



Make It Simple

A Resource for Stewardship Education and Annual Response

Family Learning Event

“MAKE IT SIMPLE at Home” Leader’s Guide and Participant Handouts

Description

“MAKE IT SIMPLE at Home” consists of an extensive set of delightful activities that can easily fill a weekend family retreat or a series of shorter events combined over a longer period of time. The activities are accessible to parents and children, and each helps deepen families’ understanding and practice of the twinned themes of MAKE IT SIMPLE: simple living and generosity.

Background

God loves and cares about your family. God knows that your family faces some hard challenges as you try to make your life simpler and your choices more sustainable. You may have much to learn:

- How to trust God to provide for you.
- How to deal with your insatiable desires for more.
- How to find hope, rather than anxiety and despair.
- How to recognize your abundance and share it.

At church you get to talk about what’s happening around you in a totally unique and refreshing way. You share a language of faith that you can speak and hear, a language that brings new ideas to subjects you may have become weary of hearing in the same old ways. Your church offers you a place to be honest with one another as you rediscover God’s abundance, promises, and covenant.

When you learn about MAKE IT SIMPLE in this congregation, you can look to your biblical tradition, lean on your congregational life of worship and education, and take advantage of the connections you have as the body of Christ. This family learning event, “Make It Simple at Home,” offers the opportunity to look at both simplicity and generosity with God’s words and ways to guide you. This event, like this stewardship emphasis as a whole, is based on four ways to think about MAKE IT SIMPLE:

- Following Jesus
- Facing the Truth
- Acting Together
- Sharing Enough

You learn together with others because you are a God-given resource for others, and them for you. God ties you together with others through faith and commitment. You can take advantage of common beliefs to support one another. Together, you can become a stronger energy force for God’s mission than you can be separately.

After learning together at this event, you will carry the things you have learned from your church home back to your family home. There you will reflect on and use the ideas you have learned in distinctive ways. Because you learn together, a little of piece of you goes home with each of your church brothers and sisters. Each of you will remember each other’s ideas and words from this learning event. You offer one another a sacred gift, a prayer for each other’s family.

MAKE IT SIMPLE seems to be a popular goal in our world. Innumerable tips fill the airwaves about sorting out clutter and managing time. There are even several magazines devoted to simplicity. Many of these efforts are quite helpful. But here at church you have a chance to approach the subject of simplifying life in a new way, by recognizing that God’s economy is quite different from your own.

For example, your time—which you may waste and fill and never have enough of—is actually God’s time that was gifted to you. Your stuff doesn’t belong to you at all; it belongs to God. In fact, your whole life, which you may think you have such freedom to use or neglect, actually belongs to so many more people than just you. You are in truth the caretaker of the things you thought you merely owned. God’s economy is a very different and refreshing way to look at your life and how you live it.

God has purposes in this world for your time, money, and gifts. So what will you do with what God has given you? How will you manage the resources that God has entrusted to you? Tied up with God as you are, the living out of God's creativity and generosity, you can ask God to help you learn so much more about your faith partnership with God, others, and the world. This event will help you do just that!

Audience

This learning event (or series of shorter events) helps families of all sizes and ages—including one-person families—unearth and wrestle with questions of how to strengthen their habits of lifestyle and generosity.

Outcomes

After attending this event, congregation families will carry away:

- **Holy helps:** Biblical texts and reflections that help them look at God's guidance about MAKE IT SIMPLE.
- **Relationships:** Ideas, concerns, and questions from church families about how they are sorting out similar issues.
- **Actions:** Some fun and important ways to evaluate and grow in the choices they make at home about how they live and give.
- **Deeper understanding** that they are part of something bigger. God holds, sustains, and challenges them simply to be more and more faithful in their living and giving.

Schedule

(NOTE: This schedule presents four distinct events inside a larger event. With opening and closing activities and a break, the event can occupy about four hours of time at a family retreat or all day event. As a set of learning experiences—over several weeks—this family event consists of four 45-minute events, each one devoted to one of the MAKE IT SIMPLE themes.)

