

STEWARDSHIP FOR Children

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Synopsis

All that we have and are is a gift from our heavenly Father. God has richly blessed us! The child of God responds to this generosity with a grateful heart. God chose us to make a difference in our families, our churches and our society. These are our vocations — the roles and purposes God has given us to fulfill. God has gifted us with time, natural abilities, spiritual gifts, personality, money, relationships with others and the list continues. Our gifts are given to us to use prudently for God's purposes in all of life.

Children are a treasure given by God to parents. Parents have an obligation to teach and model good stewardship to their children. The Bible is the source of every stewardship principle. It is crucial that churches develop leaders to wisely invest in children and do all they can to assist parents in their responsibility to train children in the fear and instruction of the Lord. This will take time and a great deal of dedication but it is well worth the effort.

Stewardship is clearly more than *\$teward\$hip*. Money is just a small part of the equation. This section deals with how to build up, motivate, encourage and strengthen children at a young age to be workers in God's kingdom. This section will guide you to consider seriously and intentionally plan the kinds of activities and events needed to assist in nurturing the mindset of giving within children so that they view all of life as a gift from a loving Father to be managed to His glory. It is our prayer that children learn to recognize their gifts, express gratitude for them and use them wisely as they learn, grow and reach full maturity in their faith.

Introduction

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16 ESV).

Children are a part of the “world” for which Christ died. If Jesus was willing to die for this troubled planet, maybe the church needs to care about it, too. We have a responsibility to do our part to love the world that Jesus loved so much. And that “world” includes kids.

In *A Theological Foundation for Children's Ministry* Bob Riggert writes about the following seven principles that should be our guiding focus as we work in children and family ministry:

1. Children are wonderfully and uniquely created by God.
2. Children are born sinful and in need of God's grace.
3. Children are invited into Jesus' kingdom now and for eternity.
4. Children receive and rejoice in God's grace through Holy Baptism.
5. Children are guided and guarded by faith-filled families.
6. Children are nurtured and celebrated by the church.
7. Children glorify God and are gifted by the Spirit to serve Him.

Theodore Epp once said that the Christian should live life as though Christ died yesterday, rose this morning and is coming back tomorrow. Do we sense the implied urgency?

In this section of the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook* we will examine children's involvement in the stewardship life of the congregation. Stewardship is defined as the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family — the church — in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes. In other words, stewardship is part of our vocation, the roles God has given us to play in church, home and society. As fellow members of the Body of Christ, we want to do all we can to help children spend time with God, get to know Him, enjoy His presence and listen to what He wants.

He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Cor. 5:15 ESV).

Understanding Children

It's not easy being a child in today's 24/7 world. The landscape is not the same as it used to be! We now have a vast mosaic of race and ethnicity. Broken homes are becoming the norm. For many children, every moment of their day is programmed without much time left to be just kids — kids with freedom, joy and choices. While the world is becoming more complex, children maintain the same basic needs as they have for decades: to be loved and trusted, to feel safe and to have a purposeful life.

"It is what it is," but the circumstances into which children are born today take a significant toll on a growing number of children. Science has given us a new appreciation for the importance of parental nurturing. We know that the adults children will someday become are the end result of the thousands of times they received comfort when they cried as infants, learned to play well with others as they got older, were spiritually nurtured by caregivers, and were shown that they were loved and valued.

And today with so many moms back in the workforce (some estimates reach 75 percent), others become stand-in parents — caregivers, teachers and other professionals, and volunteers in day cares, preschools, elementary schools and churches.

Researchers studying cognitive development now use sophisticated imaging technology to track the constant interplay of genetics and environment. They have laid down the basic building blocks of a comprehensive understanding of how experiences shape growth. Heredity sets the limits, but environment determines the extent to which the limits will be reached.

Children have 50 percent of their intelligence by age 4. By age 8, 80 percent of their intelligence will be in place. Scientists have now confirmed that the brain's greatest growth spurt draws to a close around age 10. The brain, which weighed a pound at birth, will have 90 percent of its adult weight at age 6.

Psychological research has stirred considerable interest in childhood development. Through the work of researchers like Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, Maria Montessori, David Elkind, Lawrence Kolberg and Rhoda Kellogg who have studied children's intellectual, physical, social, emotional and moral development, we have learned that growth follows an orderly, consistent, recognizable and predictable pattern. There are ages and stages of development. Development is uneven and rates of development will vary.

