

SOUTH CAROLINA  
BAPTIST CONVENTION

*Cooperative Program/Stewardship Development Group*

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**Stewardship...**  
**God's Way**

**Children's Edition**



Conclude by asking volunteers to read their litanies to the group. If a group project was written, lead students to prayerfully read the litany together. It may be recited as a choral reading, with half the group saying the first line and the other half saying the response line. Remind children to take home their children's page as you dismiss.

### Choice 3: "Giving the Firstfruits" Drama

**Prepare:** Gather props to be used in the drama: baskets, real or plastic fruit, Bible times costumes or squares of fabric for headdresses. Provide a copy of the children's page for each student.

**Teach:** Show the props and explain that children can use them to act out the Bible story. Guide the children to identify characters in the story who could be in their drama (*family who brings offering, priest*).

Let the children choose parts and help them decide how to act out the story. They may choose a narrator to read the story from the children's page as they act it out, or they may create their own dialogue. Guide students to think about how the people may have felt about finally being in their new land, picking the first crops they had grown, selecting the firstfruits to go in the offering basket, and presenting them to the priest to show God their thanks. Explain that giving a little bit back to God showed that they knew that all they had really belonged to Him. They were thankful for His gifts to them, and wanted to honor Him by giving the very best they had.

If there is time, the children may want to switch parts and act out the story again. Close with prayer and dismiss, reminding girls and boys to take home their children's page.



## Honor God by Giving Our Best

### Session Overview—Week 3

**Bible Passage:** Deuteronomy 26:1-11

**Biblical Setting:** As the Hebrew people prepared to enter the Promised Land, instructions were given for how they were to live and worship. This included instructions for giving offerings.

**Bible Truth:** We honor God when we give our best as an offering of thanks for His goodness.

**Memory Verse:** Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops. *Proverbs 3:9*

**Life Impact:** I can honor God by giving my best with a thankful attitude.

Have you ever watched and waited for the first tomato of

### Teacher's Personal Bible Study

the season to ripen in your garden? Have you eagerly watched the produce stands for the arrival of the earliest baskets of plump, juicy peaches in spring or crisp apples in fall? There is something special about the very first of the produce crop to be ready for harvest. Imagine how special the firstfruits of the harvest would seem to a people who had been away from their homeland for hundreds of years, and who had wandered in the wilderness for forty years! Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11 to find what God expected the Hebrew people to do with their firstfruits.

### **The offering** (Deuteronomy 26:1-4)

In giving the firstfruits, the people were acknowledging that God was the giver of all the good things that had come to them. They were serving and honoring Him with the most special part of their increase, the first and best they had.

It called for a sacrifice on their part, giving up those long-anticipated clusters of grapes, heads of wheat, handfuls of figs, olives, and dates. Yet what joy there could be in carefully choosing the very best produce to place in the offering basket.

Although our society uses money rather than the exchange of goods, the idea behind the offering is the same for us as it was for the Hebrew people. As we give a portion of what God has given us, we serve and honor Him. We acknowledge that He is the source of all that is good. We give up something of value to us to show that we value our relationship with God even more.

### **The confession** (Deuteronomy 26:5-11)

As the basket of produce was presented to the priest, a confession was made. In it, the giver remembered the humble beginnings of their nation. Jacob, their ancestor, lived for a long time in Aram. Later came the famine that resulted in the family moving to Egypt. The years of slavery, the exodus, and the wanderings were followed by God's leading the people back to the Promised Land.

Through this confession, the giver recalls the workings of God in the past. He recognizes that both the land itself and the fruit grown there is a gift of God. Finally, he rejoices in all the good things that God has given. The firstfruits are a symbol of the many gifts of God.

### **The use of the offering and the promise of blessing** (Deuteronomy 18:1-5, Proverbs 3:9-10)

The firstfruits offerings were used to support the priests and the ministries for which they were responsible. Our offerings are used to support the ministers serving in our churches and to finance the ministries of the church locally and, through the Cooperative Program, around our nation and our world.

**Teach:** Ask if people still bring offerings to their place of worship, and what is different about our offerings today. Then guide children to think about ways giving an offering is the same today as it was in Bible times.

Instruct students to fill in the chart, using words or pictures that show ways giving an offering are the same or different then and now. Let the children decide what to include on the chart, guiding them with suggestions when needed. (For example: "Then" may include drawings of fruit, baskets, people in Bible-times clothing. "Now" may include drawings of dollar bills or coins, offering plates, modern churches. Both sides may include smiling faces to show that people give to God with thankful feelings, or may include other symbols to represent that we give to show our love for God.)

Close with prayer and dismiss, reminding children to take home their children's page.

### **Choice 2: Giving Thanks Litany**

**Prepare:** Provide pencils and copies of the children's page for each student. Also, secure a piece of poster board or chart paper and markers.

**Teach:** Say "When they gave their offerings to the priest, God's people in today's Bible story recited a list of good things God had done for them. We are going to write a litany telling of good things God has done for us."

Distribute children's pages and pencils. Point out the explanation of a litany on the learner page. Give children the choice of each person writing their own or of the group writing one litany together. If they choose to work as a group, guide them to select a student to print their litany on the poster board or chart paper. Be available to give guidance or suggestions if needed, but allow the students to do as much of the work themselves as possible.

(If time is limited, it may help to write the repeated lines of the litany on the chart paper before the session, leaving room for the students to fill in the lines they compose.)



