

# Stone Soup

**Objective:** To involve your group (or entire congregation) in sharing a meal together and demonstrate how much we have if we share. To highlight the importance of food allocation/access.

**Recommended grade level:** all ages

**Number of participants:** this activity is suitable for as many participants as you would like.

**Materials:**

- Stove or hot plate
- Various ingredients and kitchen tools (cooking pot, knives, etc. See recipe)
- Necessary cutlery and dishes for serving
- A copy of Stone Soup story (below)
- Vegetable soup recipe (suggested recipes included in this guide).

## Activity:

This activity is great for youth groups, Sunday school classes and entire congregations. It can easily be paired with our Taste and See activity, available at [http://foodgrainsbank.ca/taste\\_and\\_see.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/taste_and_see.aspx).

Some suggested discussion questions are listed below.

The following steps are simply a guideline.

- Check to see if there are any food allergies or intolerances for which you must adapt the recipe.<sup>1</sup>
- With your group, read Stone Soup. For larger or older groups, this story can be easily adapted into a skit. It can also be read for Children's Story time during church.
- Have each person bring a few vegetables. It can be fun to give no parameters and see what you end up with—in this case you may need to have a

<sup>1</sup>Some common allergens such as dairy, soy or gluten may even be found in bullion cubes and packaged broth.

cookbook on hand (or an adept soup-maker!) so you can make soup with what is brought.

- Prepare the soup together. While waiting for the soup to cook, you may want to do a short bible study or reflection. Resources available at [foodgrainsbank.ca/worship](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/worship).
- You may wish to say/sing a table grace. Table graces can be found on the Canadian Foodgrains Bank website: [www.foodgrainsbank.ca/table\\_graces.aspx](http://www.foodgrainsbank.ca/table_graces.aspx)
- Serve the food and enjoy the fellowship!

## Suggestions:

- Have children/students create posters to advertise for the Stone Soup meal.
- After reading the story, highlight some stories from the Bible which talk about sharing with each other.
- For smaller groups or youth groups, there are some suggested discussion questions below to provoke thought on the abundance of our gifts and what it means to share our food.
- Find a nice smooth (and clean!) stone and actually use it in the soup. It will not change the soup, but it will be fun!
- Use an old family recipe or a recipe from an elder member of your group or church.
- If doing this activity with a large, varied group, have people from different stages of life preparing the meal, and the eating space, together. It is a great opportunity to build community cross-generationally.
- Make extra! Bring jars or containers of your extra soup to community members who may not get visitors or may not be able to go out into the community (seniors, people who are ill, busy new parents, etc).

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For a congregational activity, you could read the story one Sunday, have people bring food the next Sunday and hold your community meal the following Sunday.

Check out how Humber United Church used Stone Soup to connect their congregation and donate to Canadian Foodgrains Bank ([foodgrainsbank.ca/news/2088/stone\\_soup\\_raises\\_funds\\_for\\_canadian\\_foodgrains\\_bank.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/news/2088/stone_soup_raises_funds_for_canadian_foodgrains_bank.aspx)).

## Background information for educators:

### Enough Food?

The causes of hunger are complex. Although most of the world's media attention on hunger is given to natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and tsunamis, they are not the major causes of hunger.

The biggest problem is not even that there is not enough food. The world currently produces enough food for everybody. When there is a crop failure, drought, or flood in one region, there is often an abundance of food in another region nearby. People go hungry because they do not have access to existing food, or to the means by which they can produce food. People may be forcibly removed from their land, which is a key resource for obtaining food. There may also be war and conflict or environmental factors which directly reduce or eliminate the local availability of food.

More information on the causes of hunger and what Canadian Foodgrains Bank is doing to address it can be found at [foodgrainsbank.ca/hunger.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/hunger.aspx).

### The Biblical Perspective

There are many examples in scripture on the importance of sharing and ensuring that the poor have access to the resources they need.

The Old Testament gives a many guidelines around how to treat the poor and foreigner. There are commandments around allowing the poor to glean the edges of fields, giving tithes to feed the poor, and forgiving debts.

In the Gospels, Jesus highlights the importance of sharing food and caring for the poor. One of the most well-known miracle stories is the Feeding of the Five Thousand (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14). Whether you interpret this story as a miracle of multiplying food or as a miracle of changing people's hearts so they share what they have, it is an example of how important it is to share food with one another and the bounty we can enjoy when we share God's gifts. Jesus also reminds us that the poor and hungry are still made in God's image and will receive their blessings (Luke 6:20-21).

The early church also gives us examples of taking care of the poor and sharing our possessions, as outlined in the book of Acts (Acts 4:32-25).

### Why this activity?

This activity shows that we have more than enough to share with one another and with those who may not have anything. When a few people bring a little food, it quickly becomes enough food for a feast for many more people. The Stone Soup story is an excellent example of how we can take care of each other when faced with need. It is an example of how to feed five thousand people with very little food.

Of course, the issues of global hunger are very complex. However, we do have the "magic stone" to make the "soup" to end it. We just need to add to the ingredients. For example, we need:

- more support for food assistance and food security programming
- more funding for agriculture and adaptation to climate change
- a different approach to the global market so that food prices are not as volatile
- policy changes on the national and international levels so that the most vulnerable people are protected and supported.

By participating in this activity, you are contributing to the end hunger "soup". The more people know about how hunger can be ended, the more opportunities there are for people to take action.

