



Congregational Learning Event

“Living and Giving” Leader’s Guide and Participant Handouts

Description

“Living and Giving” is a 90-minute learning event that involves all members in the congregation in enjoyable activities tied to the basic theme(s) of MAKE IT SIMPLE: simple living and generosity.

Audience

All ages in your congregation are welcome and needed at this event.

Outcomes

At the conclusion of this event, participants will be able to:

1. Discern and describe the purview of their lives, including some ways in which they will make their lives simpler.
2. Look at simple living from a biblical perspective.
3. Value the perspective of different generations in exploring this topic.
4. Establish personal relationships with others who might want to continue the conversation and support one another.
5. Consider their giving in relationship to simple choices in their lives.
6. Name the ways their congregation finds it important to look at living and giving through the lens of our faith.

Schedule

Welcome and introduction	<i>(10 minutes)</i>
Mini-workshops (Four at 15 minutes each, plus Introduction)	<i>(70 minutes)</i>
Review and closing	<i>(10 minutes)</i>
TOTAL	<i>(90 minutes)</i>

Materials

- Copies of the handout, “Take Home Review,” one per family or adult participant. (See the end of this document to obtain the original for photocopying.)
- Nametags (in four colors, with equal amounts of each color)
- Newsprint pad or chalkboard for general gathering area
- Markers, pens
- Materials for MAKE IT SIMPLE Banner (Chart paper or poster paper or shelf paper, colored tissue or construction paper, markers fasteners, glue, etc.)
- Clipboards and writing paper for informal survey as participants arrive
- Refreshments (optional)

Materials for Mini-Workshop 1: Following Jesus

- Script, “Jesus Teaches About Life” (included later in this Leader’s Guide)
- Props or costume for “Jesus” (optional)
- Art supplies for MAKE IT SIMPLE signs (Felt-tip markers, poster board pieces, construction paper, glue-sticks, stickers, or photographs of birds and flowers)
- Bible (for reading Matthew 6:25-33)

Materials for Mini-Workshop 2: Facing the Truth

- Materials for Obstacle Course (Large quantity of newspaper or magazine ads, signs: SIN, GREED, LAZINESS, SELFISHNESS, STUFF IS GOOD, FUNFUNFUN, EVERYONE IS DOING IT)
- Bible (for reading Mark 4:37-41)

Materials for Mini-Workshop 3: Acting Together

- Grapes and crackers, enough to serve the number of participants attending
- Small clay pots, soil, and seeds, enough for the number of families and individual participants (Consider seeds that can continue to grow after this event.)
- Permanent markers (for writing names on the sides of the clay pots)
- Materials for a miniature scarecrow (A small rag doll attached to a small stand or mini-easel) (optional)
- Bible (for reading John 13:34-35)

Materials for Mini-Workshop 4: Sharing Enough

- “Murray Worry video” segment (From MAKE IT SIMPLE DVD-ROM)
- DVD player (or laptop computer), LCD projector and screen (or large monitor)
- Sample School Kit (See list of supplies on handout, “School Kit Preparations.”)
- Copies of the handout, “School Kit Preparations,” one per family or adult participant (See the end of this document to obtain the original for photocopying.)
- How Do We Let Go? supplies (play money and tape or sticky notes with numbers written on them)
- Bible (for reading Philippians 4:11b-13)
- Play money (large quantity) and tape
- Offering plate

Preparation

To conduct this event—with its four “mini-workshops”—you will need to complete these tasks:

- Read the entire design for this learning event, noting places where you will make necessary adaptations to fit your situation.
- Enlist the services of a group of volunteers to assist you in the following tasks:
 - Assistant leaders for opening and closing, refreshments, etc.
 - Older elementary students who will take pre-event surveys and record responses.
 - Musician for opening and closing (Also see description of Mini-workshop 1.)
 - Readers—one per mini-event—to read portions of Scripture (In Mini-workshop 3, the reader will take on the character of Jesus instead.)
 - As a speaker in Mini-Workshop 3, an older member of the congregation who remembers and participated in a “Victory Garden” during World War II, or its equivalent
 - Three panel members (See description of Mini-workshop 2 for their task)
 - Time keeper (with hand bell or tap bell)
 - Set-up and clean-up volunteers
 - Mini-workshop leaders
- Decide on your specific schedule and prepare written directions for each group leader. (Make copies of this design or paraphrase.)
- Decide on the areas you will designate as the location for each of the four mini-workshops.
- As needed, set up tables and chairs for the mini-workshops.
- Begin the MAKE IT SIMPLE Banner by lettering “Consider the Lilies” at the top of a large piece of poster board, chart paper, or shelf paper.
- Hand-letter the signs for the Obstacle Course in Mini-Workshop 2.
- Inform the musician about the songs needed to lead in Mini-Workshop 1.

