

GENERATE HEALTHY DISCUSSIONS

PAPER CLIPS

Changing the world... one clip at a time.

In 1998, the children of Whitwell Middle School in the tiny, rural town of Whitwell, Tennessee, took on an inspiring project. This project was to collect one paper clip for each of the 6 million Jews killed during the Holocaust and was launched out of their principal's desire to help her students open their eyes to the diversity of the world beyond their insulated valley. What happened would change the students, their teachers, their families and the entire town forever... and eventually open hearts and minds around the world.

PROGRAMMING SUGGESTIONS

- Invite a local Holocaust survivor's group or a community member who is familiar with the history of the Holocaust to meet with your congregation and share their stories and share their experience of watching the film.
- Create a butterfly memorial for your organization. Have members create a butterfly in memory of someone they know who was hurt or killed by an act of hate or violence and display the butterflies on a bulletin board or around the building.
- Since the Paper Clips Project was started as a project about tolerance and diversity, create a project for your community that encourages the same messages.
- The film featured a young woman who lost her grandparents and other family members in the Holocaust. Have your members share memories of their grandparents and collect stories about their life and experiences to pass on to future generations.



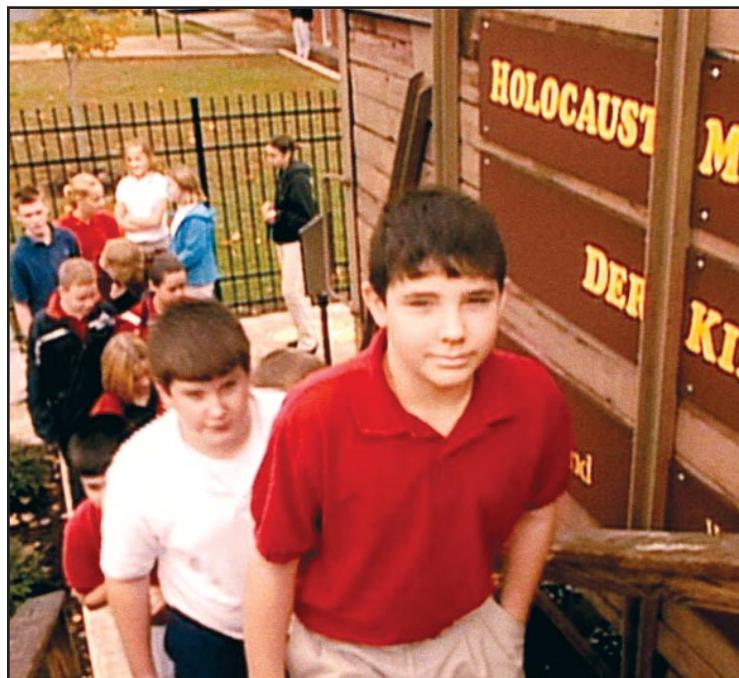
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Principal Hooper describes Whitwell as a depressed community; what does that mean? How does the community you grow up in affect you as an adult?
2. Whitwell Middle School is a community of white Protestant students with 5 black students and 1 Hispanic student. What is the population of your community like? How has diversity shaped your life experiences?
3. Why is the history of the paper clip significant? What other symbols or signs were significant during the Holocaust?
4. Peter and Dagmar Schroeder came to help the students at the request of their friend, a Holocaust survivor. Many of the students had never met a German person, yet they were learning about the German people who killed the Jews. How do you think this affected their view of German people?
5. Did Peter and Dagmar understand this before meeting the students? Do you think the students' views of German people were changed by meeting Peter and Dagmar?
5. After the Paper Clips Project was profiled in the Washington Post and on NBC Nightly News, the number of paper clips rose significantly. During WWII, the media was used to promote propaganda. What role do the media play in shaping our world? In shaping religion?
6. The students received a suitcase from Germany with letters from students to Anne Frank apologizing to her. Mr. Smith talked about his roommate in college and how he would use racial slurs around him without realizing that those words might hurt him. What words do you use without thinking of how those words might hurt someone around you? Why do you still use them?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED):

7. One of the survivors mentioned that there are still many people who do not believe the Holocaust actually happened. Do you know anyone who believes this way? How does that make you feel?
8. Mr. Smith stated that one of the most important lessons the students should learn from this project is to take the lessons of love and tolerance and teach them to others. How can you teach love and tolerance in the community?
9. Peter Schroeder said that the railcar would serve as a symbol, that symbols can change the world and that symbols are sometimes all we have to hold on to. What did he mean by that? What kind of symbol is the railcar? What symbols have meaning in both your life and religion? Can a symbol be negative?
10. How did you feel seeing the finished memorial? Did the paperclips serve as an effective metaphor for all of the people killed during the Holocaust?
11. The project started with the goal of collecting 6 million paper clips, one for each Jewish person killed during the Holocaust. In the end, they put 11 million paper clips into the railcar to include the homosexuals, gypsies and Jehovah's Witnesses who were also killed. Why do you think these groups were not part of the original project? Were members of these groups treated differently than the Jewish during the Holocaust?
12. Principle Hooper said that when you touch the paper clips, you can feel the souls of those they represent. When Peter Schroeder picked up a handful of paper clips, he caressed them gently and set them down softly on the pile of paper clips. Why did he do that? Do you think the souls of those lost are felt in the paper clips? What about the railcar? Do you think you would hear their voices if you visited the memorial?



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13. What did the teachers learn from their students during this project?
14. There is a sign inside the memorial that states: "As you leave this memorial, ask yourself: 'What can I do to spread the message of love and tolerance these children have demonstrated with this memorial?'" What can you do?

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PAPERCLIPS PROJECT AND MOVIE AND HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED VISIT:

<http://www.marionschools.org/holocaust/> and <http://www.paperclipsmovie.com>.