According to Piaget, preschoolers are in the pre-operational stage of life. They are egocentric and do not understand the feelings of others. Children of this age have a minimal understanding of things outside their immediate surroundings. They are able to classify objects by only a single characteristic as an apple is an apple and a grape is a grape, but they don't understand that both are fruit. Children at this age think in concrete terms. We can begin to teach them that all good things come from God and that He wants us to take care of them.

Children feel empowered when they view themselves as significant human beings and perceive that others see them that way, too.

Over time children start making connections as they begin forming a foundation for their faith. These early years are important for determining the child's later religious attitudes. Children in the 5-to-7 age range begin to understand things outside their immediate surroundings and have knowledge of cause and effect. They can begin to deal with the subject of money. As children grow, their knowledge and intellectual capacity expands.

Middle school children are capable of logical reasoning. They have more complex attitudes and skills. They are motivated by their peers. Relationships become extremely important. Positive role modeling is critical at this age. Our purpose should be to provide a healthy, loving family environment. This environment should reinforce a sense of trust and independence and recognize the child's need for self-awareness, self-confidence, self-expression and self-appreciation. Children feel empowered when they view themselves as significant human beings and perceive that others see them that way, too. Kids of this age, if given an allowance, could be encouraged to use percentage giving as an expression of their gratitude to God.

Research reinforces the profound truth that if you want to have a lasting influence upon the world, you must invest in people's lives while they are young. Lifelong habits, values, beliefs and attitudes are formed before the age of 13. A stewardship principle that could be nurtured by this age is one of regular, weekly giving.

In *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* George Barna writes: "The research simply crystallizes lessons that we can observe through history and personal experience. In other words, if you connect with children today, effectively teaching them biblical principles and foundations from the start, then you will see the fruit of that effort blossom for decades to come. The more diligent we are in these efforts, the more prodigious a harvest we will reap. Alternatively, the more lackadaisical we choose to be in our efforts to raise children as moral and spiritual champions, the less healthy the church and society will be" (Page 42).

The Role of Parents

The church must educate parents about their roles as their children's primary faith-shapers. Many parents lack the confidence and skill to comfortably take a leadership role. The church must help to strengthen the parts in order that the whole family will be strengthened. The church must view parents as partners in stewardship education. "Parents are meant to have the primary role in teaching and disciplining their children. Our job is to support parents

in their efforts. If parents refuse to do the job, then the church, by default, takes the primary role. But that's supposed to be the exception, not the norm" (*Children's Ministry That Works*, Page 60).

God's plan for families is that parents lead in the process of spiritual development of their children. What does the Bible say about the role of parents?

1. Parents have the key role in providing spiritual direction and care for their children.

Deut. 6:7: *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

Eph. 6:4: *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

2. The purpose of spiritual training is to raise faithful, loving children.

2 Tim. 3:16-17: *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Matt. 10:37: *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

3. Spiritual development is a lifelong, continual process.

Prov. 22:6: *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Ps. 78:4-6: *We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.*

4. Parents must rely upon God's grace and power to impact spiritual development; they should therefore pray for God's help.

2 Sam. 12:16: *David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.*

Lam. 2:19: *Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street.*

5. The Bible is the basis of our stewardship training.

Matt. 4:4: *But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

2 Tim. 3:15: *And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

6. The spiritual teaching of children will be nurtured and celebrated by the church.

Mark 9:36-37: *And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."*

1 Cor. 12:24b-25, 27: *But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TO TEACH CHILDREN

➤ **God owns all things; we own nothing. God owns us twice because He both created and redeemed us.**

Ps. 24:1: *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.*

1 Cor. 6:19b, 20a: *You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.*

➤ **We are stewards (managers) under God of all we are and have and do. Everything we have is given to us by God as a trust to use for His purposes.**

1 Cor. 4:2: *Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.*

Titus 2:12-14: *Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

➤ **We are accountable and responsible to God for all He entrusts to our care.**

Heb. 4:13: *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

Gal. 6:7: *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

WAYS PARENTS CAN ENCOURAGE STEWARDSHIP DEVELOPMENT AT HOME

➤ **Be faithful stewards: lead by example!**

➤ **Pray daily with children. Include prayers for growth in stewardship and prayers of thanksgiving for everything the children have.**

➤ **Use a family devotion book to get the family involved in a discussion, game or activity centered on a biblical stewardship principle.**

➤ **Memorize a Bible verse together each week.**

➤ **Create and implement a means for children to distribute their allowances proportionately for giving, saving and investing.**

- › Use opportunities to show love and appreciation for life, the environment, money, etc.
- › Read Scripture together.

WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT ABOUT MONEY

Jesus did not hesitate to discuss money. It was one of His most common themes. Fifteen percent of Jesus' recorded words dealt with money (Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel*, Page 210).

Our message should be:

1. It is not our money. It all comes from God.
2. We are not entitled to it but we are entrusted with it.
3. God expects us to use it in the interest of His kingdom.
4. The tithe is the biblical standard of generosity.

Parents can use the giving of an allowance to teach tithing, saving and investing to children. According to the book of Leviticus, the first 10 percent of our income is to be offered to God. If God required this of His Old Testament people, how can His New Testament be less generous?

Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord (Lev. 27:30 ESV).

The Role of the Church

We must make our ministry to children and their families a top priority. The role of the church is to spiritually mentor parents; the role of parents is to spiritually mentor their children; and the legacy of faith continues from generation to generation.

How will the church help parents lay a spiritual foundation to help children grow their faith in tangible and practical ways? The church must address children's involvement in stewardship. Each congregation must develop a clear conceptual foundation with a stewardship philosophy that permeates every department, program and policy.

We must help children discern between what God's Word says and what our culture tells them. The world is a distracting place. There's so much stuff in it to entertain kids. There's so much stuff for kids to consume and collect. And there's so much stuff that their peers have that it is easy to make a comparison and the focus becomes on what they don't have instead of what they do have.

Two excellent resources that contain a plethora of ideas to aid the church in laying this spiritual foundation are *Children Are Members* and *Stewardship Ideas for Kids Kit*, both available very inexpensively online.

Children are not miniature adults and therefore we need to develop a unique congregational children's stewardship plan.

National surveys conducted by the Barna group (*Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, Page 77), show that while more than 4-out-of-5 parents believe they have the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of their children, more than 2-out-of-3 abdicate that responsibility to the church. Their virtual abandonment of leading their children spiritually is evident in how infrequently they engage in faith-oriented activities with their young ones. Fewer than 10 percent of parents who regularly attend church with their kids, read the Bible with them, pray with them (other than at meal times) or participate in acts of service (stewardship) as a family unit.

The Children's Ministry Stewardship Team

Research indicates that the vast majority of people who become Christians do so when they are children, usually before the age of 14. Only 23 percent of converts are adults. Does that statistic get your attention?

While the church is not a business, it must be every bit as strategic and focused. We must be about the work of children! Children are not miniature adults and therefore we need to develop a unique congregational children's stewardship plan.

One person cannot do it alone! Put together a team of members who share commitment, competency, consistency and chemistry. Check things with your pastor. He needs to be your team's No. 1 fan. Explain to him every step of the way what you are about, what you hope to accomplish and how you hope to get there. Does your pastor have any ideas to support the work of the team and how are you going to support his larger vision for the church's stewardship plan?

Ask questions. How well do we know our children? What do we hope to accomplish? How does meeting these goals play out for different ages of kids? How involved have parents and the congregation been in children's stewardship activities and events? Have kids been involved in shaping the ministry? How do children have input?

Keep up with parents via a newsletter, email or bulletin insert. Use the church calendar. Devote a section of the church library to parents.

Be intentional about planning activities that involve both parents and children. Training parents to be good stewards may be the first step of any congregational activity for children.

The team will need to decide how it will go about including events that meet the stewardship needs of the local church, the neighborhood, the community and the world.

Another consideration to spend some time thinking about is an idea that comes from Roy Bleick (*Much More Than Giving*, Page 20). Bleick says the time-honored stewardship phrase of “time, talent and treasure” should be removed from our vocabulary. Bleick says that stewardship involves a much broader interpretation. Indeed, as Lutherans we know that we are really talking about vocation: the holy calling God has given us to fulfill in the home, in the church and in society. This encompasses all of life, all the gifts God has given us and the entirety of our persons.

