

'God's Good Gifts'



Leader's notes:

Our children are valuable members of our church community. They have much to learn and much to give.

This lesson has been prepared to be used in a 'whole church' service. This gives adults the opportunity to become aware of the steps that are children are taking towards Jesus. It also gives them the opportunity to make these steps themselves. Together we can support each other as we grow and redefine our friendship with Jesus.

If you used the Junior Soldier Renewal lesson on Stewardship then you will find that this content follows on and reaffirms the themes discussed on JS Renewal Sunday.

Preparation:

Ask everyone in your church community to bring in something they consider as a gift from God (or a representation of it. For example, a wedding photo could represent gratitude for a spouse, an apple could represent nutritious food, a real estate magazine could represent adequate housing)

- ◆ Have a table set up with a white board standing on it/ behind it/ beside it – provide magnets for photos and markers for the forgetful and visitors to write or draw their gift
- ◆ Prepare gift boxes for Part 1
- ◆ Purchase lollies, balloons or party favours for Part 2
- ◆ Write the word 'LIFE' on a piece of cardboard and place it in a brightly coloured envelope. Write on the front of the envelope, 'THE MOST IMPORTANT GIFT OF ALL'. Hide the envelope somewhere in the hall before others arrive (if you can't arrive that early then ask the person who unlocks the building to do it for you). This is for Part 3.

Part 3

- ◆ Photocopy the gift bag template found at the following site onto cardboard – enough for everyone in the congregation
<http://www.homemade-gifts-made-easy.com/support-files/gable-gift-bag-template-us-letter.pdf>
- ◆ Provide small pointed scissors and tape to complete the gift bags. You might also like to provide some small gifts that can be placed inside the gift bags. For example, sweets, notebooks, balloons, bouncy balls etc
- ◆ Photocopy the activity sheets onto cardboard for Extra Activity
- ◆ Have a selection of catalogues and magazines, plus scissors and glue to complete the Activity sheet
- ◆ Prepare children to take part in Bible readings and Prayer activities at least one week before

Part 1 – God Gives Us What We Need To Live For Now

We are thankful for his generous provision.

Show a selection of gift boxes or plain boxes gift wrapped with the following items inside.

Containing objects/models or pictures such as	Representing
Bottle of water	Clean water for drinking and washing
House	Homes
Blanket or a dolls bed	Warm beds
Photos of family and friends	People who care for us
Money	Our ability to buy what we need
Car	Safe, reliable transport
Medicine/ doctor's equipment	Affordable Health care
Pencil, ruler, notebook, textbook	Education for all children
Food (leave this to last and include enough to share. Could be popcorn, grapes, crackers etc. Be mindful of allergies)	Nourishing food

Ask the children to take turns unwrapping the presents and talk about the variety of God's provision to us. You can also add or substitute your own ideas.

God created this world with all we need to live happy and healthy lives. He cares about us and wants to give us the things we need.

Ask one of the children to read these verses from Psalms 95. Prepare the child to do this in advance.



Psalms 95:1-7

Come, let us praise the Lord! Let us sing for joy to God, who protects us! ² Let us come before him with thanksgiving and sing joyful songs of praise. ³ For the Lord is a mighty God, a mighty king over all the gods.

⁴ He rules over the whole earth, from the deepest caves to the highest hills. ⁵ He rules over the sea, which he made; the land also, which he himself formed.

⁶ Come, let us bow down and worship him; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! ⁷ He is our God; we are the people he cares for, the flock for which he provides.

Prayer Activity

Invite each person to come forward and place the object which they have brought with them onto the table or whiteboard. Suggest that they take a moment to pray and thank God for his good gifts.

Ask one of the children to pray this prayer of acknowledgement and thanksgiving. Prepare the child to do this in advance.

Dear God,

You have given us so many good gifts. We can see some of them here today. Thank you for all of the gifts that you give to us.

Please keep reminding us that you want to take care of us and help us to live good and healthy lives.

Help us to remind each other to always be thankful for what we have.
Amen

PART 2 – GOD ASKS US TO GIVE TO OTHERS

We can show our gratitude to God by sharing what we have.

Purchase three bags of wrapped lollies. (If you have few children then buy one and divide it up into smaller bags. You might also need to use a few adults to make the point in this illustration.) If you want to avoid lollies then you could use balloons, stickers or small party favours.

- ◆ Explain that you have some lollies to share.
- ◆ Ask the children NOT to unwrap or eat any lollies yet.
- ◆ Give one whole bag to one child, the second whole bag to another child then divide the third bag up unevenly between the remaining children.
- ◆ You could consider leaving out an older child completely; however it would be best to warn that child beforehand to avoid tears.
- ◆ Ask the children to raise their hand if they are happy with the amount of lollies that they received.
- ◆ Ask the children to raise their hand if they think the lollies were shared fairly.