To learn more about what Canadian Foodgrains Bank is doing around these issues, visit [foodgrainsbank.ca/what\\_we\\_do.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/what_we_do.aspx)

## Stone Soup: A Traditional Folk Tale

Once upon a time, a wise old man decided to go on a journey. So he packed a small bag, said goodbye to his wife, and set off. He traveled all day without meeting anyone. When it was evening, he came to a small village. "I think I'll stop here for the night," he said to himself.

Near the centre of the village, he met a group of people. So he introduced himself. "I'm a simple traveler," he said, "looking for a safe place to sleep and a hot meal."

"We'd be glad to offer you a place to sleep," the villagers told him, "but we have very little food. Our crops were very poor this year, and there's not much to eat in the whole village. Most of us are just barely getting by."

“I’m sorry to hear that,” the old man said. “But you needn’t worry about feeding me. I already have everything I need. In fact, I was thinking of making some stone soup to share with all of you.”

“Stone soup?” the villagers asked. “What’s that? We’ve never heard of stone soup.”

“Oh, it’s wonderful,” said the old man. “Best soup I’ve every tasted. If you bring me a soup pot and some water, I’ll make some for all of us.”

And so the villagers rushed back to their homes. When they returned, one was carrying a large soup pot, another had wood for a fire, and others brought water.

When the fire was going and the water had begun to boil, the old man took out a small silk pouch. With great ceremony, he reached in and pulled out a smooth, round stone. He carefully dropped the stone into the boiling water. The villagers watched eagerly.

The old man began to slowly stir the pot, sniffing the aroma and licking his lips in anticipation. “I do like a tasty stone soup,” he said. “Of course, stone soup with cabbage—now that’s really special.”

“I might be able to find a bit of cabbage,” one villager said. And off she went to her house, returning with a small cabbage she had stored away in her pantry.

“Wonderful!” said the old man, as he added the cabbage to the pot. “This reminds me of the time I had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of salted beef. It was unbelievably good.”

After a moment of silence, the village butcher spoke up. “I know where there’s a bit of salted beef,” he said. And off he went to his shop to get it.

When he returned, the old man added the beef to the soup pot and continued to stir. “Can you imagine what this soup would taste like if we had a bit of onion...and perhaps a few potatoes...and a carrot or two...and some mushrooms. Oh, this would be a meal fit for royalty.”

And before he knew it, the soup pot was filled to the brim with vegetables of all kinds—carrots and potatoes, mushrooms and onions, turnips and green beans, beets and celery—all brought by the men and women and children of the village. Not only that, but the

village baker came out with some fresh bread and butter.

And as the soup simmered slowly over the fire, the wonderful aroma began to waft over the villagers. And they began to relax and talk together, sharing songs and stories and jokes. And when the soup was finally done, the old man ladled it out into bowls, and they all shared a delicious meal together. There was more than enough for everyone to eat their fill. Afterward, they all declared that it was the best soup they had every tasted.

The mayor of the village pulled the old man aside, and quietly offered him a great deal of money for the magic stone, but the old man refused to sell it. The next morning, he woke early and packed up his belongings. As he was leaving the village, he passed by a group of children playing at the side of the road. He handed the youngest one the silk pouch containing the stone, and he whispered, “It was not the stone that performed the magic. It was all of us together.”

## Discussion Questions:

### Post-Story:

- What does this story tell us about our lives?
- What does this story tell us about feeding the hungry?
- What bible story does the Stone Soup story remind you of?
- I wonder if there is a “magic stone” to make enough “soup” for the world. What do you think?

### Post-Meal:

- How much soup did you make? Would you have been able to make that much soup if you only one person brought supplies from their house?
- How much do you think it would cost for everyone to make his or her own soup? How much did it cost each person to bring only a little food to make a lot of soup?
- How many people did you feed? How many people could eat in comparison to how many people brought food?
- What are some of the “ingredients” we can bring to the “Stone Soup” of ending world hunger?

## Any-Vegetable Soup

Serves 6-8

### Ingredients:

1 Tbsp oil  
1 medium onion, diced  
Salt  
Pepper  
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
About 8 cups diced vegetables of your choice  
*Suggestions: carrots, celery, potato, leeks, red pepper, cabbage, mushrooms, peas – as many varieties as you like.*  
1 bay leaf (optional)  
6 cups chicken or vegetable broth

Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, about 5 minutes.

Add garlic (and carrot, if being used) and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 2 minutes.

Add any hearty vegetables (such as celery or cabbage) and the bay leaf. Cook an additional 5 minutes.

Add the broth and any quicker-cooking vegetables (such as potatoes, leeks, and peas). Let the soup come to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer until the vegetables are done, about 15 to 25 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.

From the kitchen of Anna-Marie Janzen.

## Good Friday Vegetable Soup

Serves 4-6

Heat in heavy kettle:  
3 T. vegetable oil

### Add:

3 medium carrots, sliced  
2 medium onions, sliced  
1 or 2 stalks celery, sliced  
1 to 2 c. shredded cabbage  
1/2 c. chopped parsley  
1/2 t. salt

Cook over medium heat about 15 min., stirring occasionally.

### Add:

4 c. chicken broth  
2 c. fresh or frozen French-cut green beans  
1/4- 1/2 t. caraway seed

Heat to boiling. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 15 min. or until vegetables are tender.

### Options:

- Grate cheese into bowls and ladle hot soup on top to melt.
- Add chopped potato instead of shredded cabbage.

Adapted from *More-with-Less* by Doris Janzen Longacre.

