

TRAINING UP A CHILD IN THE RIGHT WAY

Stewardship for Adventist Students

BY VIOLET WEISS

What do the students in grades 1-8 at Beltsville Adventist School in Maryland have in common with the Bible's good and faithful servant? They practice good stewardship.

These students use their time and talents in the Kids Serving Others (KSO) program. On one afternoon each month, Beltsville's 200 students take part in a variety of service activities.

- Upper-grade students commute to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency warehouse to sort and package materials for developing countries.

- A puppet ministry provides an outlet for other seventh- and eighth-graders.

- A group of junior high students, in fluorescent orange vests, pick up trash along a two-mile stretch of their adopted highway.

- Middle-grade students enjoy painting ceramics with residents of a nursing home.

- At another nursing home, primary-grade students chat, play games, or celebrate birthdays with residents who look forward to their regular visits.

- Tantalizing aromas come from the school kitchen where fourth-grade students make baked goods to share with others.

The principal and teachers at Beltsville know that now is the time to make stewardship a dominant concept in Christian education.

The dictionary describes a steward as a person who is "entrusted with the management of the household or estate of another." Stewardship is defined as "the position, duties, or service of a stew-

ard." To Seventh-day Adventist Christians, stewardship means "man's responsibility for, and use of, everything entrusted to him by God—life, physical being, time talents and abilities, material possessions, opportunities to be of service to others, and his knowledge of truth."¹

Learning to Share

Even our youngest students experience and recognize the love and generosity of

God. It is crucial that they learn how to return this love and generosity to Him and how to share it with others. This is the essence of stewardship.

Financial pressures on families and churches are real today. Is it possible that a lack of early training in Christian stewardship has contributed to our current situation? The Scriptures tell us to "Train a child how to live the right way. Then even when he is old, he will still live that way."²

Perhaps the most important lesson of Project Affirmation is that cooperation by home, church, and school leads to faith maturity. We cannot depend on the pastor's once-a-year stewardship sermon to motivate students to active stewardship. Relying on parents to do it seems risky when we consider

that many church members do not pay tithe or give offerings to the church. Christian teachers must take the lead in this most important area. However, they must enlist the aid of both pastor and parents to ensure effective learning.

What Is Stewardship?

God gave us a body, abilities, time, and material possessions. He also gave us the responsibility to care for the world around us.

Stewardship of the Body. Our bodies belong to God because He created and redeemed them. Adventist health and physical education teaching should be built on this concept. God's health laws include (1) refusing to take damaging substances into our bodies; (2) refusing to engage in harmful activities; and (3) keeping our bodies clean and pure.

As Christian teachers we must demonstrate through our lifestyle the importance of

healthful living. Our healthy lives will attract our students to Christ and His way of life.

When we teach students health principles, they learn that making their bodies a "temple of God" brings blessings: the enjoyment of life, peace of

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mind, and a long life. Studies show that many children in developed countries are overweight and undernourished. Television has turned them into "couch potatoes." Christian teachers need to demonstrate and teach the blessings of exercise, sunlight, water, temperate and drug-free living, rest, good nutrition, and recreation.

Stewardship of Abilities. God gave us a wide variety of talents and abilities. The Scriptures refer to the church as the body of Christ. Just as the human body has specialized parts with certain functions to perform, so the church is made up of individuals, each with his or her own special function or contribution to make to the rest of the body. Our talents and gifts enable us to minister to others on behalf of Christ.

Teachers can help students identify and use their natural talents. Ask students to make a personal portfolio about themselves and their talents. Have the class perfectionist plan the details and make arrangements for a service project. The extrovert can be assigned to handle the up-front public relations. Classroom artists can make posters to advertise an event. Writers can take care of correspondence and reports to the newspapers. Mathematics scholars can manage the financial aspects of the project. Everyone can help get the project going. When it is completed, the class dreamer can be creating ideas for new projects.

In addition to natural abilities, God gives our students spiritual gifts. Take time to help your students identify and use their spiritual gifts.

Stewardship of Time. Time is a gift from God. Each moment is precious. God tells us to "do our best work, "redeeming the time."³ At Creation, God gave us six days of every seven to do our work. He reserved the seventh day as a special time for us to spend with Him.

Teachers can help students learn to use their time wisely. A timer may be helpful in encouraging some students not to waste school time. Talk with students about how many hours there are in a day or a week. Then ask, Why do some people accomplish more in this time than others? Keeping a daily or weekly log may help students identify time-wasting activities.

