

MY PASSPORT *to* INDIA

What's caste like? Role-playing activity

We'll never know exactly what it's like to grow up with the caste system. It is hard to imagine someone not wanting to talk to us or even touch us just because of the family we were born into.

Try this role-playing activity to get a taste of living under the caste system.**

Label index cards or pieces of scrap paper with four different colors: red, blue, green, and orange (write the word “red” on one card, “blue” on another, etc).

If you have more than four people in your family or group, make several cards for each color, enough for each person (even mom and dad!) to get a card.

If you have a very large group, make many cards labeled red and make just a few cards labeled green.

Hand out the cards randomly. Each color represents what caste you are. Go ahead with your normal activities—pretending that you are part of your assigned caste.

Green card: You are the highest caste. You can tell people from the lower castes what to do. You can even ignore them when they talk to you. You would be the first to be served during a meal. You would not be expected to help clean or cook.

Blue or orange card: You are from a middle-level caste. You must be extra nice to the higher caste people. You must do what they say. But you can also tell the lowest-caste person what to do.

Red card: You are from the lowest caste. You must do what anyone from a higher caste says. You cannot talk to a higher-caste person unless they speak to you first. You cannot touch anyone from outside your caste. You are the last to eat and you must serve during a meal and clean up after.

Time's up! Now talk about your experience. Talk as a family or group, allowing each person to share what they felt during their role-playing. Did higher-caste people start to feel like they were better than everyone else? Did the lowest-caste people feel taken advantage of or ignored? How did middle-caste people feel? Would you want to live like this every day of your life, like people in India?

Read Philippians 2:1-11. What does verse 3 tell us about how Jesus wants us to treat others? How is this different than the way India's caste system treats people? The apostle Paul says Jesus took on “the very nature of a servant” (verse 7). Why do you think Jesus did that instead of taking the form of a powerful king?

**Depending on whether you are doing this as a large group or at home as a family, and the age of the children, you will want to determine how long it is appropriate to try this activity. Parents, you may want to give some extra guidance on what kind of behavior is okay during this role-playing. A larger group may only want to do it for 15 to 30 minutes. Families might want to try spending a morning or full day in their roles, or perhaps just try it during an evening meal.