Opening	<i>(10 minutes)</i>
Following Jesus	<i>(45 minutes)</i>
Facing the Truth	<i>(45 minutes)</i>
Break	<i>(20 minutes)</i>
Acting Together	<i>(45 minutes)</i>
Sharing Enough	<i>(45 minutes)</i>
Review and Closing	<i>(10 minutes)</i>
TOTAL	<i>(220 minutes)</i>

Materials

This learning event requires an extensive set of materials to be effective. Most already exist within homes or Sunday schools. Some items will require whole-congregation searching and gathering. See the descriptions of the individual activities for more details about these materials.

General

- Bibles, one per family or participant
- Large movable chalkboard or whiteboard or four separate “Graffiti Wall” arrangements (several sheets of newsprint taped together; each “Wall” fastened to one of the four walls in the room)
- Markers, pens, pencils
- Copies of “Counting Sheet,” one per family or participant

Materials for “Following Jesus”

- Scripture cards, Matthew 6:31-33, one card per ten participants
- Bird costume
- Flower costume
- Symbols of trust in God for sustenance: Bible, flower, birdfeeder, cross

Materials for “Facing the Truth”

- Rolls of masking tape, one per family or individual participant
- Large selection of “stuff” (See event design for suggestions.)
- Copies of handout, “Counting Sheet” (See above.)
- Large signs (SIN, ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, GLOBAL HUNGER, GREED, WAR, POVERTY, STINGINESS, SELFISHNESS), one set per four families
- Paper or plastic refuse bags, at least four
- Scripture cards, Mark 4:37-38, one card per family
- Swim cap and goggles
- Broom
- Paper bag, with eye holes cut out

Materials for “Acting Together”

- Medium-sized throw rugs (5 x 8 feet), one per family
- Set of Question Cards (four cards, one question per card)
- Bible
- “Green” snacks

Materials for “Sharing Enough”

- Large fake \$100 bill
- Offering plate
- Large pair of scissors
- Large drawing of clock face (poster board)
- Large drawing of heart (poster board)
- Stock Market (or Business) sections of newspaper
- Large pieces of cardboard (size of small door), one per family
- Sets of decorating materials (tempera paint, paint brushes, colored construction paper, glue, scissors), one set per family

Preparation

This event will run smoothly and simply—most activities are enjoyable and self-evident. Some preparation is required and so you might want to consider these tasks as necessary preparation for this wonderful event. They are listed by the categories of individual activities.

General

- Read the directions for each of the activities, determining how you will adapt them to your context and your goals.
- Decide how you will adapt activities so that one-person families can work together with other families.
- Construct a Graffiti Wall in the meeting room. (This wall will be one or more places where the observations and questions of participants and leaders will be collected at various times—formal and informal—during this event.) Make sure that you provide ample space on the Graffiti Wall(s) for these comments, questions and drawings. One good way to encourage participants’ comments is to include some starter thoughts or questions on the Wall(s) before the event begins.
- Assemble all materials, anticipating that you will need some help in finding some of the more interesting items.
- Decide the format and schedule by which these events will be offered. You have several options.
- Enlist the help of assistants who can make the event move smoothly.
- Determine how you will fit the “four different directions” format of this event into the room(s) in which the event will take place.
- Find four readers who will help you with the closing devotions. Make copies of the prayer for their use.

Following Jesus

- Rehearse the quick “Bible lesson.”
- Place tape on the floor to establish the “Worry Line.” Make sure that the line is long enough to accommodate the number of families that will be standing along its length during this activity.
- Arrange for two participants—adult or children—to dress up, one like a bird and the other like a flower. See the activity description for further details of what they will do in their costume.

