

FAITH SHARING

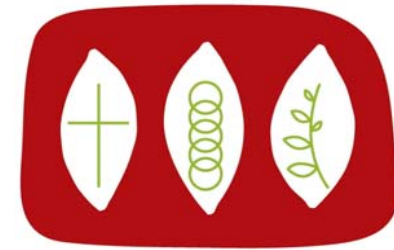
CONVERSATION THAT TRANSFORMS US

In this ever-changing, ever-expanding global world, our awareness that each person has an unique but limited experience continues to grow. Without conversation, honest and respectful dialogue, we have only our own truth. Conversation can call us out of ourselves to hear and consider the points of view and experiences of others.

When Christians gather to share faith and study the scriptures, they are gathering together as church. Jesus promised to be with us wherever two or more gather in his name.

Faith sharing is dynamic and relational. It requires participants to respect and honor one another. As a group, talk about what you value in how participants treat one another. Your group may suggest principles such as:

- ** Respect everyone. Each of us has his or her own unique experience that can contribute to the fuller truth the group sees collectively.
- ** Listen intently; pay attention to others' efforts to communicate their own story. Listening attentively is an act of respect.
- ** Communicate your experience; put it into words, share it with the group. Each must accept responsibility of contributing. Everyone's experience will be richer for it.
- ** Always ask questions when others' contributions do not make sense to you. Restate what you think you heard but ask for affirmation or clarification.
- ** Be comfortable with silent times; do not talk just to fill up quiet space.
- ** Keep conversations confidential. What is said in the room—stays in the room. When people share at a personal level, trust is essential.



ADVANCING
THE MISSION

Small Faith Sharing Group Five Week Program

for the
Stewardship Campaign:
Advancing the Mission

WEEK TWO GRATEFUL JOY Through Prayer

Participant's Guide

GENERAL FACILITATOR NOTES

Prepare for the meeting; calculate a time frame to follow. Have details set and ready ahead of the appointed gathering time.

Welcome everyone at the door. Distribute nametags if needed.

If someone is missing from your session—arrange for a quick check in and inform the rest of the group.

Arrange seating so that everyone can see each other easily.

Encourage people to stay with the group—discourage looking ahead.

At the end of this session, decide who will serve as a facilitator for the next gathering.

Relax, enjoy one another, and let the Spirit do its work!

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible
CD Player/Boom Box
a vase of flowers—one for each participant to take home
prayer cloth
Nametags & Markers
Music Selections

(borrow from the Parish Media Center, the Choir Director, the Worship Committee, or the Faith Formation Staff)

SUGGESTED MUSIC

All You Works of God – Marty Haugen, GIA Publications

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You – Public Domain

Sing A New Song – Dan Schutte, New Dawn Publications (OCP)

Sing A Joyful Song to the Lord – Jim Farrell, OCP Publications

All the Ends of the Earth (Psalm 98) – any version,
or Bob Dufford, OCP Publications

SUGGESTED READING

U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, *“Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response,”* Pastoral Letter of U.S. Bishops, 1992. See www.usccb.org/stewardship/index.htm

Hermes, Kathryn J. FSP, *The Journey Within: Prayer as a Path to God.* St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004. See www.catalog/american catholic.org

Robert F. Morneau, *Paths to Prayer.* St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1998. See www.catalog/american catholic.org

Macrina Wiederkehr, *The Song of the Seed.* Harper San Francisco, 1995. See www.harpercollins.com

Grateful Joy through Prayer

Week Two of a Five Week Series

Developed for the
Stewardship Campaign:
Advancing the Mission



Authored by Jackie Staley for the
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SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

Some instrumental music is played. The leader invites the group to a few moments of silence. The leader invites members of the small group to mention in just a few words something that impressed them from this week's conversation. The leader or another member offers some concluding, affirming words before the final prayer and hands a flower to each person to take home.

Psalm 4:4, 7-8, 9



- Leader** Lord, let your face shine on us.
- All** Lord, let your face shine on us.
- Side I** When I call, answer me, O my just God,
you who relieve me when I am in distress;
have pity on me, and hear my prayer!
- All** Lord, let your face shine on us
- Side II** Know that the Lord does wonders for his faithful
one;
the Lord will hear me when I call upon him.
- All** Lord, let your face shine on us.
- Side I** O Lord, let the light of your countenance shine
upon us! You put gladness into my heart.
- All** Lord, let your face shine on us.
- Side II** As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep;
for you alone, O Lord, bring security to my
dwelling.
- All** Lord, let your face shine on us.

Grateful Joy

Week Two

Prayer

Display a Bible with a bouquet of flowers on a cloth of color near where the group will meet.

