

DISCIPLESHIP | MATTERS

Children and Stewardship

In a culture focused on personal wants and desires, raising young stewards has never been more difficult! From cereal choices to sneakers, marketers target our children. Advertising messages blur the line between “wants” and “needs.”

It is important to teach stewardship habits early. Beginning with preschool, most children are taught to share. As these young minds are being shaped, faith perspective is critical.

Consider the following suggestions for teaching children biblical models of stewardship:

- Stewardship is learned and modeled at home. Encourage families to have conversations with their young children about caring for all that God has given us. It is important for parents to counter the voices of consumerism with God’s word.
- Provide families with simple tools. Suggest creating a three-jar bank system for children. Few illustrations have been more successful at teaching the value of saving, giving and spending than this easy idea! Dividing their allowance and gifts into these three categories creates lifelong mental models.
- Teach that stewardship is about caring for *everything* God created. Provide children opportunities to give their money, time, energy and abilities in service and sharing with others. A range of activities—from picking up trash from a roadside to visiting a lonely neighbor—can help children see stewardship as involving all aspects of life.

— *The Rev. Dr. Christine Roush is American Baptist Home Missions Societies’ associate director of Discipleship.*



Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

— Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

“A Matter of Stewardship: Eco-justice in Biblical Perspective” (#920C) can be downloaded at abhms.org > Publications & Resources > Workshops for Church Life and Leadership.

An Advent Wreath Dedication Service, two sets of weekly Advent readings, and a reproducible children’s Advent activity sheet for use in church or at home can be downloaded at abhms.org > Publications & Resources > Discipleship and Christian Education Guide.



Everything comes from you; all we’re doing is giving back what we’ve been given from your generous hand.

— 1 Chronicles 29:14b (MSG)

The season of Advent—beginning four Sundays before Christmas—contrasts with the relentless holiday shopping messages. In Advent, Christians prepare for Jesus’ birth and anticipate Christ’s second coming. Parents can reset the holiday button with times of quiet reflection. Here are a few suggestions. Light the Advent wreath candles every night at dinner or before bedtime. Have a quiet Advent picnic under the lighted Christmas tree with a take-out meal. Sing the first verse of a familiar carol together. Use the following blessing at mealtimes: “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let this food to us be blest.” Shop together for presents for vulnerable children—and talk about why.

— *Martha Bettis Gee is a writer, editor and educator with more than two decades of experience in curriculum development and children’s ministries.*



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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.