Facing the Truth

- Try out the “Masking Tape Home” activity so you understand how it will work in the space that you have available. If necessary, clear enough floor space so that each participating family will be able to tape off their “home” on the floor.
- Double-check to make sure that you have enough “stuff” for this activity. See the activity description for further details.
- Make ready several sets of large signs with the words SIN, ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, GLOBAL HUNGER, GREED, WAR, POVERTY, STINGINESS and SELFISHNESS on them.
- Ask a participant or other leader to prepare to read Mark 4:35-41.
- Arrange for two participants—adult or children—to dress up, one like a swimmer (swim cap, goggles, swim fins) and the other wearing a paper bag (with eye holes cut out). See the activity description for further details.

Acting Together

- Double-check to make sure that you will have enough throw rugs to accommodate the number and size of families you anticipate attending this event.
- With your family—or others—practice solving the problem in “Turn Over the Rug.”
- Invite a participant or other leader to read John 13:34-35.
- Make a set of Question Cards, one question per card. See the activity description for further details.

Sharing Enough

- Double-check the directions for the activity, “We Are God’s Generosity Machines.” If you’ve never constructed a “human machine” before, you might want to try out the activity with trusted colleagues first.
- Invite several kids or adults to participate in the two skits that are the central focus of this activity. After assembling the props for the two skits, practice the two skits for timing and visibility. See the activity description for further details.

- ❑ Prepare the newspapers for the second skit. Each newspaper section (the financial section of a larger newspaper) has the words GOD’S ECONOMY written in large letters on the sides facing out. Each of the four newspaper sections has a different message written on or attached to the side facing the reader. See the activity description for further details.
- ❑ Gather enough large cardboard sheets—packing boxes for appliances or similar—for each family to decorate its own “door.”

Event Plan

Opening

(10 minutes)

Welcome participants and share the outcomes and purpose of the event spelled out earlier in the Description and Background sections of this event design. Begin with a prayer or the singing of some familiar child-friendly songs. (Songs from your most recent Vacation Bible School might be a good place to start.)

Following Jesus

(45 minutes)

How Worried Are You?

Point to the taped “Worry Line” you have attached to the floor earlier. Note that this line helps people decide their answer to the question, “How Worried Are You?” One end of the line indicates VERY, VERY WORRIED and the other end of the line means NOT WORRIED AT ALL. On your signal, families stand somewhere along the line, indicating their feelings about the present and future.

Each family can only stand in one place along the Worry Line, so they must have time to talk and decide how they feel before choosing where to stand. Families can find a compromise position on the line if they have different opinions. This may be the first time that young kids hear that their parents are concerned about the future, so remember that wherever families stand, it’s holy ground.

You can make the activity more interesting by naming some possibly worrisome matters—some fanciful matters mixed in among some more evocative ones. Ask families to react to any of them, as well as indicating their general feelings. Among the prompts might be these:

- How worried are you about meteors falling out of the sky?
- How worried are you about your car?
- How worried are you about being bald when you’re 30 years old?
- How worried are you about your friends not liking you?
- How worried are you about having enough money to give offerings?

- How worried are you about war?
- How worried are you about your pet(s)?
- How worried are you about not having a house?
- How worried are you about someone you love dying suddenly?
- How worried are you about bad weather?

Use this prompt last: How worried are you about things in general, now or in the future?

Jesus Talks about Worry

After you have tried several of these “Worry Line” prompts, tell the group that you are going to read a story that Jesus told to his worried disciples. Tell the families that, as they listen to the story, they are allowed to move elsewhere along the Worry Line. You or a helper read Matthew 6:25-33 slowly, pausing several times to allow for families to talk, decide, and move if they choose.

Before the group sits down, invite a few families to share how they decided where to stand. (This may be difficult at first, so be patient or change the question slightly.) Ask someone who moved to share how they decided to do so. Which of the questions prompted the most worry? The least? How did the words of Jesus influence their place on the Worry Line? Invite the whole group to take note of which other families are standing near them.