- ❑ On four slips of paper, write the words clock, phone, money, computer, one word per slip of paper. (For use in Mini-Workshop 2)
- ❑ Set up the projection or viewing apparatus for the showing of “Murray Worry” in Mini-Workshop 4.
- ❑ Walk through the plan of activities for each Mini-Workshop, to see how much time each activity might take. If necessary, abridge the workshop or adapt the workshop to fit the time available.
- ❑ If you will be serving refreshments, consider matters such as nutrition, allergies and the environmental cost of the food.

Event Plan

As participants arrive

While the group is gathering, send older kids among the arriving participants, surveying people for their best ideas about simplifying their lives, as well as their one-line prayers about their state of mind or hopes for generosity in their lives. These responses should be recorded on clipboards for use later in the event. Younger children can use this time to color and decorate a MAKE IT SIMPLE Banner, “Consider the Lilies,” that participants will engage later in the event at the location for Mini-Workshop 1.

As participants arrive, distribute name tags—color-coded for four different groups— so that the number of participants wearing each color name tag is approximately the same. If at all possible, arrange the distribution of the nametags so that all the groups have a variety of age levels represented in them.

When all participants have arrived, place the surveys (on the clipboards) at the location for Mini-Workshop 2 and the beginnings of the MAKE IT SIMPLE Banner at the location for Mini-Workshop 1.

Welcome and introduction

(10 minutes)

Welcome the group and share the goals for the event (see above). Characterize the event in this way:

“All around us the world is changing, presenting us with a time of change perhaps like never before. Our ideas about money, time, and the environment may all be changing. In these times we are being asked to live more simply—in some ways we are being forced to live more simply—and to continue in being generous. God can help us with all this! We gather as a congregation to talk about “making it simple” because we are a community of faith, committed to following our baptismal call of faithfulness and service.

We hear lots of talk, but we also want to hear God talk. We’re here to share our lives and challenges; we’re here to share and grow in our faith. Change crosses all generations; so does our congregation. We are here together to talk, listen, pray, learn, and sing. We are here to MAKE IT SIMPLE.”

Sing an opening song or hymn familiar to most participants, perhaps one with motions or other lively elements. Pray this prayer, “Dear God, help us to follow Jesus, face the truth, act together, and share what you have provided. Amen!”

Mini-Workshops

(70 minutes)

Ask participants to notice the color of their nametags. The larger group will now be sub-divided into four different groups by the color of their nametags. All four groups will now visit four mini-workshops, rotating among all four until they have engaged all of the learning experiences.

Note where each group will begin its journey among the mini-workshop locations. Emphasize that the learning in the mini-workshops is not necessarily sequential, so it’s okay for groups to begin in different places. Tell people that they will hear a hand bell after 12 minutes, which will be their signal to wind down their activities at that location. The bell will be rung again at 15 minutes, which will be participants’ signal to move as a group to the next mini-workshop. Make sure everyone knows where to move next. Provide each mini-workshop leader with a schedule and directions. Ring the bell to begin.

Mini-Workshop 1: Following Jesus

Jesus Teaches About Life

The group is seated. A person portraying Jesus now speaks to the group, using the following script. (During the singing of each song, Jesus should move to a new spot, to give the sense that the group is “following Jesus.”)

Script, “Jesus Teaches About Life”

Jesus: I want you to MAKE IT SIMPLE because I made it simple in my life. I will need some help telling my story. When God came to earth as me, Jesus, I was born in a manger. Pretty simple surroundings, eh? Can you help me sing about my simple beginning? Let’s sing the first verse of “Away in a Manger” together.

Group: Sings first verse of “Away in A Manger”

Jesus: After I did some growing up, I was baptized and God gave me some simple directions: Tell others about God’s love through word and deed. Let’s sing thanks to God for those simple directions. You know the song; it’s called “Hallelu, Hallelu.”

Group: Sings one chorus of “Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah, Praise Ye the Lord,” perhaps with motions—standing up and sitting down.

Jesus: I spent years healing, preaching, performing miracles, and traveling around with my disciples. We didn’t carry much stuff, and we tried to be generous to the people who needed us. Then I had to say goodbye and leave this world. There’s a simple song we love that I’d like to sing with you now. It’s called “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know.”

Group: Sings one verse of “Jesus Loves Me.”

Jesus: God acted simply through me, bringing joy to the world when I rose on Easter morning. Let’s sing about joy with a song you’ve heard, “Rejoice in the Lord Always.”