Through personal example, and by providing opportunities, you can encourage students to spend time each

week in Christian service.

Stewardship of Material Possessions. Money and possessions are assets to be managed for God. Remind students often that God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift and that He provides us with the power to get wealth.⁴ To help us remember that He is the source of all our blessings, God designed the system of tithes and offerings. Giving and sharing express our love to God and others. They are necessary elements of a well-managed, happy life. We were made in the image of God, and God is a giver.

Money management should be taught as a part of the regular educational curriculum. Since many of our textbooks are developed by non-Christian publishers, we must look elsewhere for

curriculum materials that reflect the Adventist viewpoint. Fortunately, two excellent sources are available. Teaching units for grades one through eight, called "Partners With God," have been developed by the Southeastern California Conference.⁵

The *Christian Life Management Series* also contains excellent materials. It features lessons on tithing, the value of saving, budgeting, debt management, honesty, the work ethic, and viewing success and prosperity from a Christian viewpoint. Every church school teacher should have access to these two sets of materials.

Even young children can tell the difference between wants and needs. Ask students to think about what they own, and the choices they can make about what to do with their possessions.

Stewardship of the World. Almost daily the media carries news of an oil spill, an endangered species, landfill problems, or acid rain. Take advantage of teachable moments to link the students' knowledge of environmental issues to the need for responsible stewardship.

This concept provides marvelous opportunities for developing critical thinking skills. Ask students, What does it mean to be in charge and "have dominion"? What does being in charge of the

universe mean in relation to mineral resources, care of forests, rivers, oceans, seas, or interplanetary space travel? How might our actions toward the earth change if we were to treat it as God's garment? Why did the Israelites have a Sabbath, or Year of Jubilee, for the land? What does it mean to "redeem the land"? Why does the land "mourn" (Hosea 4)? What should be the Christian's response to environmental issues? (See the insert in this article on "Science Activities" and Bryan Ness's article on page 13 for ideas.)

As Laodiceans, we have come to think complacently of our riches, including the earth's resources, without realizing we are indeed "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17, NIV).⁶ God made the earth and He has not abandoned it. He put us in charge, and appointed us to care for all creation.⁷

When to Teach Stewardship

Stewardship lessons must be taught daily throughout the year. How is this possible when the schedule is already so full? Fortunately, the concepts of stewardship permeate every area of the curriculum. It is not necessary to add another subject area. The sample activities listed under various subjects at the end of this article illustrate the flexibility of stewardship instruction. You may, however, choose to teach special stewardship units, such as those outlined in the *Christianomics* or the *Christian Life Management Series* (see Resources). An easy way to find time for these special units is to present them during the classroom worship period.

How to Teach Stewardship

Education learning theorists tell us that a multisensory approach is most effective for the majority of students. An old Chinese proverb says the following:

*I hear and I forget;
I see and I remember;
I do and I understand.*

Stewardship instruction must place the student in an active learning environment. The sample activities presented under the various subject areas will spark your imagination, and the resources included at the end of this article will provide you with a variety of helpful ideas. ☞

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REFERENCES

1. *SDA Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), p. 1425.
2. Proverbs 22:6, International Children's Bible, New Century Version.
3. Colossians 3:23, 24; Ephesians 5:15, 16 (ICV).
4. James 1:17; Deuteronomy 8:18.
5. *The Journal of Adventist Education* (December 1988/January 1989), p. 34.
6. From Holy Bible: New International Version. Copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES GROUPED BY SUBJECT AREA

Language Arts

1. Write personal letters or notes of encouragement, sharing a Scripture verse in each one. Appropriate occasions include:

- Congratulations to new parents, including an invitation to cradle roll.
- Sympathy or concern letters.
- Get-well notes.
- Welcome letters to newcomers.
- Good wishes on birthdays or anniversaries.
- Congratulations to newlyweds or people who receive honors, awards, or promotions.

g. Keep-in-touch letters to shut-ins, service people, and college students.

2. Write dramas from Bible stories or church history. Present them live or with puppets at other schools, nursing homes, or orphanages.

3. Make recordings.

a. Send audio or video get-well messages to hospital patients or shut-ins.

b. Exchange messages with a missionary family.

c. Record stories or Bible readings for a visually handicapped person.

