

June 2017

Dear Church Partners,

In this packet are four free lessons for your use! My hope is that you will find this resource helpful for you as you interpret the “Change for Children” campaign to the young people of your church. While written primarily for a Children’s Sermon format, these object lessons could be used in a Sunday School setting, youth group, or even as sermon illustrations!

In my twenty years in children and youth ministry, the object lessons I have used for children’s sermon times have been a very effective way of communicating the truth of God’s Word. Many of the adults in the congregation would tell me they preferred my children’s sermons to my “regular” sermons! Jesus taught in object lessons and word pictures, too, so it should be no surprise to us that this method is highly effective—surely Jesus knew what he was doing and set an example for us to follow!

These lessons have been carefully crafted around themes of change, the impact of the gospel in our hearts and lives, and the ways in which your church can connect to the ministry of Intermountain. I hope this resource blesses you, saves you time in preparation, and makes your workload a little lighter. It is my hope that our partnership will truly be a partnership of mutual benefit. As Intermountain’s chaplain, I want to be a resource to you and an encouragement in your work with children and families.

To that end, we have other resources at our web site: www.intermountainministry.org. It has regular posts about what we’ve been up to in ministry with the children in residence as well as have an ever expanding library of resources free for your use. There will be lessons like the ones contained in this packet, as well as game ideas, youth ministry talks, sermons and sermon outlines, bulletin and newsletter “filler,” and worship resources like sample calls to worship and pastoral prayers. I update content regularly, so I’d encourage you to check back regularly. Any feedback or requests for specific types of resources or content are also welcome any time.

So, enjoy these four lessons for now, and let me know what you think. I’d love to hear from you and build a stronger relationship between my chaplain’s ministry at Intermountain and the good work you are doing in your church and community.

Blessings,



Chris Haughee, Chaplain

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Week 1: “Each one matters”

Objects needed: 2 strings of Christmas mini-lights—one working, one not. Cans/jars for each of the children to collect their coins for “Change for Children.”

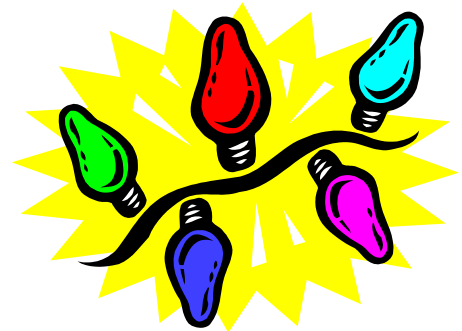
Theme/Main Idea: Just as having one broken or missing bulb can affect the whole string of Christmas lights, the whole church is affected when there are people who are broken or hurting. If we ignore those who are hurting and need help, we will shine less brightly!

Presentation:

“Think back to Christmas time. Do you know what one of the most frustrating things for me at Christmastime is? No. It’s not when someone eats the last of my favorite cookies and all that are left are the dry coconut ones... but that *is* pretty frustrating. No. It’s not when I don’t get what I really wanted as a present. No. It’s not busy stores and long lines or grumpy people... no, one of the most frustrating things for me is here in this box.

[pull string of lights out of box]

IF... that is IF... If I can happen to untangle all my Christmas lights and get them up, the MOST frustrating thing is when a bulb is broken or burnt out and the whole string of lights doesn’t work because of it! Arg! That is SO frustrating, right? What can we do if one of these bulbs is broken or burnt out? How do we fix it?



[wait for children’s responses]

Those are all things we COULD do. When I am really frustrated, I am tempted to give up. I want to throw the whole thing away and ignore the problem. But, then what do I miss out on? For one burnt or broken bulb that I have decided isn’t worth my trouble to fix, I have missed out on the beauty of all the others that want to shine!

Sometimes God’s people are like this string of lights. The thing is, there is a lot more than just one or two broken or burnt out bulbs around here! We are *each* hurting a little. We can get frustrated too. But thankfully, God doesn’t get frustrated and angry at us the way I get angry at

a string of lights that don't work properly. God is in the fixing, healing, and repairing business. And, he asks that, like Him, we enter that business too!

