



The Slough of Despond

Notes



Time: about 40 minutes

Materials:

- Squirt Gun (battery operated works well)
- Impossible Bible trivia questions--about twenty
- Sound effects tape (enclosed)
- Portable tape deck
- One jar of petroleum jelly
- Cotton balls (one package)
- Plastic straws (large milk-shake type, one for each pilgrim)
- Ping-pong balls, or marbles--one for each group
- Polaroid instant camera (optional)



the right amount of jelly on each nose. Too little and the cotton will not stick, too much and the last person will be unable to handle the huge wad. Of course, the pilgrims will have to discover that on their own.

Swamp Roll

No additional materials are needed for this task, however, it will require careful monitoring by the Sloughmate to insure everyone's safety. The entire group lies face down on the ground next to each other in a line. The first person then rolls over everyone in the group until he becomes the end of the line. The person who was second in line is now first and must also roll over everyone until he reaches the end. This continues until the entire group has done the swamp roll and has resumed original positions. At this point, they can seek the Sloughmaster for their next question.

The group will need to place little people between the big people and those who are being rolled over should keep their heads down and covered. Since everyone is wearing a backpack, the Sloughmate might suggest the "roller person" roll in the opposite position of the "rollees." In other words, the person rolling lines up so his head is rolling over the group's feet and legs and that his legs are rolling over the heads of the group. Remember, this is not a race, and there is no reason for anyone to be kicked or smashed as long as everyone is careful. Use discretion. This activity may not work for your group.

Rise From The Bog

This task closely resembles Christian's actual struggle in the Slough. The group is instructed to make a circle with their backs facing inward. They then sit down and hook arms with people next to them and squeeze in as close together as possible. Now all they have to do is stand up, everyone at once, using each other for leverage, without letting go or falling down. It is much more difficult than it sounds. The number and athletic ability of each group will determine how successful it will be. If a particular group is unable to stand up on its own, Help may sneak in and lend a hand. Once the group is on its feet, it can meet the Sloughmaster and try to answer his question.

Slough Tower:

The Slough Tower is nothing more than a human pyramid constructed by each group. They must build a pyramid at least three tiers high using everyone in the group and be able to hold the position for three seconds. They will be timed by their Sloughmate. The backpacks might even be helpful for this task to buffer the effects of bony knees in the back. Once the task is completed the group will want another crack at answering the Sloughmaster's question. For an added twist, have a Polaroid camera on hand to take pictures of the pyramids. Have the groups show their pictures to the Sloughmaster as proof of their accomplishment.

Suck Up The Muck

Materials: paper cups (one for each group member), plastic straws (the bigger milk shake straws work best), Ping Pong balls or light weight marbles (one for each group).

This is another pass-the-object game. The group is instructed to line up, one



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them to enter the Slough. After taunting them for a short time, the Sloughmaster explains that any group may free themselves from the immobilizing effects of the Slough if they can satisfactorily complete an assigned task. A task is completed only when a Sloughmate says so.

Once this is done a group may approach the Sloughmaster and attempt to answer one of his notoriously difficult questions. If the question is answered correctly, the group is free to leave the Slough and continue to the Wicket Gate. If, however, the group answers incorrectly, they get a blast from the squirt gun and hear the Sloughmaster's favorite expression: "Go back to the Slough you foolish pilgrims!"

The group must then return to its original spot. A Sloughmate will give them another task to complete. This happens over and over until the group can correctly answer the question. The only way a group can escape is if the members get the answer from Help, who is just outside the confines of the Slough. The Sloughmaster and his assistants will chase Help away if they see her, so she must be very crafty. Help has in her possession the answers to questions, but must wait until each group has failed a few times in order for them to experience the frustration and futility of the Slough.

The Tasks:

Each task should be challenging but not impossible. (The impossible part of the exercise is answering the questions). Almost any group cooperation game will work, but keep in mind that everyone is carrying a burden which makes even the most simple exercise more difficult. Below are some suggestions for games that will work. You must decide which ones will work best for your particular group, and in what order they should take place. Feel free to add choices of your own.