When the team is ready to plan specific activities and events, some things to consider are:

- › William Glasser’s research that tells us that children remember:
 - 20 percent of what they hear
 - 30 percent of what they see
 - 70 percent of what they say
 - 90 percent of what they do
 - 98 percent of knowledge acquired will leave them unless it is relevant

- › Children are hands-on learners.
- › Always start with the child’s prior knowledge and extend it
- › Children need activities that are applicable to their real worlds.
- › Children need activities that are learner-based, with attention given to their attention spans and interests.
- › Activities need to be developmentally appropriate
- › Multi-sensory activities are best.
- › Children need a variety of choices that include both active and quiet activities.
- › Children need activities that are balanced between individual, small group and large group.
- › Children need activities that build relationships such as activities where thoughts and feelings can be shared.
- › Be aware of children’s individual learning modalities. Are they primarily visual, aural, tactile or kinesthetic learners? Observation is a key element.
- › Both sides of the brain need to be stimulated. Activities need to include art, music, storytelling and puppetry.
- › Play equals learning. Have fun with kids.

THE PLANNING GUIDE THAT FOLLOWS MAY PROVE HELPFUL.

EVENT ACTIVITY PLAN	
Who	Team members involved: Parent participants: Member volunteers: Age-group involvement: Professional church worker contact:
What	Name: Description: Purpose: Equipment and supplies needed: Need for child care:
When	Date: Time: Set-up and take-down:
Where	Church location: Location outside of church facilities:
Why	Consistent with mission and stewardship philosophy: Desired outcome:
How	Budget: Communication: Evaluation:

There are many charitable organizations that could be considered as events are planned to challenge kids to love their neighbors. Jesus clearly cared about addressing poverty, disease and brokenness in tangible ways. Contact the LCMS to learn about organizations that might be considered to support as you plan servant events.

Our nearest neighbors should be our nearest concern. Canvas your community. What can the children of your church do locally to show love to others? Some things to be considered:

- › Back-to-school fairs
- › Soup kitchens
- › Book donations for low-income early childhood centers
- › Bibles for prison ministry
- › Food pantries

Program Idea List

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

– Helen Keller

The following ideas are presented to assist the children's ministry stewardship team. Many of the suggested activities could be shared with Sunday school teachers, vacation Bible school leaders, Christian day school teachers, the pastor or others who work with children in the church. Use them as a guide or means to start your team down the exciting path of providing year-round stewardship experiences for children and parents. Working together as a team can produce incredible results. Some suggestions are fragment ideas that can be incorporated easily into a Sunday school lesson or existing program. Others will take more time and planning.

By each idea you will see a number or numbers which represent the age or ages for which the activity may be most appropriate: (1) most appropriate for preschoolers, (2) most appropriate for grades K-2, (3) most appropriate for grades 3-6 and (4) most appropriate for parents.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

(1, 2, 3) Share the history of our common table prayer, "Come, Lord, Jesus." It can be found on Pages 9-11 in the "Stories to Share" section of the *Stewardship Ideas for Kids Kit*.

DISCUSSIONS

(3) Have children compare and contrast the following definitions for stewardship. What are the common elements? How is stewardship "played out" in their lives? After brainstorming ideas ask children to work individually, in pairs or small groups to write personal definitions of stewardship. For example:

- › Deliberate, responsible management of all that God has created and provided
- › Directing God-given resources to God-given goals

- › Act of managing another's possessions or property
- › Free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family — the church — in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes
- › Our stuff is His stuff that has been entrusted into our care. We manage everything to the best of our abilities for His glory.
- › The Christian steward receives God's precious gifts gratefully, manages God's precious gifts with others generously and returns God's precious gifts joyfully with increase.
- › The bottom line is that the individual believer grows in his or her relationship to Jesus Christ and lives the joyous and abundant life that Jesus came to give — all to God's glory and the advancement of His Kingdom.
- › A way of life that comes from seeing everything as a gift from God. Motivated by faith and a deep sense of gratitude the Christian responds in a planned, proportionate, thankful and sacrificial manner.

(3) A judge who regularly deals with youth has made the following statement. How do your kids respond or relate? "Always we hear the cry from teenagers, 'What can we do, where can we go?' My answer is this: 'Go home, mow the lawn, wash the windows, learn to cook, build a raft, get a job, visit the sick, study your lessons and after you've finished, read a book. Your town does not owe you recreational facilities and your parents do not owe you fun. The world does not owe you a living, you owe the world something. You owe it your time, energy and talent so that no one will be at war, in sickness and lonely again. In other words grow up, stop being a cry baby, get out of your dream world and develop a backbone not a wishbone. Start behaving like a responsible person. You are important and you are needed. It's too late to sit around and wait for somebody to do something someday. Some day is now and that somebody is you!'"