Participants can return to the middle of the floor and sit down for a quick Bible history lesson about the reasons Jesus understood worry. Use these statements to construct your own version of the lesson:

- The culture into which Jesus was born was filled with fear.
- Some of the fear came from the brutal rule of the Roman government that had taken over the country some 60 years earlier.
- The rulers—and their followers—were also afraid, mostly of violent mobs and terrorists.
- Ordinary people were worried about having enough food, and about their children’s survival. (The more healthy children you had, the more work your family could get done.)
- Most everyone was poor, and the religious leaders weren’t exactly kind to poor people, either.
- Everyone—even poor people—was expected to pay taxes to the Romans, a “Temple Tax” to keep the Temple running, and to offer sacrifices. People didn’t “give to their church” as much as they “paid taxes to the church.”

- If you couldn't keep up with the cost of sacrifices and couldn't keep yourself clean, some religious leaders thought that God didn't like you.

When you are finished, take time for a few questions or comments from participants. As you are conversing about these matters, distribute the cards on which you have written Matthew 6:31-33, one card per family. Provide 3-5 minutes for families to talk with each other about these two questions:

- What can we expect of God?
- What can God expect of us?

For a more dramatic way to teach these lessons—finding lasting and durable ways to combat worry and following Jesus' advice—try this two-part skit:

1. A child or adult dressed in a simple bird costume “flies in” to suggest ways families can “strive for the kingdom.” (Praying at mealtimes, bedtimes, and car times; talking about blessings and thankfulness; being generous; converting the power of worry into positive action.) Ask for more ideas.
2. A child or adult dressed in a simple lily costume sways in like a flower and shows some “at-home symbols” that show trust in God. (A Bible, a flower, a birdfeeder, a contribution envelope, and a cross.) Do participants have other ideas?

End this activity with this prayer: God, recycle our worry into trust and ministry. Amen!

Stretch Break

If this activity is part of a longer event, this might be a good time to take a stretch break. Encourage participants to add any of their ideas about overcoming worry to the “Graffiti Wall” you have constructed before the event. Comments, questions, and drawings can all be part of this collection point for important thoughts.

During the break you can bring out, stack, and label the pile of “stuff” that will be available for the following activity.

Facing the Truth

(45 minutes)

In these activities, participants address the second theme of the event, the difficulties associated with living simply and generously.

New Homes

Invite participants to return to the main gathering area, directing their attention to the space where they will engage the next activity: Creating the outline of their “home” on the floor and filling it with supposedly valuable items.

Give each family a roll of masking tape. Their task in the next few minutes: To mark off on the floor the outline of a small version of their “home.” Encourage participants to work together to solve an obvious problem: Not enough floor space for every family present to have a large “home.” Provide sufficient time for families to negotiate the dimensions and particulars of these “homes.” If space is at a real premium, suggest that some families might “live together”.

After most families are finished taping down the outline of their homes, invite families to select from the pile of possible belongings what they believe are important items to possess in their homes. (If the number of families is significant, you might provide several piles of stuff.) This previously assembled pile of stuff might include:

- Clothes, shoes, jewelry
- Sports equipment
- Play money
- Recycled electronic equipment
- Toys and games
- Clocks
- Bibles
- Photos and other framed mementoes
- Pet supplies
- Some facsimiles of credit cards, wallets and cash
- Bedding
- Cleaning supplies
- Cooking equipment (pots and pans)
- Plates, glasses, cups, eating utensils
- Tools
- Gardening or lawn equipment
- Materials for hobbies or collections

As participating families select from among the things they want for their homes, there will likely be some competition for the items, some disagreements, and some laughter. Note the interactions among participants as the source for follow-up questions.

When most homes are filled with the items their families have selected, talk together about some of these questions:

- What items did you select? Why?
- Are you happy with your selections? Why or why not?
- What would you have liked to select, but it wasn't there?
- What happened when (if) what you wanted had already been taken by another family?
- What did you notice (about your actions or your thinking)?

Distribute pencils or pens and copies of the handout, "The Counting Sheet," one per family or participant. This handout asks families to begin inventorying the types and quantities of materials they have in their actual homes. Provide a few moments for families to begin the counting process, while remaining in their "homes." As they engage in this activity, place several sets of signs on the floor around the homes.

