

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK: VILIA'S STORY

SESSION OUTLINE

This is a quick session to let your youth group learn a little about what Christian Aid's partners are doing to help the people of Haiti when natural disasters strike.

It includes:

- a story about Vilia, whose home was destroyed by an enormous earthquake
- a short bible study reflecting on Vilia's actions to help others
- a suggested Christian Aid Week fundraising activity, to enable poor communities in Haiti to prepare for and recover from natural disasters.

MEET VILIA

Read the story below then watch this film:

<https://youtu.be/3KuCEPMnxkM>

Vilia lives with her husband and seven children in Torbeck, Haiti. During Haiti's biggest earthquake for more than a hundred years, their house was destroyed and they were left homeless. Imagine that. No house. No possessions. Just the clothes on their backs.

Christian Aid's partner KORAL reached out to help. They built Vilia and her family a new home - safe, stable and strong enough to stand up to natural disasters like earthquakes. In fact, it was so strong that when Hurricane Matthew struck in 2016, her house was the only thing left standing in the area. As the hurricane raged on, one by one Vilia's neighbours ran to her house for shelter. By the end of the night, there were 54 more people sheltering in it.

54 people who might not be alive today if not for Vilia's generosity and grace.

She shared her food. She shared her home. She refused to huddle away in a corner, safe and sound with her family, as the hurricane smashed through her neighbourhood and destroyed everything around them.

She stepped up and did something.

DISCUSSION & BIBLE STUDY

Vilia's story is an example of how people can be strong in the face of difficulty.

- What does it mean to be strong?
- What are the different ways that people show strength?
- What would you do if your house was the only safe place during an emergency?
- Would you have the courage to open your doors to your neighbours?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-10

How are Vilia's actions like those described in the passage?

What might it be like to often be forced to consider life and death because of natural disasters in the country where you live?

We are called to be strong, to not let setbacks - big or small - stop us from helping others. The life of Jesus should be apparent, shining through, in our actions.

Have a think: where in our lives can we be like Vilia and help those around us.

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITY: THE SPONSORED SQUEEZE

In all, 54 people sheltered in Vilia's little house on the night the hurricane struck. People must have been crammed into every corner. It must have been very uncomfortable. But the alternative – staying outside at the mercy of the hurricane – was far worse.

SMALLEST SPACE

What is the smallest space in your church that your youth group could fit into? Under a pew? In a cupboard?

This challenge is to get sponsorship for squeezing the most people into the smallest space possible.

To get rest of your church involved do your challenge during Christian Aid Week Sunday service - ask the congregation to sponsor you for staying squeezed in your tiny space for the duration of a church service.

SHARED SPACE

The people that sheltered in Vilia's house had to stay in that space together for a long time without leaving.

This challenge is to get sponsorship for spending a whole day and night in a space the same size as Vilia's house without leaving the edges (except to use the toilet!)

Vilia's house is 7m X 6m. Measure the space out on the floor with masking tape and set a start and end time for your challenge.

NOTES FOR LEADERS:

As youth leader, please help your group plan for the sponsored squeeze. Get them thinking about:

- a good place to hold the activity
- a time and date that suits everyone
- how to get the rest of the church involved and sponsoring them - for example, a poster and a five-minute talk during the church service to share Vilia's story.

Make sure you get a photo of your sponsored squeeze to share with us on Facebook or Twitter using hashtag #CAWsqueeze.

Most importantly, remember to be careful when squeezing people into a small space and make sure everyone taking part is happy to do so.

Doing something like this is fun for us, but imagine what it would be like to have no choice about very cramped, uncomfortable conditions? To be unsure whether you'd even have a house to go back to once the emergency was over? We'll spend any money you raise on helping other people in Vilia's community. Here are some of the things it can buy:

£210 is enough to teach a local builder how to build houses as strong and stable as Vilia's for others in the community

£50 would buy basic building tools – such as hammers and saws.

£25 would buy a hygiene kit to help prevent deadly diseases such as cholera spreading after a disaster.

£5 would buy a jar of seeds so that families could start growing food for themselves to replace what they lose when natural disasters strike.