

Celebrating Children

GATHERING

Greet and welcome children. Direct them to a center to make paper doll chains. Give each person a paper doll chain and invite him/her to color the paper dolls to represent a diversity of people and cultural clothing using the pictures as guides.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 10:13–16
John 6:1–11



BIBLE STORY

Allow time for children to show and share their creative work. Talk with them about differences among people, using pictures for some clues. Ask children to name some ways people are different. Help them explore the diversity of people, not only in the way they look, but also differences in interests, skills, food choices, language and lifestyles. Talk about why diversity is good. Read Mark 10:13–16 and talk about Jesus' response to children. Ask:

- **How did Jesus treat the children who came to see him?**
- **How do you think Jesus wants us to treat other people?**

Sing together, "Jesus Loves the Little Children." Then say, "I wonder if you can tell me some ways people are the same." Encourage children to talk about the needs for food, water, safety and the love that all people share. Invite them to name some of the people who take care of them and a few of the ways they are cared for. Explain that some children do not get enough food to eat every day, even though their families love them and want to take good care of them. Explain that they are sad and their families are sad because they can't get enough food. Tell the story found in John 6:1–11 and ask:

- **How can we show Jesus' love to people who are hungry?**
- **How can we help people who live far away, people we don't even know?**

Talk about Heifer International; say that sometimes people need just a little help, and then they can take care of themselves and their children. Show pictures of two or three animals and ask how each animal might help a hungry family. Explain that you will save the money that the children bring and together you will get an animal to send to a hungry family. Tell what animal you intend to purchase and give information about the good that animal can do. Show the chart that will display their progress toward their goal. Help children experience excitement and joy as they anticipate helping hungry people.

CLOSING

Close with a snack of animal crackers or cookies made into the shape of the animal you plan to purchase. Lead in this prayer:

Thank you, God, for giving us the food we need. We know you love all of us, no matter what we look like or where we live. Thank you for loving us so much. Help us to show your love to other people by helping everyone get enough food to eat. Amen.

PREPARATION

- Choose an animal to purchase.
- Cut paper doll chains: Fold paper in an accordion fold with each face approximately 3 x 3 inches. Cut a person shape through all folds at once, but do not cut around fingers at the edges of the paper. Get crayons and other supplies for decorating chains.
- Download and print pictures of people from different countries and different ethnicities. Visit www.flickr.com/photos/heifer/albums/. Post these in your meeting space.
- Create a progress chart to be used in every session.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

Create Cooperative Collages. Draw four large circles on newsprint. Let children take turns choosing a picture from stacks of animal, habitat, food, wool, milk, eggs, other animal products, and pictures of people who might use the products or care for the animals. Match animals to habitat and products; glue matching pictures in circles.

Celebrating God's Creatures

GATHERING

Welcome children and collect money for your animal project. Let children make changes to the progress chart to show how much money they have collected. Invite them to talk about their pets and the care animals need. Explain that God made many kinds of animals, animals are for God and people to enjoy, and God cares about animals.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 104:1
Psalm 104:10–28



PREPARATION

- On a large sheet of paper, draw a scene that includes streams of water flowing, grass, trees, etc. as described in Psalm 104. Draw pictures of animals or download and print from <http://flickr.com/gp/heifer/8rPxx2/> to add to the picture as you read the psalm. Attach with glue or tape.
- Make cards for memory matching game.
- Gather things to glue on puppets.

BIBLE STORY

Read aloud Psalm 104:1, 10–28 from a children's translation. After each verse or introduction of an animal, let children take turns adding the appropriate animal to the picture you have prepared. Talk about the Psalm with children.

- How does this Psalm say God takes care of animals?
- Why do you think God made so many different kinds of animals?
- What can chickens do that donkeys can't do? What can donkeys do that birds or goats can't?
- How can chickens, donkeys, goats and bees help hungry people?
- What would you do to take care of chickens, cows, goats and bees?
- What might happen if you didn't take care of (feed) your pet?
- What might happen if people didn't take care of their animals?
- How do people take care of the animal you are purchasing?

Describe the training and preparations Heifer project participants make before they receive an animal.

GAME

Play a memory matching game of animals and their babies. Draw animal pictures or glue pictures cut from magazines, or printed from the Internet onto blank index cards or small squares of colored paper. Half the cards should have pictures of adult animals. For each adult animal card, there should be a corresponding picture of the baby animal. Turn all cards face down. Each child takes a turn looking at two cards. If the cards don't match, turn them over again and let the next child take a turn. If they match, the child keeps the cards. Continue until all cards have been matched.