Jesus Talks about Storms

Interrupt the inventorying activity before families complete the handout. Ask the group, "Does it feel windy in here? Does anyone feel a storm coming up?" Ask everyone to close their eyes and pretend that their "homes" have now become boats. They are now riding in a boat—with all their stuff—and will listen to Jesus' ideas about "storms." (In many places in the world, people's homes are about the size of boats. In other places, people live in their boats as their homes.)

Distribute copies of the Bible verse card you have previously made, with two verses from the story of Jesus calming the storm: Mark 4:37-38. Invite families to read the passage together and then consider any or all of these questions:

- What keeps us from seeing Jesus outside our home? Inside our home?
- How did Jesus make it simple for the frightened disciples?
- How often do we ask God to bail out our sin?
- Who saved the disciples? Who saves us?

Two surprise visitors help refocus the group about sustainable ways to face the truth about simplicity and generosity at home. A child or adult wearing a swim cap and goggles comes in with a broom and begins sweeping away the words around the boats/homes. This symbolic act reminds participants of the power of confession and forgiveness.

Another child or adult wearing a paper bag over his/her head—with eye holes cut out—distributes paper or plastic refuse bags among the families. This action reminds the group of the power of tossing out our doubts, our excesses, our isolation, our selfishness. Families fill the bags with the stuff in their homes and return them to a designated spot. They also pull the masking tape off the floor during this time.

Complete the activity with this short prayer: God, help us to stop hiding from our greed, and from you. Amen!

Break *(20 minutes)*
Offer time for a longer break, with another invitation to add to the Graffiti Wall(s) ideas about how to face the truth of our too-complicated lives.

Depending on the length of the total event, this might be a good time for snacks. Before the event, ask a funny, extroverted family to prepare and present a “commercial” for a healthy, environmentally friendly snack that they will offer to the entire group.

During the break, distribute throw rugs among families, so that each family has a medium-sized rug for its use in the next activity.

Acting Together *(45 minutes)*

When you reconvene the group after snack time, direct their attention to the space where they will participate in the next activity, based on the theme of “Acting Together.”

Turn Over the Rug

This activity requires families’ ingenuity and cooperation to accomplish what seems like an impossible task. Give these directions—perhaps more than once—for the challenging task of turning over the rug: “Your job is to turn over this throw rug completely. You may not use your hands and none of you may step off the rug.”

When one or two families accomplish the task, stop the activity, and invite them to share their secret of how to turn over the rug. If there is sufficient time, let each family try the solution so that they experience success. If time is at a premium, invite families to sit on or around their rug.

KEY TO TURNING OVER THE RUG: First, the entire family stands at one corner of the rug. Second, one family member reaches out with his or her foot to pull over one corner of the rug. Other family members move aside to allow for the action. This action continues, little by little, as the rug slowly folds over. The last step may require some delicate footwork: Reaching inside the last curl of the rug to flip it over.

Talk about the experience together, using questions such as the following:

- What was the most difficult part of this activity? Why?
- How did you figure out how to solve the problem?
- Can you recall a time when your family faced something “impossible” and you worked together to solve the problem? How did that feel? What did you learn?
- Why is “together” usually better than “alone”?
- Why do you think there are congregations? Denominations?

Jesus Talks about Love

Introduce the Bible reading and sharing time with these thoughts: Jesus offered advice to his disciples about working together, about team work. Before Jesus departed for heaven, he gave his disciples words to live by. Jesus made it simple by telling them the most important thing.

You or a designated reader can read John 13:34-35 slowly.

Divide the larger group into four smaller groups and distribute one of the following Question Cards to each group. Their task: to consider and answer their question within 3-5 minutes. For your reference—in making the Question Cards—the questions are these:

- How does loving one another at home help us be generous at church?
- How does loving one another at church help us be generous at home?
- What are some other simple words that change lives, as Jesus’ words did?
- God’s love never ends. How does God help us sustain love?