Today you will each get a can that says, 'Change for Children.' You'll have a chance to take these home and fill them up each week with the loose change you find around the house, or maybe with a bit of your allowance money. This money goes to Intermountain, where God is using the gifts of many people to help those children and families that need a special touch of God's grace and healing power. They may feel a bit like a broken or burnt out bulb. Maybe they have lost a bit of the hope that someday they can shine again like other children or families they see. That's where your gifts and your prayers can make a big difference. Help be part of the change for these children.

Will you pray with me?

God, we thank you that each and every one of us matters. When one of your children hurts, we all share in that hurt. Thank you for not getting frustrated at our brokenness and for loving us just where we are. We want to shine for you, and we want to help the children and families of Intermountain shine as well. Bless our efforts, and bless our Change for Children cans, that as we fill them with our gifts, You might fill us with your love, grace, and peace. Amen."

Key Text: "LORD, you are my lamp. You bring light into my darkness." –2 Sam. 22:29 (NIRV)

Week 2: “Getting Your Hands Dirty”

Objects needed: At minimum, an oil filter. If possible, the other items needed for an oil change (drip pan, oil, air filter, rags, wrench, etc.)

Theme/Main Idea: Change can get messy. Sometimes we avoid changing so we don’t have to get our hands dirty, literally or figuratively. Just like our car would run VERY poorly if we never changed the oil, sometimes our hearts need to change before we will understand our responsibility to God and others properly.



Presentation:

“Has anyone here ever helped mommy or daddy change the oil on their car? No? How about this... has anyone here ever gone with mommy or daddy to the car dealership or store to get the oil changed? Yes? No? Okay... when let me tell you just a little about why a car needs to have its oil changed.

[Take out items... oil filter, air filter, etc.]

These are some of the things you might need if you wanted to change your oil in your car. The oil in your car’s engine helps it run smoothly and run the way it should. But, every few months you need to change that oil... flushing out the bad oil, replacing the filter that has gotten gunked up, and putting in new, fresh oil! This helps your car run better and last longer.

Can anyone here guess what might happen if you didn’t change you oil... ever?

[wait for responses]

Yes, you car wouldn’t run well. In fact, if you kept on going and driving your car for a long, long time without replacing the oil, you could break your car really bad! You might even ruin the engine and have to get a whole new car! Wow... that would be a bummer, right?!

So, obviously, the answer is to not let it get to that point. The answer is to change the oil and to keep changing it regularly. But, you know why some people don't? Yes... not knowing how might be part of the reason. Forgetfulness? Yes, that might have something to do with it. What if I told you that I didn't want to change the oil in my car because it's yucky and dirty? And, I don't really like to get my hands dirty. Changing the oil is messy work... and, I'd rather not do it!

Why are you looking at me that way? Do you think I am being silly? Well, maybe I am a little bit. But, the silliness of not changing the oil in my car is minor compared to the silliness of some of us when it comes to not wanting to do the 'dirty work' required to change our heart, our attitudes, and our involvement in other people's lives that really need our help.

How are you doing at home with your Change for Children cans? Have you got any money in them yet? I'd be willing to guess that a few of us haven't even started yet, even though we've had a week since last Sunday. We're putting off getting started because we think there is plenty of time. Or, maybe we took a can out of guilt last Sunday and we don't really want to do this whole collecting of change thing. I get it... I really do!



Change is messy. Thinking about getting involved in helping hurting children and families is messy. The problem seems so big that maybe our few prayers and handful of coins doesn't seem worth it. But, let me encourage you... the investment of just a little time to pray, just a few coins here and there... well, it's a great way to get involved as a start. Let yourself experience the joy of knowing that getting your hands just a LITTLE dirty, getting involved with Intermountain... well, knowing the joy that comes from being a part of the healing and hope that children and their families experience when they are changed by your gifts. When you do that, you just may find that like my car, your engine runs a little smoother and you feel a little better as you see the change that it brings in your life, as well.

