

Encouraging Children To Be Generous Disciples

Teach children how they should live and they will remember it all their lives.

(Proverbs 22:6, Good News)

My parents encouraged many good habits in me as a child and for that I am very grateful. One of those was to give an offering each week at church and I still remember getting out my offering envelope on a Saturday evening, placing my sixpence piece (yes, I am old enough to remember pre-decimalisation) and deciding which funds I wanted my sixpence to go towards. This good habit is one that I would invite you to encourage with the children in your family or congregation.

There are children in my own congregation who come to church each week excitedly holding on to their offering envelope and, for them, the placing of their envelope in the offering plate truly is an act of praise. When I receive the quarterly financial reports from other congregations I like to look at the forms for children and imagine the conversations associated with them, "I think I'll give 5p to Peacemobile this week and 2p to Outreach International and the other 3p to...let me think...oh yes, to my congregation."

Children like to know that they are part of something big and that they can make a difference to this 'big thing' in the place where they live and throughout the world. Sitting down with a child, no matter how young, and talking about the different things that they can give their offering to is a great way to do this.

In January we will be making available re-designed envelopes for children. As before, these will be in two halves, "My Church at Home" and "My Church in the World". Using these envelopes children will be able give towards their own congregation, Peacemobile, Dunfield, Outreach International, the work of the church throughout the British Isles as well as any of the new Mission Initiatives of the church such as 'Invite People to Christ' and 'Abolish Poverty, End Suffering'. On the back of the envelope will be pictures of Jack and Jenn, two cartoon characters that we will be using to teach children what it means to be a generous disciple. If you want to give your children a sneak preview of Jack and Jenn go to www.cofchrist.org/Generosity/ChildYouth.asp.

Children need to understand that sharing is an important part of being a disciple for Jesus. We should take opportunity in our homes and at church to tell Bible stories of times when people shared such as when a boy shared his food with Jesus and a huge group of people was fed.

The Power of 10 website, which can be found at www.giveyour10.org, contains some great stories and pictures of the ways that church offerings are being used to bring blessing around the world. Whilst these stories are not written specifically for children, an adult sitting down with a child and talking through the stories is a great way for children to see how their offerings are making an impact.

In "Of Water and Spirit", the church's pre-baptismal material, is an excellent section on generosity including the following activity that you could share with children:

Hold up a sheet of paper and share the following challenge. "God has blessed me in many ways. Each corner on this piece of paper represents a blessing. It has four corners. (Count them aloud.) We are called to share generously with others. (Tear a square off one corner of the paper, and give it to a child.) When I shared, what happened? What does my friend have? (Count corners of friend's square.) Do I have less because I shared? (Count the corners of your paper—now five. Continue until everyone has a piece of the paper.) When you give generously in response to God's blessings, you also receive."

Words are very important in teaching our children but, even more important is the example we set through our actions. So be an example to your children through your own generosity. If you are part of a family with children then let me suggest that you make a commitment as a family to all give each week using offering envelopes. Or, as a congregation, you could make a decision to encourage everyone, adults and children, to commit to give using envelopes and plan at least once a year to have a celebration of those things made possible through the generosity of the children and adults in your congregation. I've already ordered the offering envelopes for 2012 but I'm an optimistic person and have ordered more than I've been asked for by the congregation financial officers. So if you need more just let me know.

For many years, on the back of our offering envelopes, it said, "The Lord loves a cheerful giver." Have you noticed how, 9 times out of 10, a child will place their offering on the plate with a big smile on their face? As we encourage children to be generous disciples let us be open to learn from them the joy of generosity.

Andrew Fox
Mission Centre Financial Officer

MY MISSION TITHES		5555 0123
My Church at Home		
CONGREGATION MINISTRIES	£	_____
_____	£	_____
_____	£	_____
_____	£	_____
OUTREACH INTERNATIONAL.....	£	_____
My Church in the World		
USE WHERE NEEDED MOST	£	_____
INVITE PEOPLE TO CHRIST	£	_____
ABOLISH POVERTY, END SUFFERING	£	_____
PURSUE PEACE ON EARTH	£	_____
DEVELOP DISCIPLES TO SERVE	£	_____
EXPERIENCE CONGREGATIONS IN MISSION	£	_____
APRIL 10, 2011		

The Story of
Jack and Jenn
Mick & Jenn