

Character Building from the Bible

A Series of Bible Lessons by Every Child Ministries

CONSERVATION NOT WASTEFULNESS

Definitions:

Conservation is the wise and careful use of God-given resources for good and helpful purposes, recognizing that God has entrusted to us the use of all we have.

Wastefulness is the opposite of conservation. Wastefulness is the unwise or careless squandering of God-given resources, failing to recognize that God has entrusted to us the use of all we have.

Lesson Aim:

At the conclusion of this lesson, I want my students to understand that God has entrusted to us resources to use wisely to help ourselves and others. He wants us to use what He has entrusted to us carefully, not to waste it.

Memory Verse:

“So when they were filled, He (Jesus) said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost."

John 6:12 (NKJV)”

Bible Lesson Story:

“When Jesus fed five thousand people, what did they do with the scraps?”

John ch. 6 vs. 1-13

Introduction:

Ask two children to volunteer who like to put on skits. You give them instructions as they go along. First ask two of the children to come up. One will be a king or a rich man and the other may be his servant. The king’s servant presents him with many valuable gifts that visitors are sending to him, but the king wastes all of them, throwing them on the floor as if he does not value any of them.

At the conclusion of the skit, ask the children if the king showed conservation or wastefulness. Let several children briefly explain how the king was wasteful.

Transition from Introduction to Bible Story:

You may not be a king and you may not be rich, but God has given every one of us resources. We have goods that came from Him and belong to Him. God just lets us use them for awhile while we are on this earth. We have a choice to make, whether to use God’s resources wisely or to waste them.

Does the Bible have anything to say about conservation or wastefulness? Let's see. Let's look at John chapter 6.

Bible Story Outline (Development of the Lesson): (Activities suggested in parentheses after each point)

1. Jesus went over the sea of Galilee (in a boat), with crowds following Him because He had been healing the sick. (vs 1-2)
(Have everyone pretend to get in boats to follow Jesus, then sit in the rocking boats as they follow Him.)
2. Jesus went up into a mountain and sat down with His disciples, with a great crowd of people following Him. (vs. 3) (Skip vs. 4 as it does not move the story forward.)
(Have everyone pretend to be climbing a mountain as they follow Jesus.)
3. Jesus asked Philip where they would buy food, but He knew already what He would do. (vs. 5-6) (Let the children turn to one another and ask, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?")
4. One of the disciples, Philip, said it would cost too much to feed all the people. (vs. 7)
(Let the children look at you, shake their fingers and answer, "There's not enough money to feed all these people!")
5. Another of the disciples, Andrew, said the only resource available was one little boy's lunch. (vs. 8-9) (Let the children hold up five fingers and say, "Five little barley loaves", then hold up two fingers and say, "Two small fishes." Then shake their heads and say, "Not enough! Not enough! Not enough!")
6. Jesus asked them to sit down in groups. There were about 5,000 men. (vs.10) (Ask the children to squeeze together in groups of any number that is convenient for the seating arrangement. Count them up and pretend that there are 5,000 of them.)
7. Jesus took the boy's lunch and gave God thanks. He recognized that the food we eat comes from God. (vs. 11a) (Have the children pretend to hold the food in their hands and bow their heads. Have them say together, "Thank You, God...for this food...You have given us.")
8. He distributed the food to the disciples and they gave it out to the crowds. (vs 11b)
(Have the children pretend they are putting food into baskets.)
9. The little food became more and more—it was multiplied. (This is implied, since they all ate & were filled.) (Have the children keep on putting more and more food into more and more baskets.)

10. They all ate and were filled. (vs. 12 a) (Have the children rub their tummies as if they are full and satisfied.)
11. Jesus told the disciples to gather up the fragments that remained, that nothing be lost. (Today's memory verse) (vs. 12b) (The children should turn to one another and say, "Gather up the fragments....that nothing be lost!")
12. They gathered up 12 baskets of fragments. (Vs. 13). (Have them pretend to stack up the baskets of food that remained, counting each basket as they put it down.)

Concluding Discussions:

Discuss: What do you think they did with the fragments? The Bible doesn't say, but it does say Jesus didn't want anything to be lost. They didn't have refrigerators, so they could not have kept it for a long time. Maybe they ate it later in the day, or maybe they gave it out to others in need. Either was a good and helpful use of the resources.

Discuss: What did Jesus do that showed He understood that our food comes from God? (He gave thanks, vs. 11a). Food is just one example of a resource that comes from God. What else does God give us? (Sun, air, earth, plants, animals, families, schools, teachers, books, paper—every good thing we have is a resource from God).

Discuss: Since Jesus did not want the scraps of food to be lost, what do you think He would say about the other resources God has given us?

Discuss: What are some ways that students might waste God-given resources? (Let them respond. What are some ways that students could conserve those resources and use them wisely for good? At ECM's International Office we would like to receive a report on the details of this discussion.

Application:

What God-given resources have you been wasting? (Let the children respond, or just let them think about it. In older classes you might ask them to write down their ideas.) Let's pray about this right now. Let's ask God to help you conserve those resources and use them for good, that nothing be lost. (Teacher, pray for the students that they might become good stewards of God's resources and not be wasteful. Pray that they would be able to use all God gives them for good. If the students have mentioned specific areas where they need to change, pray for those areas.) In older classes, you might ask several students to pray. Guide their prayers along the lines suggested.

If God has shown you a way you can be less wasteful and a better steward of His resources, try this week to do the thing He showed you. I will ask next week about your progress.

Invitation:

A lesson in the series, "Character Building from the Bible",
developed by Every Child Ministries,
"Hope for the forgotten children of Africa"
Email: ecmafrica@ecmafrica.org
www.teachingaforfrica.com



There is another resource that it would be a shame to waste. That resource is salvation in Jesus Christ. Jesus, God's Son, died to pay the punishment for all our sins. He rose again. He finished His work and went back to heaven. He's alive today. He wants to give you eternal life, and He can save you if you call on Him. Today, if you have not yet called on Jesus, if you have not yet asked Him to save you, why not do it today in your heart? Don't waste the greatest resource God ever gave us. Let's bow our heads silently for a moment. In this moment of silence, if you have not yet asked Jesus into your heart and life to be your Saviour, would you call out to Him in your heart and ask Him in right now?

Songs:

Since conservation not waste may be a new thought to the children, these songs are best sung at the conclusion of the lesson.

Sing to the tune of "Oh Be Careful Little Eyes"

O be careful how you use what God gives (Please be careful!)
 O be careful how you use what God gives (Please be careful!)
 For the Father up above is looking down in love
 So be careful, very careful every day.

Sing to the tune of "Just Because He Loved Me So"

Everything I have is His
 Everything I have is His
 My God gave it all to me
 To use it carefully
 Everything I have is His

(Make up your own tune)
 Use it! Don't waste it!
 It all belongs to God
 Use it all for good today
 It all belongs to Him