(2, 3) Start a class stewardship dictionary. New entries could be added as new vocabulary from Bible passages and stories are introduced. The dictionary might include, among other words, the following:

- › Altar — a place where sacrifices/money gifts were/are given to God. Could be made of wood, stone or other materials
- › Bless — give good things or show kindness to another Christians — people who believe Jesus Christ is God's Son and that He died and rose for them and want to follow His teachings
- › Commandment — rule or teaching God wants us to follow
- › Consecrate — set something or someone apart to serve God in a special way
- › Denarius — Roman money, a silver coin, usually payment for one day's work
- › Faith — believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He came to take the punishment for our sin so that we may become members of God's family

- › Firstfruits — the offering to God of the first vegetables, fruit and grain the Israelites picked from their fields
- › Grace — God’s undeserved love, kindness and forgiveness towards us
- › Harvest — to gather ripe fruit, vegetables, grains, and other crops from fields and vineyards
- › Invest — put money to a use expected to yield a profit
- › Overseer — a person who watches over or takes care of others
- › Sacrifice — a gift or offering given to God
- › Servant — a person who works for the comfort or protection of others
- › Talent — a large amount of silver or gold worth a huge amount of money. One talent was considered to be the amount of money a worker would earn in about 10 years.
- › Treasure — anything very valuable like money
- › Tithe — give God 10 percent of what you earn. If you had 10 dimes, you would give one dime to God.
- › Worldly — loving the things of the earth more than the things of God

(3) After studying the Beatitudes with middle school kids, make small group discussion cards. Use group parent leaders if available. Possible discussion starters might include:

- › In the Beatitudes Jesus used the word “blessed” seven different times. What does it mean to be blessed? What synonyms or other words can you think of that communicate a similar idea?
- › Jesus says the meek or humble people will inherit the earth. What do you think that means?
- › Do you know a humble person? Describe what you think a meek or humble person is like.
- › What does a person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness or goodness do?
- › What’s so great about being shown mercy? How can you show mercy to others?
- › How many different ways can you think of to show that someone is sincere or pure in heart?

(2) Study Matt. 5:19-21. Put the following questions in envelopes to use as discussion starters. Divide into groups and give each group an envelope. After each group has discussed its question(s), give a shared respond to the whole group.

- › What are some things that people value or treasure? What do kids your age value a lot? What does this Scripture say about these kinds of treasures?

- › What are some differences between treasures on earth and treasures in heaven?
- › We learn in this passage not to treasure or value things that thieves can break or steal. What things can’t be stolen from us?
- › What are some ways people get treasures on earth? How do you think we store up treasures in heaven?
- › What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”?

(1) Study the story of Dorcas. Teach the kids the following Dorcas poem. Teach the kids to sign the words in italics.

Kind Dorcas was always doing *good*.
 She *gave* to people all that she could.
One child had no *coat*; another’s was torn.
 So Dorcas made coats to keep them *warm*.

Good is signed by moving the right flat hand down from the mouth and resting it in the left hand. *Gave* is signed by having both hands facing downward and turning them in, up and forward in a giving gesture. Hold index finger in the air for *one*. For *coat* trace the form of the lapels with the thumbs and pull them down each side to the lower chest. *Warm* is signed by holding the right hand in front of the mouth with palm facing in and then moving it slowly upward and forward opening it as you would do if you were blowing on it to warm it.

(1) The prayer that follows could be used when discussing all the good things God has given to us.

God gives me lots of food to eat
 And clothes that I can wear.
 And when it’s time to go to sleep
 He keeps me in His care.
 I have a house in which I live
 I have a family.
 Thank You, God, for all these things
 And thanks for loving me. Amen.

(2, 3) Have children write their own paraphrase of “The Sheep and the Goats” story after you read and discuss this one:

I was hungry and you gave me a sandwich.
 I was thirsty and you gave me a Coke.
 I was cold and you loaned me your jacket.
 I was disabled and you wouldn’t let others make fun of me.
 I was bullied and you protected me.
 I was sick and you brought me my homework.
 I was grounded and you called/texted me.

