

BEYOND BEYOND

Children Session: Barnabas

Acts 4:32-37

The Cooperative Program

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Lesson Overview

Who owns all things? Every stewardship concept begins with this question. If all we have is ours, then giving is subject to our own desires and whims. But if God is the rightful owner of all things, including all that we are and have, then giving is subject to who God is and what God values. This is the central stewardship question: Who owns all things?

Stewardship Emphasis

The believers in the book of Acts exemplify Christ-centered selflessness. Their example compels the 21st-century Christian to *selflessly give* through the Cooperative Program.

Teaching Aim

To encourage children to:

- Understand that God owns all things.
- Understand that a Christ-centered life results in giving.
- Understand the example of selfless giving by Barnabas.

Bible Story

“All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles” (Acts 4:32-37, NLT).

Teacher Preparation

- Read the passage thoroughly.
- Read the text a second time, looking for emerging themes. You might want to underline them and write them on a piece of paper.
- Read the text a third time, and answer the following questions:
 - What stewardship principles emerge in the text?

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- What does the text teach about God/Jesus?
- How does God speak to me through this text?

Lesson Preparation

- Read the lesson entirely and prayerfully.
- Complete the teacher preparation section.
- Gather all the supplies and arrange them neatly in the classroom.
- Make sure the classroom is well lit, clean and uncluttered (Children assimilate concepts in ordered environments.)
- Be in the classroom before the children arrive.
- Enlist extra adult helpers to secure a 1-adult-to-5-children ratio.

Greet the Children

As the children arrive, greet them with a smile. Allow each child a minute or two to prepare for class by sitting quietly. Remind the children your time together is “special” and “sacred,” so they must prepare their hearts and become peaceful inside. Encourage an atmosphere of respect and reverence by speaking calmly and gently to the children as they enter.

Lesson Explained

The believers in the book of Acts provide a beautiful example of stewardship. They were united in heart and mind. But what united them? They were united by the gospel. As they embraced their belief in Christ, the blessing of the Lord was poured on their lives. Their new faith became the engine behind everything they did. Their good works, their generous giving and their caring for one another all began with their love and devotion for Jesus. Their lives were completely God-centered.

The passage explains that the believers “felt that what they owned was not their own” affirming what the psalmist says in Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” And because of this conviction they gave freely and among them no poor person was found. The passage ends by using Barnabas, the “Son of Encouragement,” as an example of extravagant giving. He sold a field and brought the money to the apostles to distribute.

Write Psalm 24:1 on the board and have the children repeat it a couple times with you. You might want to break the passage into sections and explain its meaning part by part.

Once you feel the children have grasped the meaning of the verse, ask them questions like: Who owns your sweater, Josh? Who owns your dress, Zoe? Who owns your hair, Jack? Who owns your toys, Cohen? If the children are older, you might ask: Who owns your intelligence, Jacob? Who owns your athletic abilities, Stacey? Emphasize that God owns all things.

Activities

Children learn in different ways. Some children are artistic, some are musical. Some children are relational, while others are introspective. Others learn best through movement. It is a good idea to incorporate activities that cater to different types of learners.

*Some activities work best sitting at a table and on a chair (*TC). Others work best around a circle (*AC).*

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Activity 1: Ownership Illustrated (*TC)

Materials: Cookies (2 per child)

Teaching: Give each child one cookie. Tell them the cookies are *theirs*. Tell the children they have two options: 1) Eat it themselves; 2) Give it to someone else. Most children will eat their cookie. Ask them why they kept it for themselves? Eventually one of them will tell you: “It’s mine!”

Give each child one cookie (again). Tell them this cookie belongs to *you*. Then ask them to take care of the cookie while you are gone for a few minutes. Leave the room for a couple of minutes and then come back. You should find each child with the cookie intact.

Ask the children: Was it hard not to eat the cookie? Why didn’t you eat it? The children should answer that the cookie is not theirs. Then ask them to put the cookie back in a bag as you go around to collect them. If the children complain, remind them, this cookie is yours, not theirs. (Be kind as you do it.)

This exercise illustrates ownership. The person who owns something is the one who ultimately decides what happens to that one thing.

Explain to the children that everything we have is ultimately like the second cookie. Everything belongs to God. There are times when God asks us to care for one of His belongings (e.g., nature); other times He allows us to keep and enjoy the gift He gives us (e.g., our clothes); still other times He asks us to give the gift away (e.g., tithe, offering, etc.). All of the above belong to God: nature, clothes and money. A good steward is one who is sensitive to the wishes of the rightful owner.

Review the verse on the board once again with the children.

Activity 2: A World in Need—Give! (*TC)

Materials:

- Pictures of people (adults and children) from other cultures
- Map or globe

Teaching: Put a number of pictures on each table. Ask the children to help you guess where the people are from. As they do, point to that area on the map: Asia, Africa, America, Europe, etc. Share with the children that many of these people around the world have never heard about the love of Jesus. Many do not own a Bible. Many don’t have a church to go to. Ask the children: How does this make you feel? What does it make you want to do? What does it make you want to give?

Remind the children about the passage and how all the believers shared what they had so no one was poor. Tell the children we can learn from them by giving generously of what we have been given so others can hear the good news of the gospel. This is a fantastic opportunity to introduce them to the Cooperative Program. To make it more tangible, you might want to introduce them to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions (<http://www.imb.org/main/lottie-moon/default.asp#VT6tVJN2GAY>) or the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions (<http://anniearmstrong.com/>).

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**Consider collecting for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering or the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering the following week (no matter what time of the year it is).*

Activity 3: A World in Need—Pray! (*AC)

Materials:

- Battery operated tea lights
- Pictures of people
- Map used previously

Teaching: Place the map or globe on the floor along with the pictures of the people used in the previous activity. Ask the children to sit around the map/pictures in a circle (pretzel-style sitting). Ask the children to quiet their hearts and explain to them that along with giving generously God expects us to pray for the many people who have not heard about Jesus and do not have a Bible or a church.

Explain Luke 10:2, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Tell the children that this verse means there are millions of people who are in need of Him, but there are not enough people to pray and give and go to these people with the truth. Explain to the children that God wants us to pray for the Lord to put it in people’s hearts to *pray* and *give* and *go* to the ends of the earth with the gospel.

Give each child a tea light. Once they each have one, dim the lights in your classroom. Ask the children to turn on their tea lights. Go around the circle and have each child pray for the Lord to call more *missionaries*, more *givers* and more *prayer warriors*. Ask each child to participate, however timidly. All must pray!

Finish by reading this verse, Habakkuk 2:14, NIV: For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Go around the circle one more time and have each child pray that verse. “Lord, as the water covers the sea, cover the earth with your truth and light.”

With your tea lights on, teach/sing the hymn on the next page and bless the children.

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Activity 4: Learning Stewardship through a Hymn

Frances (Frances Ridley Havergal) never wrote a line of poetry without praying over it. In fact she lived a life of prayer. In the morning she would pray for a “vivid love” for Jesus. At midday she would pray for “faith, hope and love.” In the evening she always prayed for the Lord to show her, her true sinfulness. Her prayerful life is reflected in all she wrote.

“Take My Life, and Let It Be”

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless
praise.
Take my hands, and let them
move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee.
Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt
choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart; it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Blessing

Ask the children to close their eyes. Bless them by name using the Priestly Blessing found in Numbers 6:24-27.

The Lord bless you and keep you (Hannah, Cole, Malachi, Zoe),
The Lord make His face to shine upon you,
And be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you
And give you peace.

NOTE: We recommend you read next week’s lesson and plan ahead for any materials/props you might need.