

WEEK SIX



Austin Gutwein
(left) at a Hoops
of Hope event.

David Kadlubowski / Genesis Photos 2006

Week 6:

BASED ON

THE HOLE IN OUR GOSPEL: REPAIRING THE HOLE



FACT

As many as 5 million people die every year—one child every 15 seconds—of water-related illnesses. The lack of clean water causes millions of needless child deaths. Yet the cost to bring clean water to one person costs only *one dollar per year!* When you realize that a gift as small as a dollar can save a life, it is hard to argue that you're not wealthy enough to make a difference. (*The Hole in Our Gospel*, pp. 137 and 138)

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SCRIPTURE | MARK 6:30-44

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

They said to him, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.



HOOPS OF HOPE

Excerpt from The Hole in Our Gospel by Rich Stearns

Austin Gutwein was just 9 when he learned about children in Africa who had become orphaned because of AIDS. Most adults would laugh at the idea of a 9-year-old tackling the global AIDS pandemic, but Austin believed he could do something—that he had a “talent” that God could use. Austin described his journey in this letter, found on the Hoops of Hope Web site:

In the spring of 2004, I watched a video that showed children who had lost their parents to a disease called AIDS. After watching the video, I realized these kids weren’t any different from me except they were suffering. I felt God calling me to do something to help them. I decided to shoot free throws and on World AIDS Day, 2004, I shot 2,057 free throws to represent the 2,057 kids who would be orphaned

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during my day at school. People sponsored me and we were able to raise almost \$3,000. That year, the money was used by World Vision to provide hope to eight orphan children.

From that year forward, thousands of people have joined me in a basketball shoot-a-thon called Hoops of Hope. By doing something as simple as shooting free throws, Hoops of Hope participants have raised over \$500,000. The children left behind by AIDS now have access to food, clothing, shelter, a new school and finally, a medical testing facility.

Last year, our goal was to raise \$150,000 to build a medical testing lab in Sinazongwe, Zambia. This lab will enable medical staff to test parents for HIV and AIDS prior to administering medication for the disease. The medication will allow parents suffering from HIV and AIDS to prolong their life and keep their children from becoming among the 15 million children already orphaned by this disease.

Not only did Hoops of Hope participants raise enough money to fund the building of the lab, they also supplied the lab with 1,000 medical caregiver kits. This will allow those caring for HIV and AIDS infected moms and dads to have the basic supplies they need. We also were able to furnish the 2006 Johnathan Sim Legacy School.

In 2008, we would like to build a second medical lab in Tivatchiyanda, Zambia (also the site of the 2006 Johnathan Sim Legacy School), provide caregiver kits and provide bicycles for caregivers to ride. The lab combined with caregiver kits and bicycles will help to keep parents healthier and alive longer so they can provide for their children.

I hope you'll join us by participating or sponsoring a participant. It's an awesome event that will leave an impact not only on the lives of the kids we're helping, but on yours as well.

*In Him,
Austin*

Today, Austin has thousands of kids in 200 different locations doing “Hoops of Hope” in most of the 50 states and in other countries around the world. His cumulative fund-raising is approaching \$1 million. Think of it: a million bucks—for shooting hoops! Talk about using your talents to change the world!
(pp. 265–266)



MEDITATIONS

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead (p. 241)

“Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.”

—Henry Van Dyke (p. 257)

“What are you going to do about it? That was the question that confronted Bob Pierce that day in 1948, when he was met head-on with the desperate plight of one child. And in one moment he learned

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something groundbreaking about the gospel that he so freely preached: The *whole* gospel involves more than preaching; it also means caring about the *whole person* and finding ways to meet that individual's needs. When we look around our world and see children beaten and crying, huddling in their broken-down houses, aren't we confronted with the very same question that challenged Bob Pierce? For him, it was life-changing. He wasn't a wealthy man; he was just a poor evangelist who had barely raised enough money to go to Asia in the first place. The fact that he had only five dollars in his pocket at the end tells you how little he had. But Pierce had had an encounter with God, and nothing for him was ever the same again."