Slimeknots

Instruct the group to make a circle, with everyone facing inward. Each member of the group must reach across the circle and grab the hand of another person. At this point every hand should be held and the group tied in a knot. The object is to get untangled and restore the circle without letting go of any hands. This means going under, over and around arms and bodies.

Some groups will untie themselves in just a few seconds and will proceed to the Sloughmaster for questioning, others will get hopelessly tangled and have to start over. The secret to success in slimeknots is to not grab two hands from the same person or the hand of the person next to you--but don't tell the pilgrims that. They must find out for themselves.

Pass The Sludge

For this activity each group will need a small jar of petroleum jelly and a few cotton balls. The group lines up, one behind the other, and each person rubs a little petroleum jelly on his nose. The Sloughmate hands the first person in line a cotton ball which that person must place upon his slimy nose. The object of this exercise is to pass the cotton ball from nose to nose all the way down the line without anyone using his hands or arms. If the cotton ball is dropped at any point along the way, the group must start over again with a fresh cotton ball. Once every person in the group has successfully handled the "piece of sludge," the group may proceed to the Sloughmaster for questioning. The secret to successful sludge passing is to have just



Setting:

A roped-off outdoor area large enough to accommodate physical activities for your entire group.

Characters:

Sloughmaster. We created this character and his minions for this experience. He (or she) is the evil and disgusting inhabitant of the Slough. He entices pilgrims to enter the Slough and then taunts them for being foolish enough to listen. He should dress in a bizarre fashion, a cross between the Hunchback of Notre Dame and Bozo the Clown. He wields a squirt gun and blasts anyone who disagrees with him or answers a question incorrectly.

Sloughmates. They are the assistants to the Sloughmaster, giving instructions and refereeing the groups struggling in the Slough. They should dress like the Sloughmaster, but less extreme. You will need at least three of them. It is important that they stay in character and see to it that no one gets hurt.

Help. He (or she) is the King's servant who, as his name suggests, is very helpful. He assists all pilgrims who are caught in the slough and is therefore hated by the Sloughmaster. Help can wear a white robe or any simple garment that suggests a "good guy".

Summary:

This activity is based on Chapters 4 and 5 of Little Pilgrim's Progress, The First Stage in Pilgrim's Progress, and Dangerous Journey, Program 1

Because of the burden on his back and the stories of Evangelist, Pilgrim decides to leave the City of Destruction and journey to the Celestial City. Evangelist gives him the message from the king and points the way through the Wicket Gate. In his path, however, lies a perilous grassy marsh known as the Slough of Despond. Not watching where he is going and oblivious to the danger, Pilgrim steps right into the middle of the marsh and begins slowly sinking into the soft, green mud.

With his heavy burden weighing him down, Pilgrim realizes that without immediate assistance, his journey will end here. Fortunately, one of the king's servants, by the name of Help, is nearby and comes to the rescue. He warns Pilgrim that many dangers lie ahead and that he must be very careful. He also comforts the Little Pilgrim with the knowledge that the king deeply loves him and will always keep him safe.

Introduction\Objectives:

The spiritual life is difficult to initiate. Pilgrim stepped almost immediately off the path into the Slough. We, too, get sidetracked and often frustrated by the obstacles along the way in our own spiritual journeys. This set of activities begins to build community in the groups and vividly illustrates the frustration of being "stuck" along the way.

Procedure:

The groups are herded into the Slough by the devious Sloughmaster. He and his assistants offer comfort, candy, or as a last resort, a blast from a squirt gun to persuade



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member behind the other. Each person is then given a small paper cup and a plastic straw. The Sloughmate drops a marble (or ping pong ball) into the first person's cup. Using the straw as a suction tube, player #1 picks up the marble and transfers it into the cup of player #2. This process continues until the marble has successfully landed in every group member's cup. If the marble is dropped or is touched by anything but the straw and the cup, the group must start over again from the beginning. Once the task is completed the group may pay another visit to the Sloughmaster and, hopefully, answer correctly.

Remember, these are only suggestions. Please change any of these activities to suit the needs of your group.