We talked a few minutes ago about how God has given us everything we need to live happy, healthy lives. But some of you might have noticed that not everyone has the same amount. Some of your friends might have a much bigger house than you or maybe they can afford to buy nicer clothes.

Go back to the items that were in the boxes in the beginning and use these to illustrate the things we have but others do not.

If we look around we can see that some people have very little.

Many people don't have enough clean water.

There are some people that don't have a home to live in. Some have to live under a bridge, or in their car, or even in rubbish tips.

Etc

The Bible has lots of letters in it that were written long ago. 2 Corinthians is a letter that was written by a man named Paul to the people in a church at a place called Corinth.

Paul travelled around to lots of different towns and he had discovered that the Christians in Corinth had plenty but that people in other places were extremely poor. The Christians at Corinth had offered to take up a big collection that they could give to Paul to help those who didn't have enough.

So, Paul had gone on a journey and was planning to come back to collect their gift. But he began to worry that the Corinthians might change their minds or give for the wrong reasons. He wrote this to them...

2 Corinthians 9:7-11

Each of you must make up your own mind about how much to give. But don't feel sorry that you must give and don't feel that you are forced to give. God loves people who love to give. ⁸ God can bless you with everything you need, and you will always have more than enough to do all kinds of good things for others. ⁹ The Scriptures say,

"God freely gives his gifts to the poor, and always does right."

¹⁰ God gives seed to farmers and provides everyone with food. He will increase what you have, so that you can give even more to those in need. ¹¹ You will be blessed in every way, and you will be able to keep on being generous. Then many people will thank God when we deliver your gift.

This is good advice about giving.

God doesn't want us to give because we think we have to. Being generous is not about following rules.



Being generous is about being thankful for how much God has given to us. We can show God how grateful we are by lovingly caring for others as we share what he has given to us.

Ask the children to look back at the number of lollies they were given. What could we do to make things fairer?

(The children should come to the conclusion that the situation will be fairer if those with a lot give some to those who have only a few or none at all. If they fail to reach this conclusion, you should suggest it.)

Some people think that because a person doesn't have very much, God must not love them. This simply isn't true. In fact, God promises that he absolutely loves us and cares for each of us. That's why in the Bible God continually asked his people to share what they have. Today he still asks us to share what we have. He wants us to look after each other.

God gives us plenty of good gifts and he wants us to share them.

Part 3 – God Gives Us What We Need To Live Forever

God has given us lots of super gifts but the most amazing one of all is the one I want to talk about now. I've written the name of this extra special gift on a card and hidden it in a (??) coloured envelope.

Allow the children to race to find the hidden envelope.

The most important gift that God gives us is the gift of life. He gives this gift to every person for us to live here and now.

There is one thing that he gives us that we **MUST** have to live this life. Can you guess what it is? It's more important than food. It's more important than water.

The answer is **oxygen**. Without oxygen we can only live for about one minute.

Oxygen is the most important gift God gives us to live life now.

God also offers us the gift of life **forever**.

What are some of the gifts that God has given us for life forever?

Allow the children to offer some suggestions. Include trust, forgiveness, love, hope, belief.

All of these things are important gifts that God has given to us for life forever. But there is one thing that God gives us that we **MUST** have to live life forever. Do you know what it is?

Life forever comes from Jesus and Jesus shares this gift of life forever with all of his friends.



You might already be a friend of Jesus, maybe you would like to be but don't think you are yet or maybe you need some more information before you make an important decision like this.

Friendship is something that grows as we get to know our friend better. Today, we can each make decision to learn more about Jesus and his friendship with us.

Lead the congregation in the following prayer

Dear God,

We want to thank you that you give us life for now and life forever. Thank you that you fill them with good gifts.

We especially want to thank you for the gift of Jesus.

Some of us today don't yet know much about what it means to be a friend of Jesus. Please help us to learn more.

Some of us know about Jesus and are ready to be his friend. Please forgive us for the times that we have hurt you with the things we have said and done and allow us to be friends with you forever.

Some of us have been your friends for a while now. Help us to keep on learning more about how to be a good friend to you and how to share your friendship with other people.

Amen

We can also share the gift of life forever with others by sharing Jesus with them.

Have everyone in the congregation make a gift bag, not just the children. You might be able to divide into small groups so that adults can assist the children (or vice versa). This is likely to be noisy and messy so you might need to prepare the adults in advance for this.

To finish today we are each going to make a gift bag.

Write these words on one side of the bag: "God gives us good gifts"

Cut out along the solid lines and fold along all of the dotted lines.

Use tape to fasten the sides and bottom of the bag.

Place a small gift inside then tuck the tags into the holes.

You can give this gift to a friend and tell them about the best gift of all - Jesus.

Extra Activity

- ◆ Photocopy the activity sheet onto cardboard.
- ◆ Have the children cut out pictures of God's gifts to us from the catalogues and magazines.
- ◆ They can stick these into the outline of the letters, 'JESUS', to make a collage.



GOD GIVES US LIFE FOR NOW
AND FOREVER

SHES