is one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ...Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.'" (Print this verse to hold up and read to the children. It is provided in the attachment of Bible verses.)

Explain Partners International's ***Harvest of Hope Gift Catalog***, and how kids can earn money to help Dalit kids go to school. In India, if students don't have a uniform or the proper supplies, they are not allowed to go to school. Many Dalits are too poor to buy the necessary supplies. Bible Faith Mission, one of Partners International's ministry partners, runs an English medium school where both Dalit and higher caste kids study together (the subjects are taught in English, which is very desirable in India). Each gift of \$13 to "School Supplies for a Student in India" (page 7 in the catalog) buys a uniform and school supplies for a Dalit child attending the school. The school is also a Christian school, so children learn about how much Jesus loves them. Other projects in the catalog related to Dalits are "Scholarship for a Dalit Church Planter" and "Bible for a New Believer," both on page 7. Encourage kids to earn money to help Dalit kids in need.

Poor Kids' Games

Divide the children into upper caste and Dalits. The upper caste kids will be given real toys and games already available on one side of the room near their clean water. The Dalit kids will gather around a "garbage dump" of stuff and be told to try and make **toys** out of the garbage. (See the list of suggested types of items in Supplies section below.) The "garbage dump" items already placed on a sheet or small tarp can be carried into the room or uncovered at this point.

After giving them five minutes, let them share their creations. They will probably enjoy the challenge and be proud to share what they have made. (The upper caste kids may actually be envious of the Dalit kids!)

Now that they are excited about what they have made, describe what a real dump looks like. Show pictures. Ask them to imagine the smells of rotting food and to see the pieces of broken glass and sharp metal. Explain that there are dangerous diseases in the dump. For Dalit kids, this isn't a safe way to make a toy: *You were given safe and clean garbage; but for them, it could lead to getting hurt or sick.*

Restate the ONE BODY verse, and talk about us connecting to our Christian brothers and sisters who truly count on us to be praying for and remembering them. Many Dalits are not Christians, and they need our prayers and to hear about God's love for them through Christ.

Prayer

Gather the kids 10 minutes before the end and talk about **how to pray** for the Dalits. Based on their experiences today, ask them to list things they can pray for the Dalits. Let kids come up front and pray those prayers aloud as they are mentioned. Optional: Have a large piece of paper taped or tacked to the wall and markers the kids can use to write prayers and verses for the Dalits. Let the parents read what the children have written when they come to pick up their children.

Closing

Encourage the kids to share what they have learned through this experience. If they are slow with comments, ask them questions:

"How did those of you who were upper caste feel being treated more special? What surprised you the most? What are you most thankful for in your own life? Any ideas about what you might want to do with your life?"

As parents arrive, let them listen to the group debriefing and invite the children to show the parents their prayers written on the wall, what they made out of trash, as well as the pictures and facts posted in the front of the room. Give them a copy of the parent letter provided in the "Parent Take-Home Letter" attachment.

SUPPLIES and PREPARATION for Dalit Lesson

Bracelets

Make bracelets out of colored string or yarn, or buy pre-made ones from a store like US Toy or Oriental Trading. US Toy (www.ustoy.com) calls them "friendship bracelets." Divide the pack of 144 by color and then count each color. Decide which color has about the right number for 25 percent of the kids who you expect to be attending.

Dirty Water Simulation

Clean stock pot or bucket

Ladle with a hooked handle, if possible, so the ladle can hook on the side of the container

If the ladle doesn't have a hook, put a cheap-looking plate to lay it on next to the container

Vinegar- cheap white vinegar is fine

Food coloring to make the water look brown or black

Clear glass or plastic pitcher
Clear plastic cups for $\frac{1}{4}$ of the children you expect
Little simple (not cute) bathroom paper cups
Water for pot and pitcher, and extra faucet nearby to refill pitcher if it gets empty

Floor Puzzles

Two large floor puzzles are suggested for a group activity in the lesson. By taping together three large pieces of poster board using clear packing tape, you can make your own puzzle. Use bold or black markers to write out a Bible verse from the lesson. Then cut it into pieces at various angles to create your own puzzle. Make two of these using a different verse for each. Put a number 1 on the back of all the pieces from one puzzle, and a number two on those of the second puzzle, so that the pieces can be sorted if they become mixed together.