Let's pray:

God, thank you for the change you have brought to each of our lives. Thank you for helping our souls run smoothly as we know your peace and joy. We know that change can sometimes be messy, but it is worth it when that change brings us closer to You and to others. Help us grow in

love and joy by joining in the work of your Spirit as it heals families and children through Intermountain's service to those that need extra help. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Key Text: From Matthew 21:28-31

The Story of the Two Sons

²⁸ "What do you think about this? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

²⁹ "'I will not,' the son answered. But later **he changed** his mind and went.

³⁰ "Then the father went to the other son. He said the same thing. The son answered, 'I will, sir.' But he did not go.

³¹ "Which of the two sons did what his father wanted?"

"The first," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "What I'm about to tell you is true. Tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² John came to show you the right way to live. And you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. You saw this. But even then you did not turn away from your sins and believe him.

Optional ending: Sing first 2 lines of "Change My Heart, O God" with children as closing prayer

"Change my heart, O God, make it ever true. Change my heart, O God, let me be like You..."

Week 3: “Bringing the right kind of change”

Objects needed: Suitcase or travel bag with varied items in it, appropriate for different climates. Suggested for this lesson: a swimsuit, sunglasses, and wide-brimmed hat for a sunny destination; and, a heavy winter coat, ski goggles, gloves, etc. for skiing trip.

Theme/Main Idea: Where I am going determines the type of ‘change’ I will need to make. If I am headed somewhere cold and I only have summer clothes, I will not have a good time. In our walk with Jesus, knowing where we want to go is a great first step. Then, we need to prepare for our arrival at that destination.

Presentation:

“Today, let’s pretend I am going on a trip. I have my suitcase here, and I have packed it full of things I figure I might need. Let’s see if you can guess where I am going based on what I have packed here.

[suggestion: take items out of the suitcase one by one, have the children name them, and then set them aside... the bigger the ‘production’ you make out of this activity, the more fun the children will have, and the more they will get into the activity!]



So, I have my swim shorts and some sunglasses, and I have my winter coat and gloves... all sorts of things. Where do you think I am going on my trip?

[wait for children to guess... their answers should vary a bit, based on which items they focus on. If the children need some prompting, hold up items and ask them what they are used for, and what kind of trip or destination that might suggest]

Hmmm... it seems there is a little confusion here. I have all sorts of things packed, and they don’t all seem to go together. I wouldn’t wear my winter coat and gloves at the beach, and it would be CRAZY to wear my swimsuit on the ski hill in the mountains with snow! Would it surprise you at all if I told you that I wasn’t really sure where I was going when I packed my suitcase? No... I am guessing you can see how we ended up with a full suitcase and with me as a pretty confused traveler!

Did you know that this same sort of confusion can happen in our lives when we try to be the people God wants us to be? The Bible talks about living for God as a type of trip, too—a journey, if you will. Sometimes you might hear people talk about walking with Jesus every day. Have you heard people talk like that around here? Is that ever a little confusing to you? Yeah, me too, sometimes. Can I help you think about that just for a few minutes?

Our trip with Jesus is going somewhere, and it's more than just thinking about heaven someday. It's a trip that is supposed to be taking us away from selfishness and putting ourselves first in every decision to thinking about what God wants us to do, how Jesus would have us treat others, and to get to the place where we reflect God's character to others in our lives.

The things we pack for this journey are a little different than the things I put in my suitcase. The Bible talks about putting on certain characteristics, certain ways of being, kinda like we put on clothes! If you think about, each day, putting on kindness and patience—just to name two things—well, it will change the way you treat others! You'll be a few steps further down the road on your journey towards showing you are God's kid in each and every thing you do! That would be awesome, right? Of course it would be!