ART/VISUALS

(2) Make a bulletin board using the words “God Loves a Cheerful Giver.” Have children color a picture of a piggy bank and cut it out. Make large coins and have the children write what they do to give cheerfully on them.

(1) After reading “The Prodigal Son,” children could string beads on chenille wires to make rings.

(1) After studying the story of Dorcas have children make robes like the ones Dorcas used to sew for others. Cut robes from a pattern drawn onto poster board. Punch holes around the edges. Children can color the robes and then sew with yarn through the holes up and down or around the outside edges of the poster board robes.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

(2) Study Eph. 4:32. Then relate this game to the Scripture. This is a game of balance and kindness. Put a beanbag on the head of each child. Kids balance the beanbags while music is played. If a child drops a beanbag, the child must freeze until another child is kind enough to pick up the dropped beanbag and give it back to the child who continues to play. If the second child drops his own beanbag while attempting to help the first child, both players remain frozen. Have all children freeze periodically by turning off the music. To vary the game, place the beanbags on another part of the body other than the head.

(1, 2, 3) Try this game of “Firstfruit Giving.” You will need a container of popped popcorn, a salt shaker and a squeeze bottle of melted butter. Tell the children that they will need to follow the directions carefully just as the Israelites carefully followed God’s instructions. The popcorn represents the grain that will be offered. Put the popcorn at the end of the room opposite the children. The children, carrying Styrofoam cups, choose a way to move to get to the popcorn. When they reach the popcorn, they fill their cups and then squirt a little butter on the top just like the Israelites poured oil on their offerings. Then sprinkle the salt on top. It is a reminder of the promises God made to them and they in turn made to God. After filling the cups, the children return and enjoy the offering as did the Old Testament priests. A cereal like Cheerios, milk and sugar could be substituted for the above mentioned foods for younger children.

SERVICE EVENTS/PROGRAMS

(1, 2, 3, 4) Shortly before the beginning of the new school year hold a “Blessing of the Children” event. It could begin with a worship service in which the story of Jesus blessing the children is shared (Mark 10:13-16). Reference could also be made to Matt. 19:14 in which Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” The service might include singing, an act of confession, prayers of thanksgiving and a special blessing of each child in the chancel area of the church. There might be a time of fellowship at the conclusion of the service. Refreshments could be served and the children could be given a set of school supplies. The money for the school supplies could come from another event as the one described next. This event could be attended by children of the congregation and children of neighboring schools. Good advertising is critical for this

BIBLE STORIES TO TEACH STEWARDSHIP CONCEPTS

The Beatitudes	Matt. 5:3-9
Feeding of the 5,000	Matt. 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:5-13
Parable of the Unmerciful Servant	Matt. 18:21-35
The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:25-37
The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-24
A Rich Man’s Question	Matt. 19:16-26; Mark 10:18-27; Luke 18:189-27
The Widow’s Mite	Mark 12:41-44
Dorcas	Acts 9:32-43
The Sheep and the Goats	Matt. 25:31-40
Firstfruit Offerings	Lev. 2
The Early Church	Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, 5:12-16
Paul and Lydia	Acts 16:11-15
Zacchaeus	Luke 19:1-10
The Widow at Zarephath	1 Kings 17
Nehemiah Rebuilds the Jerusalem Wall	Neh. 1-8
Jesus Call His Disciples	Mark 1:16-20
Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet	John 13:1-17, 34-35
Parable of the Talents	Matt. 25:14-30
Naaman’s Leprosy	2 Kings 5:1-14
Creation	Gen. 1-2
Building of the Tabernacle	Ex. 25-31, 35-40
God’s Family Gives	2 Cor. 8-9
The Christians at Antioch	Acts 11:19-30
David and Goliath	1 Sam. 17
Jesus Teaches about the Last Day	Matt. 25:31-40
Jesus Blesses the Children	Mark 10:13-16
Jesus Heals the Official’s Son	John 4:46-54
Jesus Heals Jairus’ Daughter	Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56
Miriam Protects Moses	Ex. 2
Samuel and Eli	1 Sam. 3
Jesus Anointed at Bethany	Mark 14
Who Is Greatest	Mark 9:33-37
Jesus Clears the Temple	Mark 11:15-17
Peter Heals the Crippled Beggar	Acts 3:1-10
Peter Lacks Commitment	Mark 14:66-72
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego	Dan. 3
Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard	Matt. 20: 1-16
Joseph Shares with His Brothers	Gen. 50:15-21

event.