### Apply Bible Truths

Ask what kind of offerings we usually bring to church (*money*). Remark that the reason we bring an offering is the same as when the people of the Bible brought their firstfruits: we are showing our thanks to God, who gives us everything we have. Remind the boys and girls that our gifts to God include not just offerings of money or possessions, but also of time, abilities or talents.

Ask a student to read the verses marked in the Bible (*2 Cor. 9:7 and 2 Chron. 29:9*). Help them to identify the attitudes the people had about giving (*rejoiced, gave freely and wholeheartedly*) and the attitude God wants us to have (*cheerful*).

### Sing

Lead the children to sing the chorus, "God is so Good" with the verses used previously ("He made the world," "God sent His Son") and adding "I'll give Him thanks."

### Pray

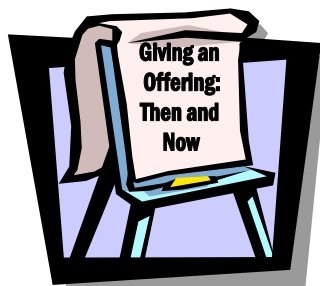
Encourage the children to say brief prayers of thanks. Close the prayer time by thanking God for His gifts and asking Him to teach each of us to honor Him by giving our best.

## Bible Learning Activities (20-25 minutes)

Provide the following activities, instructing children to choose one activity to continue learning.

### Choice 1: "Giving an Offering" Comparison Chart

**Prepare:** On a piece of poster board or chart paper, print the title, *Giving an Offering: Then and Now*. Draw a vertical line down the center of the poster and label the left side "Then" and the right side "Now". Provide pencils and markers or crayons.



Along with the instructions about giving an offering comes a promise. Proverbs 3:9-10 directly links the offering of the first fruits with a promise of blessings. Although God expects us to give up something of value, we can never out give Him!

## Beginning Activity (5-10 minutes)

### Prepare

- Provide foods typical of Bible lands for children to smell and taste. Examples are grapes, figs, olives, dates, and pomegranates.
- Provide any utensils needed for tasting the fruit, napkins, moist towelettes for cleaning hands, small cups, and a small pitcher of water.

### Teach

As children arrive, display the tray of fruits and explain that these are the kinds of items grown in the land God gave His people, now known as Israel. Invite students to name, smell, and taste the fruits. Explain that today's Bible story tells what the people did with the very first of the fruits to be ready for picking after they moved into the Promised Land. Offer small cups of water if needed, and encourage the boys and girls to help with clean up.

## Group Time - Bible Study (20-25 minutes)

### Prepare

- Make a session title banner and display it in the group time area.
- Write each word of the memory verse on a separate index card.
- Provide a copy of the children's page for each student.
- Mark the following verses in a Bible: 2 Chronicles 29:9, 2 Corinthians 9:7

### Introduce Session

Lead students to recall the definition of stewardship (to use what God has given you in ways that please and honor Him).

## Memory Verse

Inform the children that today's memory verse tells us a way to honor God. Give them the children's page and lead them to read together the memory verse from the front. Hand out the memory verse cards in random order and tell the students to work together to unscramble the verse, laying the cards out on the floor or table. Lead the group to read the verse together when it is completed. Remove one card at a time, repeating the verse each time a card is removed, until the group is saying the verse from memory.

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops. *Proverbs 3:9*

**Bible Skills** Direct the students to open their Bibles to Deuteronomy 26. Explain that today's story comes from this book, one of the first five books of the Bible. Ask whether this book is in the Old or New Testament. If you have older children, ask them to name the division (*Law*), and name the five books in that division (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*). With younger children, guide them to pronounce "Deuteronomy." Explain that Deuteronomy is a book of instructions that God told Moses to give His people.

## Tell the Bible Story

With your Bible open to Deuteronomy 26, tell the following story:

God's people were at an exciting time in their lives. Moses had led them out of slavery in Egypt. They had spent years in the wilderness. They were about to enter the new land God had promised them. God wanted the people to remember where they had come from. He wanted them to be thankful for the ways He had taken care of them. One way they could show their thanks was to give an offering to God. He had Moses tell them what to do. **Read Deut. 26: 2, 4.**

Perhaps the people went carefully through their gardens and fields when it was time to pick the crops. They may have chosen the very prettiest fruits, the very best stalks of grain, the finest vegetables. These were gently arranged in a basket. These first items to be picked, called the "firstfruits," would be their offering. The basket would be given to the priest during a worship service.



When the offering was presented to the priest, the giver was to tell about how God had taken care of their people. **(Read Deut. 26: 5-10.)** The gift showed their thankfulness for God's care. It showed that the people knew that all the good things they had were gifts from God. They honored God by bringing the very best they had as an offering to Him.

Explain to the children that the baskets of food were then used to feed the priests who served in the temple, and to help feed needy people in the land.

## Review Bible Facts

Ask the following questions:

1. What did the people give as their offering? (*firstfruits; the first of the crops they picked*). Remind the boys and girls that the fruits they saw and tasted at the beginning of the session were the kinds of fruits the people would have placed in their offering baskets.
2. What did the people do as they gave their offering? (*told about how God had taken care of their people*).
3. The offering showed that the people were thankful to whom? (*God*)
4. How was the offering used? (*to feed the priests and needy people*)