After the group discussion time has elapsed, call for the most exciting answers from each group. Record the groups' responses on the Graffiti Wall(s). You might assign a member of the event team to transfer all the responses on the Graffiti Wall(s) to a hard copy or an electronic version that would be distributed to participants after the event.

Complete the activity with this prayer: Loving God, help us to be part of your plan for love flowing through the world. Amen!

If it seems necessary, take another stretch break. During the break, you might want to clear space for the next activity, "God's Generosity Machines" and check with the volunteers who will present the two skits that follow. You may also want to bring together in one place all the materials needed for the activity, "Opening Our Doors."

Sharing Enough

(45 minutes)

Bring the group back together at the space you've designated for the "Sharing Enough" activities. Ask participants to return to their four groups from the previous activity. The following set of activities helps participants understand and imagine how acts and attitudes of generosity get folded into the practice of simplicity.

God's Generosity Machines

What's God's simple plan for delivering the energy of goodness and love to the rest of the world? God uses us, the church, in many places. Participants will now demonstrate how this works by constructing "human machines," in this case "God's Generosity Machines." Each group will now "construct" a generosity machine that demonstrates how God's sustainable love is enacted as a church. Each member of the team should be a part of the machine, engaged in the machine's work.

ABOUT "HUMAN MACHINES"

A "human machine" activity works like this: People decide on an overall action that this "machine" will accomplish. Each person will be part of the machine, engaging in some action in relationship to the people nearby. So one person might lift an object, the next person transfer the object, and the third and fourth person might clean and polish the object. Other people prop up these parts of the machine, and still others make machine noises. The activity requires some creativity, some whimsy, and close physical proximity. One hint for starters: Think of an assembly line.

Some possible activities these “generosity machines” might make include:

- Serving communion.
- Giving or collecting offerings.
- Sharing the peace.
- Collecting or serving food for people who are hungry.
- Repairing the home of a homebound person.
- Cooking or serving food in the church kitchen.
- Assembling School Kits.
- Writing letters to public officials or businesses.
- Any other generous action of your family or congregation that shows God’s love to the world.

Provide enough time for groups to think together about their machines, and to put their chosen action into motion. As you circulate among groups, give hints only when necessary. (For example, ask group members what connects to what; what it takes for their “machine” to work efficiently, or what might be special about their “machine.”) When most groups are ready, give each “God’s Generosity Machine” a chance to demonstrate its efficiency and teamwork.

Two Themed Skits

Use these two skits to further present this theme. In the first skit, three adults or children sit in a “pew.” The ushers arrive with an offering plate. The first child pulls out a very large fake \$100 bill, cuts a slice off of it, and puts it in the plate, looking smug. The next child pulls out a large cardboard clock, cuts out a slice of it, and puts the slice into the plate, with a similar look of smugness. The last child pulls out a large heart and places it, as is, in the offering plate, looking very content. The first two actors look at one another in shock and then put in the rest of their offerings.

Ask the audience members what they think God wants us to share.

Continue with the second skit. Four helpers walk in, holding the financial or stock market pages from the newspaper, wide open in front of them. GOD’S ECONOMY is written in large letters on the outside of each newspaper section. The “newspaper readers,” each in turn, read out loud the message on the *inside* of their newspaper section and post it on the Graffiti Wall(s).

First Reader's Message: I have learned to be content with whatever I have.

Second Reader's Message: I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty.

Third Reader's Message: In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.

Fourth Reader's Message: I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Complete this activity with remarks similar to the following:

God makes it simple for us by instilling a desire to be generous in each of us. We are created in the image of a giving God. When we give, we find God's peace, knowing that we are doing what we were built for. When we give, we feel empowered to do God's work. We can simplify our lives by getting our priorities straight, by practicing the focus of sharing. As we "act differently," we replace the urge to grasp with the desire to give. We begin to experience the heart of what St. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "We can do all things through God who strengthens us."

Opening Our Doors

When we throw open the doors of our homes and head out with the spirit of generosity, where do we go? What are the volunteer opportunities in our congregation and our community? What are the particular needs? Who are some of the people who are blessed by our congregation's offerings? The following activity introduces families to these questions, and begins their answers.

