

Miss Fannie and the Widow: a Story Experience Lesson About Stewardship for Adults

Background

Learners: Adult Sunday school class of 12-15 members

Setting: Classroom with tables and chairs that can be arranged in a variety of formats

Time Frame: 60 minutes

Focus

Unit Subject Matter: Stewardship

Biblical Principal/Scripture for this session: We give unselfishly to God in grateful response to God's grace and mercy. Luke 21:1-4

Session goals:

- Share first memories of stewardship in the church
- Read and discuss Miss Fannie's Hat
- Compare the literature selection to the scripture passage
- Write newspaper articles about the widow and her giving from different perspectives
- Draw conclusions about our attitudes towards stewardship
- Create a poster to express through words and pictures what the class learned about stewardship.

Space, Set-up, and Materials

Environment: Sunday school classroom with 3 tables of 6 chairs each arranged in a U-shape; separate square table in the center of the U-shaped table arrangement

Materials, Resources, Equipment:

- Stewardship item display on square table (offering plate, pledge card, One Great Hour of Sharing fish bank, coins, offering envelope, 2 cans of food, basket of nickels to represent 5 Cents-A-Meal Offering, other items of leader's choice)
- Miss Fannie's Hat by Jan Karon
- Bibles (NRSV) for all participants
- Paper and pens
- One white sheet of poster board and colored markers

Step-by-Step Story Experience Plan

FEELING into the story (10 minutes)

1. Leader opens the class session with a prayer.
2. Participants are given several minutes to view the stewardship items that are on display and think about their memories of giving.
3. Participants share their earliest memories of giving at church.
4. Leader explains that today we will look at giving from the perspective of a parable and a literature book.

MEETING with the story (30 minutes)

1. Share the story of Miss Fannie's Hat.
2. Read the scripture passage from Luke 21:1-4
3. Discuss the two stories with the following questions:
 - Compare and contrast Miss Fannie and the widow in Luke 21:1-4.
 - What is the message of the rose hat and the two copper coins?
 - How does Miss Fannie's favorite scripture verse (Matthew 19:26) connect these two stories?
 - What do the roses planted all around the church in the final illustration of the story of Miss Fannie say to us about giving?
4. Divide the group into 3 smaller groups. Give each group paper and pens. Explain that today we will be writing news articles for the front page of the Jerusalem Journal about the widow we met in Luke 21:1-4. Each group is asked to imagine that the characters in the story of Miss Fannie have been transported back in time to witness the widow's giving and will write their article from the perspective of one of these characters.
Group 1 writes from the perspective of Miss Fannie.
Group 2 writes from the perspective of the wealthiest member of Miss Fannie's church.
Group 3 writes from the perspective of the preacher of Miss Fannie's church.

RESPONDING out of the story (20 minutes)

1. Each of the three groups will share their articles for the Jerusalem Journal.
2. Discuss how our attitudes towards stewardship can differ based on our own personal situations.
3. Each member of the class uses markers to either draw or write something about stewardship on the poster board based on their experience with the literature book and scripture passage.
4. Poster will be displayed on a church bulletin board during the church stewardship campaign.
5. Leader closes with prayer.

Rationale

Stewardship is a vital part of our lives as members of a Christian community. Too often the time of the church year that is designated for the annual "stewardship campaign" becomes a time of sermons and minutes for mission that can sometimes be very similar from year to year. The congregation expects this campaign and can thus miss the real message of what it means to give back to God. Miss Fannie's Hat is a beautiful story that brings the message of stewardship to us in a fresh way.

I intentionally chose to use this book for an adult Sunday school class because I believe this piece of children's literature is very powerful. It will also be for many adult classes a completely new way of experiencing the concept of stewardship in what they view as a book for children. I especially like how the final illustration in the story has a deep meaning about how our giving can help to yield a harvest far beyond what we can imagine.

Lesson prepared by Marcia Rauch, Union-PSCE Student, Fall 2009