If you would rather purchase puzzles for this lesson, www.sensoryedge.com has a 33 piece world map puzzle for \$9.95, and a round 48 piece floor puzzle called Children Around the World for \$11.95 can be found by doing a search online. Both are excellent. One of each would be ideal. Let the Dalit kids have the one that looks the most difficult of the two. Be sure to leave enough time to order and receive it before your event if you decide to buy one pre-made off the internet. This kind of puzzle is great to have as a resource.

World Map

A map of the world can be found at any teacher supply store. Wal-Mart carries a 5 x 7' colorful fabric map at many of their large stores. Sew a hem around the edges with your machine, and this durable and washable map can be used in countless ways for geography and prayer activities. There are world map shower curtains available at many stores which are excellent to use with children. They are easy to wipe off and are large enough for the children to be able to find the countries.

The 10/40 Window

This is a term used to describe the area of the world where the largest concentration of people live, and also is the place where the gospel is least known by many of the people who live within this "window." It is between the 10th and 40th degrees of latitude on the map and spans across North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Southeast Asia. Within this area of the world are countries like India, China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the former Soviet Union. This part of the world is the focus of many Christians who want to see all the people groups and nations have an opportunity to hear the good news of the gospel. Most of the least reached people groups live in the 10/40 Window. A picture of a Wal-Mart map showing the 10/40 Window is included in the attachment "The Dalit Lesson in Pictures." More information can be found at www.takeitglobal.org.

Children At Risk Issues Signs

See "Children at Risk Signs to Print" attachment. Print and post for children to see when sharing these statistics.

Dalit Word Search

See “Dalit Word Search” attachment. A good activity for before or after the lesson, with words related to the Dalit people and India. Answers are found on the “Dalit Word Search Answer Key” attachment.

Global Cookie Demonstration

Use “Global Cookie Demo Directions” and “Global Cookie Demo Continent Signs for Print” attachments

A package of animal cookies from the grocery store, enough for each child you expect to have at least one

A bowl to put the cookies in

A printout of the Global Cookies

Continent signs- print in color on white cardstock or paper

World Population and Food Distribution Chart

Print in color and cut out the pictures of the people and cookies provided if you expect a group smaller than 15 kids

Tape to hang up the continent signs, or these can be held by the kids

Bible Verses

See “Bible Verses to Print” attachment. These are provided in an attachment formatted to fit on 8 ½ x 11” paper or cardstock. Putting them into a protective sleeve will help them stay clean and reusable.

Dalit Photos

These are available from Partners International upon request and can be emailed or printed and mailed. Photos are of Dalit children at Bible Faith Mission’s English medium school.

Toys and Games

Bring games from home or use games you have at church. Some suggestions are, checkers, cards, Sorry, table puzzles, jacks, educational games, Mancala, coloring or puzzle books with crayons or markers. The idea is to give the impression of opulence. You want them to plenty to choose from.

Supplies for Garbage Dump Simulation

A large sheet or a plastic tarp (available at Wal-Mart for less than \$2) to place all this on beforehand

String, yarn- any color, varying lengths

Plastic straws

Q Tips

Paper clips

Pieces of wadded up tin foil

Empty boxes of various sizes

Crumpled up sections of newspaper

Pieces of paper towel

Empty paper towel or toilet paper tubes

Baby food jars or other jars
Tongue depressors
Plastic animals
Little bells
Crumpled pieces of recycled paper
Paper cups
Plastic wrap
Wrinkled wax paper
Buttons or beads
Empty 2 liter bottles

You get the idea. Your collection should be made up of things that are not sharp or dirty that the children can be creative with. This list is just to get you started thinking. You could include some of these, all of these, or none of these, and instead use other things you have around. (See the picture in “The Dalit Lesson in Pictures” attachment.)

Pictures of Dumps

You can find these online and show them on a power point, or print them out to show the children what a dump really looks like, as you ask them to imagine the smells and dangers there.

Prayer

Optional: A large piece of paper taped onto a white board or wall and markers for the kids to use to write prayers for the Dalits based on the prayer requests being suggested by the group. It is an eye opener for adults and teachers to see the prayers of kids written.

Parent Letter

See “Parent Take-Home Letter” attachment. Read and customize it for your group. It would be fantastic to include an invitation for children and their families give through the *Harvest of Hope* Gift Catalog. This could follow this program, or may need to be at another time. This letter will help parents reinforce what has been taught in this lesson and give their child an opportunity to “debrief” about the Dalit simulation, and share what they learned. It is key to give them a few tangible things they can do in response.

Photos of This Lesson Being Done

See “The Dalit Lesson in Pictures” attachment.