Group: Sings one verse of “Rejoice in the Lord Always,” perhaps as a round.

Jesus: Ever since that time my followers have simply tried to follow the commandment I gave them, “Love one another.” I still live in each of you, and I can help you to make the right choices about simply caring for the world and its people. As the body of Christ, you are simply and clearly part of this mission. Let’s sing another joy song; this one is called “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart.”

Group: Sings one chorus of “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart,” perhaps with motions.

Jesus: I know that sometimes it’s hard to simply trust God. It was hard for my disciples too, so I told them this story. (The designated reader reads Matthew 6:25-33. After the reading, Jesus continues.) Can you sway like the lilies? Can you fly like the birds of the air? I hope that you will carry my story home with you and it will help you to make it simple.

Take-home project

Begin creating MAKE IT SIMPLE signs to take home and display. They can remind the of Jesus’ assurance that they are abundantly nurtured. The signs can be simple, including photos or stickers of birds and lilies. The group can also work on the MAKE IT SIMPLE Banner for the church, titled *Consider the lilies*. Each group that rotates through this station will add to the banner.

Mini-Workshop 2: Facing the Truth

Panel Discussion

Introduce a panel of three people of different ages. Give each person two minutes to answer this question: What gets in the way of living life simply so that we can remain generous? (Be sure to give panel members this question beforehand so they can prepare their thoughts. Stress the need for each panel member to stay within the two-minute limit.) Share the ideas for simple living that were gathered on the clipboards at the start of the event.

Barrier Sounds

Quickly divide the group into four sub-groups and hand each group a slip of paper with one of these words written on it: clock, phone, money, and computer. Give each sub-group one minute to prepare a sound that stands for their word. Then each group presents their sound to the other groups, denoting things that get in the way of living simply. As time allows, talk about the nature of the barrier to simple living that each item characterizes.

What Gets in the Way of Simple? Game

Spread newspaper advertising and large signs with words like SIN, GREED, STINGINESS, LAZINESS, SELFISHNESS in a wide area across the floor. Ask who can “Get over the barrier” and allow group members to try to jump over or tiptoe around the barriers represented by the advertising and the signs. (Provide other options for those for whom “jumping” might be difficult.) Remove one row of newspapers and one or more signs. Then say that we are trying to make our lives simpler. Jump or tiptoe again. Repeat until everyone can simply step over the few remaining vestiges of the previous barriers. As time allows, talk about what this activity might suggest.

Ask the designated reader to share Mark 4:37-41. At the end of the reading, remind participants that the storm calmed when the disciples looked to Jesus.

Mini-Workshop 3: Acting Together

Jesus’ Disciples Listen to His Words

Tell the group that they are now disciples. Pretend to sit around a table. Pass around the grapes and crackers. The person designated as Reader takes the role of Jesus. “Jesus” now speaks to the group:

I wanted to talk to you, my disciples. I have some very important words for you. These words tell you how to live your life. There are just three words. Simple, right? Three words that I’m counting on you to remember. Here are the words: Love One Another. Can you say them with me? Love one another. I see some younger people here, some older people here. Some boys and girls, men and women. Kids, here are your words, Love One Another. (Repeat the instructions for other age or gender groups.)

A church is a group of people acting out the commandment I just gave you, Love One Another. Can you move around to make yourself into the shape of a church? A heart? A cross? A star? (Create all these shapes as a group.)

Jesus: I’m counting on you to work together. Let’s pray: God, help us to love one another and share our call to make a difference. Amen!

Victory Garden

Invite an older member of the congregation to talk for a few minutes about victory gardens and how they helped people act together. How they exemplified generosity in troubled times. While this person is talking, participants can add soil and seeds to a small pot. They can label the side of the pots with their names and the name of the plant, or write the theme, “Acting Together.” Create a little “garden” on the floor by putting the plants in rows. You can add a scarecrow if you’re really clever!

Mini-Workshop 4: Sharing Enough

Murray Worry

View the “Murray Worry” video up to the point where Murray discovers that he can’t get his stuff in his backpack. Ask the group what they think Murray will do. After a few moments of conversation, continue playing the video up to the point where Murray can’t get his two backpacks off. Stop the video, and ask the group if they have some solutions for Murray. After a few suggestions, finish the video and ask the group for their answers to Murray’s question, “What is enough?” Write the answers on poster paper or the chalkboard.

Ask the designated reader to read Philippians 4:11b-13. Ask the group what words about “enough” they might want to include next to their ideas about “enough” from the video.

How Do We Practice Enough? Game

Divide into small teams of three or four participants per team. One member of the team stands still while the other members tape pieces of play money to that person. They should be sure to tape money to the person’s back. After a couple minutes of having “money” attached, the moneyed-person tries to remove the play money as though trying to keep everything for himself or herself.

