

# B



## Teaching Leaflet

### Understanding Poverty Lesson Two: Not Everyone Deserves Our Help

#### “Means Tests Activity”

The following activity may be useful to help develop participants' understanding of means tests and how they affect people seeking assistance. As the church, it is important for us to remember that we are called to help everyone in need in whatever way we can.

#### Supplies

6 slips of different colored paper (or you can use M&Ms for children/youth) for each person  
Tickets (or stickers for children/youth)

#### Directions

Each color of paper (or color of M&M) represents a different resource (job, income level, children, shelter, Social Security card, Birth Certificate, health problem, education, etc.). Each paper should be labeled on one side with the resource it represents (cafeteria worker, \$22,000 a year, 3 children, living in a friend's house, no driver's license, diabetes, GED, etc.). If you are using M&Ms, you should have a chart ready that explains what each color represents.

1. Set up 3 stations around the room (2 “agencies” and 1 “church”) manned by an adult or older youth. Each of the agencies will have a set of qualifications a person must meet (a certain income level, number of children, insurance, etc.) to receive help. The church will have no qualifications.
2. Have each participant choose 6 slips of paper of different colors (or M&Ms) without knowing what the colors mean.
3. Tell the participants to visit each station and ask for help.
4. If the participant meets the qualifications/means test, they are given a ticket/sticker that represents some resource (additional income, food, an educational opportunity, a service, etc.). If they do not, they are sent on their way to the next station.

This activity may seem frustrating at times for the participants – having to wait in line, potentially not receiving anything, potentially not receiving enough. However, it demonstrates the point that it can be much more difficult to get help than we sometimes think. This activity is a great way to get the group engaged in discussion, especially about whether or not asking for help is work and the benefits and drawbacks of means testing.

#### Discussion Questions

For Youth or Adults:

1. What resources did you possess originally? What resources do you have now that you have visited each station?
2. What resources do you still need? What are other ways you could get more resources?
3. What about the qualifications seemed fair and what seemed unfair?
4. Why do agencies, ministries, or the government have eligibility requirements, qualifications, or means tests for people seeking their resources?

**B**

5. How did you feel as you walked around the room seeking help?
6. Imagine if each of these stations were miles (or even cities) apart. What would your day have looked like trying to receive help?
7. What resources would you need to be able to go to each of these agencies and churches to receive help?



For Children:

1. What resources did you have at the beginning?
2. What resources were you able to receive from the agencies or from the church?
3. What resources do you still need?
4. How hard was it to get the help you needed?
5. How did it feel to have to ask for help?
6. What did it feel like when you couldn't get help?
7. Which stations were you able to get help at? What did you have to have in order to get that help?
8. At which station did your M&Ms not matter in order to get help? Why do you think you could get help there with any color M&M?