

Understanding the Basic Stewardship Concepts for Children

Efforts to teach stewardship and giving to children are most successful if you concentrate on five basic concepts. These concepts can be discussed in the classroom, in children's liturgies, in Children's Church programs and at home. The five concepts are:

1. Help children see that God has given them many blessings.

(This also teaches good self-esteem.)

- Challenge children to make a list of all God's gifts to them. There is no wrong answer! Everything is a gift from God.
- Regularly complement children on their special gifts – simple things like nice handwriting, pretty smile, nice coat to keep you warm, etc. Remind them that this special gift is a blessing from God and offer an idea on how they can be grateful or share that gift with someone else.
- Encourage children to recognize their talents and the talents of other people in their lives. Every talent does not have to be star quality. Talents can be simple - such as strong to carry a box, smart to help someone with homework, a good listener for someone with a problem.

2. Teach children to be grateful to God for the blessings He has given us.

(This also teaches an overall sense of gratitude and a positive outlook on life. It helps kids see that the cup is half full rather than half empty.)

- Make it a practice to ask children on a daily basis to name something for which they are thankful.
- Ask children to write a prayer of thanks to God.
- Have children write a thank-you letter to God, telling Him why His gifts are so special to them and what the child will do with those gifts. This could be a good birthday or Christmas practice, when children might be writing other thank-you notes, too.
- Help children to see that God has given them blessings to share. Discuss the poor and needy. Talk about how God has trusted us to use our gifts to help those who have less.
- Read the Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25:31-46) together. Discuss all the ways people are in need, and what children could do to help.
- Encourage children to think about and pray for those in need.

3. Show children how stewardship has built our Church.

(This also teaches appreciation and responsibility for our Church.)

- Tell children the history of the parish and the role stewardship played in building up the parish as it is today.
- Tour parish facilities looking for signs of stewardship.
- Talk with children about the building up of the Church throughout the world and the role stewardship played in the cathedrals, hospitals, schools and churches that we have today.
- Talk with children about the lives of saints and the ways they were good stewards. In most cases children will learn that it was how people used their time, talent or treasure for God that earned the person the title of "Saint."

4. Help children to recognize that stewardship is something we do all the time. It is how we live our lives. Every decision we make about how we use our time or treasure is a stewardship decision.

(This also teaches good time management and budgeting.)

- Encourage children to keep a record of their time – How much time do they give to God in prayer? How much time do they spend learning – developing knowledge and talents they can use later for God? How much time do they spend helping others? How much time do they spend taking care of themselves so they are strong and healthy for God's work? How much time do they waste?

- Talk about shopping decisions; about how we can waste money when others need it. Discuss the concept of the tithe – of giving 10% back to God. Discuss the difference between something we need and something we want. We may need soccer shoes to be part of the team – but having the most expensive or popular brand is only a “want” not a “need.”

5. Help children recognize the joy that comes from stewardship.

(This also helps students realize that real happiness cannot be found in possessions.)

- Have children discuss how they feel when they help someone else.
- Share your own good feelings about helping and giving.
- Invite a young volunteer to talk to your children about their volunteer experiences.