Talk about the experience: How did this person decide when she or he had enough money? When could this person have started to be generous? How can we learn to be satisfied with enough? How can we be brave enough to be generous? Collect all the play money in an offering plate as a symbol of one kind of generosity.

Take-home project

Show the group a School Kit they can prepare to send to a child or adult who couldn’t afford these supplies. Pick different kids in the group to come up and add each supply to the kit. When it is complete, invite members of the group to place one hand on the bag to bless it with this prayer: Gracious God, remind us of the joy of generosity. Thanks for giving so much to us. Amen!

Review and closing

(10 minutes)

Bring the group back together and call on a few participants of different ages to share what they learned during the event. Review the concepts that were presented in the mini-workshops:

1. Jesus made it simple and we follow Jesus.
2. It's not easy to "make it simple" in ourselves and in our world, but God helps us.
3. We need each other to make it simple. Jesus taught us to love one another.
4. God blesses us with enough. We can share our enough. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Distribute the School Kit Preparations handout (see below) for participants who want to make more of them at home. Remind participants to pick up their MAKE IT SIMPLE signs, flower pots, and MAKE IT SIMPLE Take-Home Review handout.

Close with the one-line prayers gathered at the start of the event. Sing an ending song of your choosing.

Options

1. If you have more time available for this event, you can extend the time for each of the mini-workshops by adding some moments of conversation among participants about the meaning of the activities in which they've just engaged.
2. To shorten the event, eliminate one or more of the activities at each of the mini-workshops, so that the time at each location is limited to ten minutes.
3. To provide some meaningful activities for very small children, see the Children's Resources section of this resource.
4. If the space available to you does not allow for four separate locations for the mini-workshops, take the whole group through each of the mini-workshops in sequence. In that case, prepare the materials for each workshop and place them each in a separate container. In that way, you can make easy transitions between the mini-workshops.
5. If you choose, you can reenact the "Murray Worry" story out loud and have participants draw or sketch as you read. (See the script for this story in the Children's Sermon section of Sermons/Bible.)



Living and Giving

Handout: “Take Home Review”

Directions: Put this sheet somewhere where it will remind you to have a conversation about your experiences in the learning event, “Living and Giving.” Talk with another person about any of these matters, recalling what you thought at the time was surprising, important, or worth remembering. Some of the directions here will help you take some actions that will also help you remember how to “MAKE IT SIMPLE.”

1. **Jesus MADE IT SIMPLE and We Follow Jesus**
 - Matthew 6:25-33 (Lilies and Birds)
 - Don’t forget to hang up your sign at home!

2. **It’s Not Easy to MAKE IT SIMPLE in Ourselves and in Our World, but God Helps Us**
Mark 4:37-41
 - When you see newspaper or magazine ads, remember: Get Over It!
 - Read the Bible, not just newspaper or magazine ads!

3. **We Need Each Other to MAKE IT SIMPLE. Jesus Taught Us to Love One Another.**
 - Love one another. John 13:34-35
 - How’s your plant growing?
 - Call someone from the event and talk more.

4. **God Blessed Us with Enough. We Can Share Our Enough. We Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Us.**
 - I can do all things through Christ. Philippians 4:11b-13
 - Take a clue from Murray Worry and check out your life—do you know what’s enough? What will you share?
 - Make more School Kits—they are really needed!



Living and Giving

Handout: “School Kit Preparations”

Before You Begin

A School Kit may provide the only supplies for children returning to school after the disruption of war. School Kits help parents continue their children's education, even while living in a refugee camp, for example. A School Kit may also be used in adult literacy classes.

Directions:

Include the following items in each School Kit:

- Padded or spiral notebooks of wide- or college-ruled paper approximately 8" x 10 1/2" totaling 150-200 sheets (if using 70-sheet notebooks, please include three); do not include loose-leaf paper
- One blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades work well)
- One 30-centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other
- One pencil sharpener
- Six new, unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers; secure together with a rubber band
- One eraser approximately 2-1/2" long
- One dozen sheets of construction paper in assorted colors (if necessary, fold in half to fit into the School Kit bag)
- One box of 16 or 24 crayons
- One sturdy cloth bag approximately 12" x 14" with cloth handles or drawstring closure (See <http://www.lwr.org/beinvolved/schoolkit.asp> downloadable patterns.)

Important Note

Do not add other items or leave out any of the items listed. All items should be new and in good condition. Remove any excess packaging and pack items in the bag, fold the handles over, and secure with two large rubber bands or tie with yarn.