Direct participants' attention to the large cardboard sheets and decorating materials you have assembled for this activity. The large cardboard sheets now become "the front door of our home," the exit families take to enter the world and do God's will.

The directions are simple: Each family decorates their large piece of cardboard, creating a "door" to their house. The doors are a reminder—or a sign—of how this family intends to share God's love with others. Provide time for families to make decisions about their intentions and to decorate their doors suitably. Families might want to title their doors MAKE IT SIMPLE, or to include this Bible verse: *The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore. Psalm 121:8*

After most families are finished with their work, they can circulate within the room, writing ideas on each other's doors about where families can go to volunteer at church and in the wider community. Congregational leaders can write needs on the doors, as well as facts about the congregation's work in the world.

At the end of the event, families take their doors home to remind them of the goings-out they want to do and the comings-in of God's Spirit through generous simplicity.

Review and Closing

(10 minutes)

Thank everyone for coming, and encourage continued conversation and action. Announce other events related to MAKE IT SIMPLE. Conclude with this prayer.

MAKE IT SIMPLE Family Learning Event Closing Prayer

Reader 1: Dear God, during our time together we have admitted our worry and heard from Jesus that we can trust God to provide. We have learned that our energy is better used in ministry than in fretting.

Reader 2: During our time together we have taken a look at what is in our houseboat—a lot of stuff, but also a Messiah who saves us from ourselves and all that is swirling around us.

Reader 3: During our time together we have been together. We need one another to continue the conversations we have just begun. We feel less alone and more empowered for good through our community of faith.

Reader 4: During our time together we have learned about living with less and giving with more. Dear God, this is your dream for us, that we would know we can do anything through Christ who strengthens us. Help us to live in your will. Help us to make it simple in Christ. In his name we pray,

All: Amen!

Options

You can adapt this Family Learning Event to your situation by using any of the following options:

1. Visit the Children’s Resources and Bible Conversations sections of MAKE IT SIMPLE for other activities.
2. You can lengthen any of the individual activities by:
 - Providing more time for families to complete any of the activities.
 - Following each activity with additional time for discussion and sharing, either in small family groups, small inter-family groups or with the larger group.
 - Extending snack or stretch breaks into times of family recreation—walks, exercise, exploration— or opportunities for rest or other free time.
3. Any of the four major time segments can be shortened by keeping instructions brief, providing less time for the activities’ completion—families can finish projects or conversations at home—or by eliminating selected activities.
4. Use the “Murray Worry” video segment in place of the activity, “How Worried Are You?”
5. If you are not able to obtain sufficient quantities of cardboard sheets—for the “Doors” activity—ask families to make “yard signs” for the same purpose. Adjust the materials needed and the meaning of the activity.
6. If space is limited—most of these family learning activities require significant floor and wall space—consider “stations” in other parts of your facility, moving the group from room to room instead of staying in one place. Don’t forget hallways and the outdoors as places for learning.

Make It Simple

Family Learning Event Handout: "Counting Sheet"

Directions: Together with other members of your family, conduct an inventory of your home—seeing what you have, and how many of each item you have. How many of these items can you find at your house? HINT: Don't forget your closets, attic, or basement!

ITEM	TOTAL
Socks	
Bibles	
Towels	
Videos	
DVD's	
Toys you don't play with	
Recycling bins	
Art supplies for hand-made gifts	
Spaces for a garden	
Cars	
Energy-saving devices	
Credit cards	
Unidentified leftovers in the refrigerator	
Televisions	
Pets	
Checkbooks or billfolds	
Savings banks	
Books	
Healthy food packages	
Clothes items you've outgrown	
Clothes items you haven't worn in a year	
Sports equipment you don't use	
Collections with dust on them	
Broken items waiting for repair	
Big power tools	
Dolls or cuddly toys	

As a family, consider the reasons why you might give away or recycle your "stuff."
Make a plan of how you might start doing this more regularly.