4. Make scrapbooks to share with patients in the pediatric ward of the local hospital.

5. Participate in Read-a-thons or other projects sponsored by various civic organizations.

Mathematics

1. Present problems such as this one: Robert has the following income and expenses per month. Calculate his income, expenses and tithe:

\$25.80 for first week's work at the grocery, \$3.75 interest on a savings account, \$15.00 gift from Grandpa, \$24.90 for second week's work at the grocery, \$20.00 for second week's work delivering newspapers, \$19.74 for third week's work at the grocery, \$23.60 for fourth week's work at the grocery.

Total income \$ _____

Tithe \$ _____

\$20.00 miscellaneous living expenses, \$10.00 paid out for help in delivering newspapers.

Total expenses \$ _____.

2. Invite a church family to demonstrate where their money goes. Ask them to convert their paychecks into one-dollar bills. Pile the money in the middle of a table at the front of the classroom. Count out and make stacks of money labeled Tithe and Offerings, Housing, Food, Car Expense, Clothing, Insurance, Education, Medical Expenses, Allowances, etc. There will probably be little unassigned money left. Discuss the need for budgeting and saving for emergencies, as well as the privileges and responsibilities of family members.

3. Relate personal experiences in tithing and giving or sharing. Invite other adults in the church to share their experiences.

4. Display "Buy Now, Pay Later" advertisements. Discuss the pros and cons of credit purchasing. Invite an accountant to explain the difference between actual costs of cash versus credit purchases.

Bible and Christian Service

1. Adopt a missionary family and remember them with letters, tapes, and gifts throughout the year.

2. Adopt a child, father, mother, or grandparent. Visit a lonely person. Play games, read, or just visit and be a friend to that person.

3. Plan and conduct a Sabbath school or church worship service.

4. Help shut-ins and widows: spring cleaning party, fall rake 'n' run, merry mowers marathon, etc.

5. Start a tutoring service.

6. Contact a community action agency and ask how you can help the handicapped. Volunteer at a school for the blind or deaf, or at a hospital.

Science

1. Plant flowers. Pick and take bouquets to shut-ins or residents at a nursing home.

2. Plant flowers or trees at a park, church yard, children's home, or nursing home. (Trees are often available from the park service or the county conservation office).

3. Clean up a stream, river, lake, or bay.

4. Plan and establish a habitat for wildlife.

5. Reclaim an area damaged by erosion.

6. Adopt a highway.

7. Recycle newspapers, glass, aluminum cans, etc. Use the money earned for service

projects.

8. Research the energy crisis. Devise some practical ways to help solve the problems.

9. Report on endangered animals.

Social Studies

1. Identify mission fields as a part of map study. Adopt a mission and send Bible supplies, etc.

2. Combine current events and map study to identify areas of suffering and despair. Find ways to help with ADRA projects that provide seed, fertilizer, health care, etc.

3. Consider what it is like to be elderly and alone with very little income.

4. Think about what it is like to be hungry. Plan a Family Fast Day and donate the food money saved to feed the hungry.

Art

1. Make holiday nut cups, placemats, or tray favors for hospital patients.

2. Make greeting cards for various occasions.

3. Schedule an art project, such as ceramics at a nursing home. Have students help the residents paint.

4. Request permission to decorate windows in local stores, churches, and schools with mini-messages about God's love.

5. Develop guidelines for and sponsor a Christian art display.

6. Make banks to encourage students to save money.

7. Use pictures from catalogs and magazines to make posters showing wants and needs.

Music Activities

1. Sing or play for hospital patients, nursing-home residents, or shut-ins.

2. Make musical tapes to send to shut-ins or missionaries.

3. Consider what makes music Christian. Develop guidelines and sponsor a music festival.

Health and Physical Education

1. Bake bread and give the loaves to the elderly and poor.

2. Make an exercise trail for community use.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES GROUPED BY SUBJECT AREA

3. Witness through gymnastics programs.
4. Sponsor an aerobics class and invite community members.
5. Give puppet shows on healthful living.
6. Hold a Jump-a-thon, Run-a-thon, Bike-a-thon, or Skate-a-thon for community fund raising.
7. Sponsor a physical-fitness workshop for the church and community.
8. Organize a "You Are What You Eat" workshop or cooking school for the church and community.

Holiday Activities Throughout the Year*

September (Labor Day) - Check with farms and orchards to see if you can harvest food for service institutions or the poor.