We're on our third week of thinking about Intermountain and the families and kids that are being helped through their work each and every day. Hopefully you are filling up your change for children cans that we gave out two Sundays ago... You are? Great! Well, let me close out our time this morning telling you a little about the way our message today connects with the work Intermountain is doing.

Each and every person that comes to Intermountain comes with a destination in mind—a place where they and their family is healthier, happier, stronger, and more filled with hope for a bright future. The work they do with counselors, teachers, aids, the chaplain, the nurses, the therapists, and the staff all help them to pack the right things in their suitcase to make that journey.

Some things might have to be removed from their suitcase because, although they are helpful for the place they are at now, they aren't going to work so well in the place they want to be. Just like a winter coat and gloves would look out of place at the beach, some of the ways these children and families have 'clothed' themselves are going to look out of place in that hope-filled future they are heading towards. Your prayers and your gifts are helping them get the right things in their suitcase. Thank you for helping make a change for children.

Let's pray:

Jesus, help us think about where we are headed as your children—away from stubborn selfishness towards joyful obedience to your call to love others as we love ourselves. Thank you for the chance to participate in your healing work at Intermountain. Bless our efforts and renew our hearts to see the change we can bring when we let You change our hearts. In your name we pray, Amen."

Key Text: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." –Colossians 3:12 (NIV)

Week 4: “100-fold” —Collection day for Change for Children!

Objects needed: a few loose pennies or coins, and a jar FULL of pennies or coins

Theme/Main Idea: By itself, a penny isn’t worth very much. But lots of pennies together can buy much more! Small gifts can seem insignificant alone, but together many small gifts can be used by God to make a huge difference.

Presentation:

“I see you have brought your jars back with you today! That’s great! I can hear the satisfying sound of clinking coins being moved around in your jars. To help us focus during this time, however, why don’t we pass all those jars to me...

[Take a moment to collect the jars from the children, thanking each of them]

Wow! Look at all this... fantastic! And, this leads us right into what I wanted to share with you today.

[hold up a penny]

What is this? Right! It’s a penny. What can you buy with a penny these days? Anything? No, not really... not anymore. When I was a child, you could still buy candy for a penny in the store... now, well, it costs at least a quarter, right? That’s 25 pennies! Boy, how things have changed.

A penny isn’t worth much. We know that. And, sometimes we might feel like what we are doing for God isn’t worth much either. No one seems to notice it, or nothing seems to change. Sometimes we might think... ‘Why bother?!’

Well, though a penny by itself isn’t worth much... let’s take a look at what we have here... [hold up your jar of pennies, as well as some of the jars the children have brought in] We’ve got lots of pennies and other coins here! Lots of little coins making one big collection! Wow! You guys are amazing... great job!



All together, we are making a difference. That's why it's important to remember that our efforts are not isolated. We are doing what we do for Jesus' sake alongside many others that also love Jesus. Our Change for Children jars will join those from many other churches and many other families. Added up, it will make a big difference. And there is something more important that has happened here... do you know what it is?

You know how lonely you can feel sometimes when you don't think anyone else notices you or what you are going through? Yeah... it's not a good feeling, is it? Well, the families and kids at Intermountain can sometimes feel the same way. It's a lonely feeling to be working through hard stuff and not think that anyone else notices or cares. That's why what we have done over the last 4 weeks makes such a big difference... we have noticed. We have cared. We have prayed and we have gotten involved. These children and families know that they are not alone in their struggle and they can be encouraged by our prayers. You have done that. You have been used by God to bring hope and healing.

Thank you. Today makes my heart very happy, and I can see it makes you happy, too. Let's pray and thank God for this opportunity we have been given to take all our gifts and prayers and add them to the amazing work that He is doing at Intermountain...

God, take our small gifts and multiply them many times. Not for our sake, but for yours, and for the sake of the families and children at Intermountain. As we have been blessed, we seek to be a blessing. As you have encouraged our hearts, we pray that our efforts and our gifts would encourage others. In Jesus name, Amen."

Key Text: "Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." –Matthew 13:8 (NIV)