The number of flowers equals the size of the group.

Open the Bible to Philippians 1.



The leader welcomes the members of the group.
If new members are present, each introduces her/himself.
The leader can begin the session by reading the introduction aloud.

INTRODUCTION

Prayer *flowers* into JOY. When we lift our hearts to God, opening and offering ourselves with gratitude, we can experience priceless joy deep within. A glimpse of the beauty of God is reflected in the simple radiance of a flower. The Bible, the Word of God, is our inspiration.

OPENING PRAYER

Philippians 1:3-4; 9-11

- Leader Let us begin by asking God to bless our reflection and prayer together.
- All Pray with joy to the Lord!
- Reader I I thank my God whenever I think of you and every time I pray for you all I always pray with joy.
- All Pray with joy to the Lord!
- Reader II And this is my prayer for you: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception to discern what is of value.
- All Pray with joy to the Lord!
- Reader III So that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.
- All Pray with joy to the Lord!

FAITH IN ACTION

1. Set aside some time for daily prayer. Keep the time to a manageable amount, but be faithful every day. Include one of the scripture passages in the reading or reflection in your prayer.
2. List some of the times when you experienced true joy. Take that joy with you to your next Eucharist with your parish community.
3. Pray with someone who is ill or struggling. If it is not possible to pray with them, pray for them.
4. Tend to a flower or plant with the theme of rich soil, vines, flowers, harvest, the 'grandeur of God.'
5. In the spring plant a vegetable or flower garden. At harvest time, give some of its produce to your nearest homeless shelter.



FAITH SHARING

1. How would you link personal prayer to stewardship as a way of life?
2. How is the celebration of the Eucharist with your parish community connected to stewardship?
3. Could a person be a good steward without prayer? A humanitarian, such as Albert Schweitzer, could be called a good steward. What dimension does prayer add to Christian stewardship?
4. When have you experienced deep joy? Was it – or could it have been – linked to prayer?
5. How does gratitude for your many gifts from God affect your words and actions?



A READING

excerpted from the
U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops Pastoral Letter:
Stewardship: A Disciple's Response (1992)

In the lives of disciples...something else must come before the practice of stewardship. They need a flash of insight – a certain way of seeing – by which they view the world and their relationship to it in a fresh, new light. “The world is charged with the grandeur of God,” Gerard Manley Hopkins exclaims. More than anything else, it may be this glimpse of the divine grandeur in all that is which sets people on the path of Christian stewardship.

Not only in material creation do people discern God present and active, but also, and especially, in the human heart.

“Do not be deceived.... All good giving and every perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17) and this is true above all where spiritual gifts are concerned.



A REFLECTION

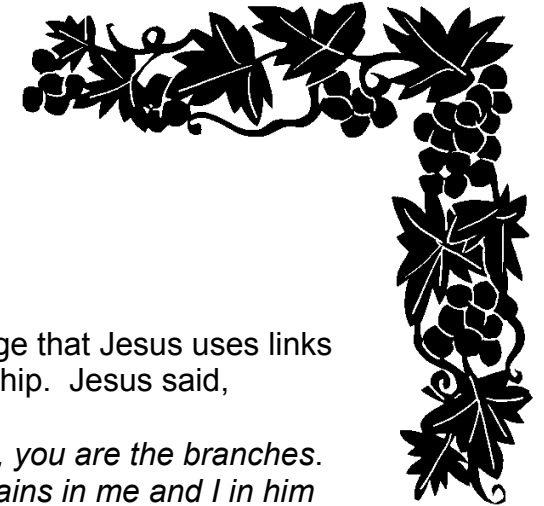
We have heard the expression, “nature *versus* nurture,” referring to one’s physical or psychological traits that come from genes versus environment. When looking at our lives before God, we can drop the “versus” and simply link nature AND nurture.

Becoming deeply aware of the endless gifts of God to us personally and as a community, we see that the *nature* of God is generosity. Our response is both delight and gratitude. Our responsibility is to *nurture* these gifts with reverence for the Giver. When we pray, we nurture our sense of gratitude. Then we open ourselves to experience joy.

“There are those who have been sown in rich soil; they hear the word and accept it and yield a harvest, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” Mark 4:20

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.”

Matthew 13:44



Another harvest image that Jesus uses links prayer with stewardship. Jesus said,

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing....”

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. John 15:5-9

A life that is attached to Jesus the vine and grounded in prayer yields a rich harvest, a harvest of joy and energy to spread the goodness of God.

Then we become God’s good stewards. Stewardship as a way of life thrives.

