

Stewardship Intergenerational Program

Small-group Session Plan Middle School

Objectives for this lesson with this age group:

1. To explore the idea of all things as gifts from God.
2. To recognize that these gifts are ‘on loan’ and need to be given back to God (directly or through others).
3. To provide an opportunity to recognize someone who has been an example of stewardship and to commit to following their example..

Materials needed:

- ◆ Fake flowers
- ◆ Paper
- ◆ Pens and markers
- ◆ Envelopes
- ◆ Guidelines for letter
- ◆ “Planting a Tree” story

Before the session:

- ◆ Go to your assigned room and check to see that everything is there and ready.

You will be called by name to lead the children in your age group to your room.

Small-group time: 60 minutes

The amount of time for this lesson should allow you to move at a comfortable pace through the materials. I don’t think you’ll need to rush to complete most of this lesson.

1. Welcome the students. Tell them your name. Take a couple minutes to get to know them. Ask them to move their nametag to where you can see it, if necessary. This portion is really important because a lot of the students don’t know each other and are therefore reluctant to interact. Feel free to be creative, but at least have them go around and all say their name, school, and one or two other questions of your choosing. Make sure you answer them as well. (5-10 minutes)
2. Tell the students that you have a gift for them and bring out the fake flowers. Allow them to choose one that they like best and put the rest away. Ask them to hold on to them as you read the story. If you think that the flowers will distract them, then ask them to place them on the floor in front of them instead. (5 minutes)
3. Read “Planting a Tree” to the students and go through the discussion questions with them. As you go through the questions, if they are reluctant to participate, go around the circle and have everyone answer. This takes off some of the pressure since they know everyone will have to say something. Use their answers to build discussion. (15 minutes)

4. Explain to the students that everything we have is a gift from God. To be a good steward is to recognize this and to ‘give back’ to God what he has given us ‘on loan.’ Often we ‘give back’ to God by sharing our gifts and giving to others. For example, if we have been given the gift of singing, we may join a choir, go caroling, or sing along to Christian music with friends. If we have been given the gift of money, we may donate to charity. If we have been given the gift of free time, we may choose to help out at St. Vincent DePaul.
5. Tell the students that the flower they received is going to act as a symbol of all of the gifts they have received from God. It has brightened their day, and now it is time to share the gift with others. Invite them to use the materials available (paper, markers, envelopes, etc.) to write a letter to someone that has been a good steward by sharing their gifts. This can be a parent, a friend, a teacher, the custodian or lunch lady at their school, the priest... anyone that they see as a good steward. Some things they should include are as follows:
 - an introduction (of themselves, that they’re learning about stewardship, etc.)
 - what gifts the person has ‘given back’ to God by sharing/serving others
 - why the student appreciates it
 - explain the flower as symbolizing the students’ desire to follow in that person’s example and ‘give back’ to God by sharing their gifts
 - a thank you for the person’s example and anything else the student wants to add(30 minutes)
6. When you have about 2 or 3 minutes left, ask the students to gather up the pencils, markers, etc. Thank them for their participation. Ask them to take the flower and letter with them and give them to the person they wrote to the next time they see them.
7. Just leave the materials in the room – it is important for you to go with your group and get back to your own family.

Thanks!!!

The secret to understanding stewardship comes in realizing that we are not asked to "give" something to God, but rather to "give back." Absolutely everything we have on this earth is a gift from God. When we give to God we are really only returning something that He gave to us first.

Planting a Tree

One day a young man went to visit his old grandfather. He was surprised to find his grandfather in the backyard planting a small peach tree. The boy knew it would take many, many years for the peach tree to grow up big enough that it would give peaches. If his grandfather wanted peaches, the young man wondered, why didn't he just go to the store and buy some. That would be so much faster.

Finally after watching his grandfather work for a long time at planting the peach tree, the young man asked, "*Grandfather, why are you planting a peach tree?*" His grandfather answered, "*Son, all of my life I have eaten the peaches off of trees that other people have planted. Now it is my turn to plant a tree that someone else can enjoy.*"

Discussion questions:

- What kinds of things do we use everyday because someone else planted a seed?
- What seeds did someone have to plant so that we would have our school and our church today?
- How can we plant seeds today that will benefit someone else later?
- What kinds of seeds are we planting when we study hard and learn new things?

- **Introduction**
- **Gifts they have 'given back' to God**
- **Why you are thankful for it**
- **Flower as symbol of how you want to follow their example**
- **A "thank you"**
- **Anything else you want to add**

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