(1, 2, 3, 4) Have a “Pay it Forward” event. Give each family a designated amount of money. (Individual members of the congregation could contribute funds for this project or money could be used from the church’s children’s ministry budget.) Tell the children that a way of saying “Thank You” to God is to “Thank Use” His gifts. Use this experience as a means to show children how they can make their money grow. Designate a certain amount of time for this project. See how much money each family can return to God. Let’s say each family is given \$5. The family uses the money to buy ingredients to make 24 cupcakes that they sell for \$1 per piece. This

will give them a return of \$19. At the “Pay it Forward” event, each family can share how they used their small gift to grow the gift. Each family could consider making a visual presentation to show how their \$5 grew. This gift will be combined with the gifts of other families and will grow into something bigger and better.

(2, 3, 4) Hold a Sunday brunch fast. Incorporate any of the suggested activities in this section with the fast. Have the children and parents donate the money that they would have been spent on lunch to a food pantry or other organization that helps the less fortunate.

FIFTY-TWO BIBLE PASSAGES TO TEACH STEWARDSHIP CONCEPTS TO CHILDREN

1. Gen. 1:1	<i>In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.</i>	11. Matt. 6:33	<i>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.</i>
2. Gen. 2:15	<i>The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.</i>	12. Matt. 17:20b	<i>If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.</i>
3. Ps. 24:1	<i>The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.</i>	13. Matt. 20:26b-28	<i>But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.</i>
4. Ps. 34:8	<i>Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!</i>	14. Matt. 22:37	<i>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.</i>
5. Prov. 3:9	<i>Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce.</i>	15. Matt. 25:21	<i>Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.</i>
6. Prov. 14:21	<i>Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.</i>	16. Matt. 25:40	<i>Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.</i>
7. Mal. 3:10	<i>Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.</i>	17. Mark 12:30	<i>And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.</i>
8. Matt. 5:13a, 14a	<i>You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.</i>	18. Luke 12:48b	<i>Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.</i>
9. Matt. 5:16	<i>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.</i>	19. Luke 16:13	<i>No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.</i>
10. Matt. 6:19-21	<i>Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.</i>	20. John 13:34-35	<i>A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.</i>

21. John 15:12	<i>This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.</i>
22. John 17:15-18	<i>I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.</i>
23. John 20:21b	<i>As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.</i>
24. Acts 10:35	<i>In every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.</i>
25. Acts 20:35b	<i>It is more blessed to give than to receive.</i>
26. Rom. 12:2	<i>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.</i>
27. 1 Cor. 4:2	<i>Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.</i>
28. 1 Cor. 10:24	<i>Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.</i>
29. 1 Cor. 16:2	<i>On the first day of every week, each one of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.</i>
30. 2 Cor. 5:17-18	<i>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.</i>
31. 2 Cor. 8:2-5, 9	<i>For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints — and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.</i>
32. 2 Cor. 9:6-7	<i>The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.</i>

33. Gal. 6:6b	<i>Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.</i>
34. Gal. 6:10	<i>So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.</i>
35. Eph. 2:8-10	<i>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.</i>
36. Eph. 4:32	<i>Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.</i>
37. Phil. 2:5-8	<i>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to death — death on a cross!</i>
38. Phil. 4:12-13	<i>I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.</i>
39. Col. 3:17	<i>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.</i>
40. 1 Thess. 5:11	<i>Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.</i>
41. 1 Tim. 4:12	<i>Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.</i>
42. 1 Tim. 6:7-8	<i>For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.</i>
43. 1 Tim. 6:10a	<i>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.</i>
44. 1 Tim. 6:17-19	<i>As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.</i>

45. 2 Tim. 1:6	<i>For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.</i>
46. Heb. 13:16	<i>Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.</i>
47. James 1:17a	<i>Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from</i>
48. 1 Peter 2:9	<i>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.</i>
49. 1 Peter 4:10	<i>As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.</i>
50. 1 John 3:1	<i>See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.</i>
51. 1 John 3:16-18	<i>By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.</i>
52. 1 John 4:19	<i>We love because he first loved us.</i>

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