—Rich Stearns (pp. 248–249)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. You have probably heard the story of the feeding of the 5,000 many times, but reread it and look for new insights. What did Jesus say to the disciples when they panicked about how they would feed the large group of people? Imagine that Jesus is asking you the same question, "How many loaves do you have?" How would you respond if God asked how much you have to give?
2. Name one thing you have to offer others in terms of "time, treasures, and talents." How could you use these things to benefit the kingdom?
3. Be specific in thinking of a time in which you did nothing because you felt unqualified or lacked resources. Share that experience. During that period, did you focus on what you had or what you did not have? What difference might it have made if you had considered yourself worthy despite what you lack?
4. What did Austin Gutwein have to offer? Does it surprise you that a young boy could raise close to a million dollars to fight HIV and AIDS in less than five years? When Austin watched the video about AIDS, what do you imagine he was focusing on? What did you learn from reading Austin's story?
5. Do you think Margaret Mead is correct in her opinion of the power of small groups of committed citizens? Give some examples in which this is true.
6. Henry Van Dyke reminds us to use that which we already have. What talents do you possess that you have been timid to use because they may not be as "good as the other birds"?
7. Rich talks about a dilemma facing Bob Pierce (founder of WorldVision) in 1948 when a little girl was brought to him after being beat up and kicked out of her home for becoming a Christian. The woman, who had no room to take in another child, demanded, "What are you going to do about it?" He gave her the only money he had, five dollars, and promised to send more. What would you have done in that same situation? When you hear about the plight of children around the world, do you ever feel that God is asking you, "What are you going to do about it?" What is your response to this question?

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TAKE ACTION

This week, answer the question, “How many loaves do you have?” What talents, treasure, or time do you have to offer? Take a piece of paper and write down the three T’s listed above in separate columns.

For “Talents,” make a list of any talents you possess. Talents are not limited to artistic and athletic abilities; they are simply traits that make you unique. Rich explains, “When considering our talents, we need to consider all of the above—our abilities, personalities, passions, pursuits, knowledge, experiences, and our relationships and networks. These things are all resources we possess than can be used in one way or another” (p. 264). Spiritual gifts should also be considered when thinking of talents you have to offer. Read Romans 12:6–10 and 1 Corinthians 12:1–12, and reflect on the spiritual gifts you may have.

For “Time,” think about how you spend your time each day. Time is often not considered the most valuable resource in kingdom work, but it can be a powerful thing. Taking time to listen to someone or to encourage a child can have a life-changing impact. You can affirm people’s value by spending quality time with them and letting them know that they are important. Think about all the ways you waste time each day (watching TV, strolling through malls, and so on) and write down a number of these things. Decide to take some of that time and use it doing good. Maybe you can tutor students, become an advocate for a child in the court system, or simply call someone you know who needs a friend. Time is valuable, and you may never know the long-lasting impact your time spent with another person may have.

Finally, think about the “Treasure” you possess. In times of economic uncertainty, it is unlikely you will have lots of extra money to give away. However, the truth is that if your income is \$25,000 a year, you are wealthier than 90 percent of the world’s population! If you make \$50,000 per year, you are wealthier than 99 percent of the world (p. 215)! So the question is, “How does God want you to use your wealth?” Look toward the areas that you are passionate about and find an organization, person, or cause that you want to support. Write down the name of the organization, person, or cause and contact them if you have any questions regarding financial needs and how donations are spent. Set aside a certain amount of money each month to give toward the cause you have chosen.



CHALLENGE

Put the piece of paper on which you have written your three T’s, in a visible place so you will be reminded to give your talents, time, and treasure for building up the kingdom.

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SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Luke 6:46–48
- Luke 17:21
- Nehemiah 1:3–4
- 2 Corinthians 4:7
- Matthew 13:31–32



PRAYER:

Thank God for the journey He has taken you on through this study. Pray for the courage to use your talents, time, and treasure in service of His kingdom. Thank God for His promise to never leave you nor forsake you and let that be your strength. This may be a time in which you commit or recommit your life to Christ and surrender your will to His.



STEPS TOWARD TRANSFORMATION

Now that you've concluded this study, here are some next steps for continuing the transformation.

- Learn more about issues affecting the poor. Go online to research world poverty and stay updated on global affairs.
- Go to www.theholeinourgospel.com and share your experiences of participating in this study. You can also find inspiration to do more in the “Things You Can Do” section or in the blog or forum in “The Buzz.”
- Teach your children or young relatives about being compassionate global citizens. Find plenty of tools (including free materials) at World Vision Resources' Web site, www.worldvisionresources.com.