October (Halloween) - Prepare treats for the elderly or shut-ins.

November (Veterans Day) - Send cards, gifts, or letters to military personnel.

(Thanksgiving) - Plan a feast for a lonely or poor person. Present a program about world hunger that focuses on what people can do to solve the problem.

December (Christmas) - Collect new or used toys for needy families, an outpatient waiting area, or a children's ward at a hospital. Go caroling at rest homes, hospitals, homes of shut-ins, or prisons. Send goody boxes and cards to military personnel. Make Christmas tray favors for a hospital or nursing home. Present the Christmas story as a program or choral reading at a hospital or nursing home.

January (New Year's Day) - Make stewardship resolutions.

(Martin Luther King Day) - Write letters to black leaders in the church, community, or nation expressing appreciation for their leadership.

February (Valentine's Day) - Make valentines with a Bible verse about love as tray favors for a hospital or nursing home. Plan a project to raise funds for the American Heart Association.

March (Spring begins) - Pick spring flowers and deliver them to shut-ins.

April (Arbor Day) - (See Social Studies).

(Secretaries Day) - Write thank-you letters to the school or church secretary or make small gifts for her as an art project.

May (May Day) - Fill a basket with toys

and deliver it to a children's home. Make paper baskets and fill them with flowers for shut-ins, hospital patients, or senior citizens. Make paper baskets and fill them with wrapped candy and invitations to your church, or with Bible correspondence cards. Hang them on doors in your community. Fill a May basket with food for a poor family.

(Memorial Day) - Plan a luncheon or send letters, cards, or gifts to disabled veterans.

* Adapt project ideas as appropriate for national holidays in your country.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT STEWARDSHIP

1. The Christian Life Management Series was prepared by the Department of Church Ministries of the General Conference of SDA, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Each of the three Instructor's Manuals contains 13 lessons. The lessons are designed to be used in either half-hour or longer sessions. Each lesson could provide a week of worship activities. The manuals are entitled:

- Beginners: *What Shall I Give Him?*
- Elementary: *In Charge of God's World.*
- Teens: *In Charge!*

2. *Partners With God*, a Christian money-management curriculum for grades 1-8 mathematics classes. Send \$25 to the Assistant Superintendent for K-8 Curriculum, P.O. Box 8050, Riverside, CA 92515, or call (714) 359-5800 for additional information.

3. Jackson, James W., *What'cha Gonna Do With What'cha Got? A Study in Christianomics*. Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1987. Applies the principles of economic theory to everyday life. Can be used as the basis for a 13-session study in Christianomics for teens to adults. You will also need to purchase the Leader's Guide and *Christianomics for Young People*, a student workbook.

Jackson, Anna Marie and James W., *A Stewardship Adventure*. Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1987. The children's version of *What'cha Gonna Do With What'cha Got?* Presents students with the adventure of being involved in a stewardship journey. Lessons include personal identification, charting the course of life, and "real life" opportunities

to share with others through treasure-chest transfers.

4. Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., *Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity: Step 8, The Christian and Stewardship*. San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1983. Contains seven lessons and a review suitable for teens to adults. The lessons address God's claim upon every individual and all aspects of life.

5. Stewart, Ruth Goring, *Environmental Stewardship*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990. A guide containing six Bible studies aimed at helping teen-to-adult-age students look at the crucial issues involved in caring for the environment from a biblical perspective. The study questions will spark lively discussion and develop critical thinking skills.

6. Van Benschoten, A. Q., *What the Bible Says About Stewardship*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1983. A study guide that combines Bible reading and contemplative questions to help group members consider how to use the world's resources according to God's command. Uses a timeline to present stewardship from a historical perspective.

Resources for developing stewardship through service activities:

Christian Service Curriculum Guide. Available from the North American Division Office of Education, General Conference of SDA, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600.

Dieleman, Dale, *Handbook on Service*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1980.

Ziegler, Sandra, *Service Project Ideas*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1977.

Materials for teaching individual growth in stewardship:

Kendall, R. T., *Tithing: A Call to Serious Biblical Giving*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.

Seventh-day Adventists Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1988. Chapters 20, 21.

For information about Beltsville Adventist School's KSO (Kids Serving Others) project, contact Wendy Pega, Principal, Beltsville Adventist School, 4200 Ammendale Rd., Beltsville, MD 20705 (301) 937-2933.