



Make It Simple

A Resource for Stewardship Education and Annual Response

Following Jesus (Based on Matthew 6:25-33)

Background thoughts

It is important to have the right attitude about material possessions. Jesus' instruction not to worry about tomorrow does not forbid thrift, thoughtfulness, and careful provision for the future; these qualities are good. It does, however, forbid the sort of worry about clothes, food, and the future that so consumes the person that there is no joy left in their life. The disciple must combine hard work with quiet confidence in God for the future. Worry can take up so much of one's energy that one is paralyzed and cannot act. From *The African Bible Commentary* (Zondervan)

Reflections and questions

- How do kids MAKE IT SIMPLE?
- Kids are like birds and flowers; they move and grow!
- What do kids worry about?
- In some sense we can watch children and know how to get over our worries.
- When kids have too much, they are weighed down and can't fly.
- Where do children hear that God provides?
- Where do they also hear about money worries?
- What is God telling children and their families through this teaching of Jesus?

Preparing for the sermon

1. Find and bring to church two child-friendly backpacks.
2. Assemble and bring to church a large variety of school supplies, snacks, and clothes.
3. Before the sermon is delivered, pick a volunteer to be Murray Worry.
4. Read and rehearse the story, "Murray Worry." (See the full story at the end of this document.)
5. Optional: Make copies of take-home instruction sheets for School Kits. (See below.)

Sermon: “Murray Worry”

Tell the story of Murray Worry. When the story is finished, revisit the story by asking the volunteer Murray Worry to pack up his backpacks, perhaps with the help of the other children.

Now load up Murray with both backpacks. Ask the children who are present, “What is enough? How do you know?”

Remove about half the stuff out of the backpacks. Tell the children that you have an idea for the extra materials that Murray probably doesn’t need. Tell them that you have an idea for the extra stuff. Introduce the idea of “school kits” or their equivalent in your faith community. If you have retrieved sufficient materials from Murray’s backpack, show children how to assemble the School Kit.

About School Kits

These are standardized collections of necessary school supplies, packaged in a useful container. Two organizations who carry out this kind of work are Lutheran World Relief <http://www.lwr.org/beinvolved/schoolkit.asp> and Church World Service http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=kits_school. See their Web sites for further details, including downloadable take-home instruction sheets.

Continue the Children’s Sermon by telling the children that Murray Worry did forget something; he forgot what he had heard in church. Show them a small Bible and read the Matthew text that shapes this sermon.

Jesus told them, “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ Seek first God’s ways and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Ask the children what would happen if Murray shared his stuff and made a School Kit for a child somewhere else in the world who doesn’t have any money. Remind them that Murray can ask God for help with trust the next time he gets really worried.

Give kids a take-home sheet about making School Kits. Announce details of your congregation’s efforts to assemble School Kits.

Tell kids that they get to take home something else, a question—What is enough?

Pray together. “God of birds and flowers and us, we thank you for feeding us and clothing us. We trust you to take care of us. We hear you tell us to take care of one another. Please help us. Amen!”

A Children’s Story: Murray Worry

Once there was a boy named Murray who liked to worry. Murray worried about lots of things:

- Whether his hair would fall out,
- Whether his pet turtle needed vitamins, and
- Whether his sister watched him when he slept.

Summer was over for Murray Worry and now he had a new worry—Would he get the right back-to-school supplies? Murray’s mom took him to the store and he checked the list from his new teacher about a million times.

- Glue sticks or glue in a little bottle?
- Pink erasers or white erasers?
- 100 sheets of paper or 500 sheets of paper?
- A metal ruler or a plastic ruler?

Murray just couldn’t make up his mind—and he wanted to get it right.

“We’ll just buy one each of all these things,” said Murray’s mom. She was in a hurry. So they bought:

- A new backpack
- 5 folders with animals on them and 5 plain folders
- several boxes of Kleenex®
- A couple boxes of Band-Aids® (wide and skinny)
- Scissors with round ends and scissors with pointy ends

And on and on. . . .

Murray’s mom headed for the checkout line. “No, Mom!” called Murray. “We still have to buy snacks and gym clothes!” In the food section, Murray couldn’t decide between Gummy Armadillos and Fruit Cuties. So, you guessed it—they got both. They also stocked up on crackers, cookies, and bars. Murray Worry saw snacks that his friends liked and he talked his mom into those things, too. “Otherwise they might not like me,” worried Murray.

In the clothes section they picked out gym shorts—yep, long ones and short ones—T-shirts with different teams on them, and a couple pairs of tennies, in case one pair got dirty. Finally, with their cart filled, Murray Worry and his mom headed to the checkout line. Now Murray’s mom looked a little worried, as she looked at the cart and wondered about her credit card balance.

On the first day of school Murray packed up his school supplies in his new backpack. He stuffed in this and he pushed in that. He stretched the corners of the backpack to try to fit in all his stuff. There was just one problem—one BIG problem. Murray’s backpack filled up, but there was still a big pile of stuff on the floor. “Oh no! Oh no!” said Murray Worry. “I have to bring all this stuff to school. I guess I’ll have to take another backpack too.”

So Murray stuffed more stuff into his old backpack from last year, the one with the color none of his friends liked. Two full backpacks. Now Murray worried about how to carry two backpacks. They were too fat to stack on his back. So he slipped his arms through the straps, putting one backpack on his back and one backpack on his front.

Murray walked like a robot all the way to school. When he arrived at the playground, his friends greeted him. “You look weird, Murray!” they said. “Put down all that stuff! We’re playing tetherball and Four Square.” Murray Worry would have loved to “put down all that stuff,” but two things stopped him. He was worried that someone would steal his stuff if he didn’t hold onto it, and, honestly, he couldn’t get the backpacks off! The front straps were in the back and the back straps were under those, and his hands couldn’t reach either one!

Some kids were looking and laughing at Murray. He ducked into the school and went to the nurse’s office. “Um, I think I’m stuck,” said Murray Worry to the nurse. He was, of course, worried that he would have to wear two backpacks for the rest of his life. She rescued him, removed the backpacks one by one, and asked Murray why he brought so much stuff. “I just didn’t want to forget anything,” said Murray.

“Murray, don’t you know what’s enough?” asked the nurse. That question followed Murray down the hall, as he wore one backpack and carried the other. It followed him into his classroom, where two backpacks wouldn’t fit in his cubby. It followed him home, where he lay on his bed and thought about it. It followed him to church. And here’s the question now—Don’t you know what’s enough?