ACTIVITY

Help children make puppets: glue craft sticks to photos or images of animals that are already cut out. Encourage children to choose a variety of animals to make. Let them use their puppets as they sing an animal song together. "Old McDonald Had a Farm" is a good example.



OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

Invite a beekeeper or farmer to the class to talk about the care bees need, the way they pollinate trees and flowers, and the production and gathering of honey. With their parents' permission, offer children a taste of honey.



CLOSING

Tell children to make the sound of each animal you name as you pray:

Dear God, thank you for goats (maah) and bees (bzzz) and cows (moo) and chickens (cluck-cluck) and donkeys (hee-haw) and all the animals you put on Earth. Please help us to take care of the animals and to spread them around so everyone can have enough food to eat every day. Amen.

Celebrating God's World

GATHERING

Greet children, collect money and add to the progress chart.

PRAY

Thank you, Lord, for giving us this good world with lots of plants and flowers and trees.

Distribute the following pictures to children: (1) sun; (2) sky and clouds; (3) green grass and trees; (4) moon and stars; (5) fish and birds; (6) people, cattle, wild animals, bugs and reptiles. Tell the story of creation found in Genesis 1. As you read the story, invite children to hold up the appropriate picture.

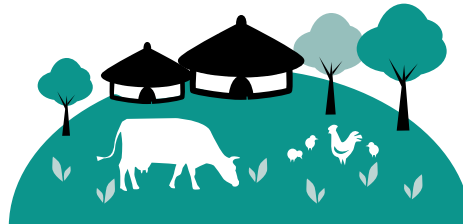
BIBLE STORY

Talk about the creation story. Ask:

- **When God made the world, what kinds of food did God make for animals? For people?**
- **Where do you get your food? (Trace food back to farms/gardens.)**
- **What kinds of things do you have to do to grow food in a garden?**
- **How do animals help people grow food?**

PEOPLE/LAND/ANIMAL CYCLE

Post pictures that show people raising crops in a variety of countries and settings using different animals and tools. Look at each one with children and note the differences in resources and land.



Use pictures to show how animals help: a cow can plow the soil and give milk to make people strong for work, animal manure fertilizes the soil, seeds are planted, plants grow, crops are harvested and made into food for people and the fodder fed to the cow.

Show pictures of different kinds of food. Talk about the kinds of foods you eat and how it differs from what other people eat around the world.

CLOSING

Close with a song about trees, food or the Earth. Pray:

Thank you, God, for all the plants and trees and flowers. Help us to take good care of the Earth so every person and animal will have food to eat. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:1–27



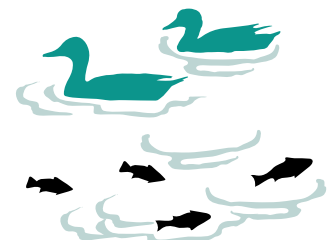
PREPARATION

- Prepare pictures to correspond to the six days of creation.
- Collect and display pictures of farming practices in different parts of the world. Find examples at www.flickr.com/photos/heifer.
- Cut pictures of food from magazines or from an online image search.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

Show pictures and tell stories of how people and animals work together to take care of God's world. Some examples:

- Some farmers use geese to weed vegetable gardens. Once the vegetables are large enough, the geese eat only the small weeds and fertilize the plants with their droppings.
- Ducks on a pond keep the water clean and stirred up so fish can live in it. Meanwhile, the ducks have a place to live, swim and find food for themselves.



Celebrating Sharing

GATHERING

Welcome children; collect money and note progress on the chart. Ask three volunteers to be players in a story. Give each volunteer one of the three prepared lunch bags. Tell a story about three children who go to preschool together. Describe some of the fun things they might do in a day and ask the children to show happy faces. Include details that give the children opportunities to show scared faces, sleepy faces and excited faces. Then, say it is snack time. Tell the first child with food to open the bag and show what he/she has to eat. Ask that child to make a face that shows how they feel about having the food. Do the same with the second child who has food. Finally, let the third child, with the empty bag, show what he/she has. Ask:

- **What would make the third child happy?**
- **Where could we get some food for this child?**

Ask all three children to show happy faces and give everyone snacks.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 3:11



PREPARATION

- Pack three lunch bags. In two of the bags, put animal crackers and fruit. In the third bag, put only an empty container and a napkin.
- Using stiff, colored paper, create enough game cards for each child to have four. Make pairs of cards by drawing animals, trees or food on the cards or by attaching stickers, two of each picture, to the cards. The Animal Inserts are perfect for this game. Order them in the "Congregational Resources" at www.heifer.org/shop.
- Gather two coats, apples, pairs of shoes, stuffed animals or pictures of each.

BIBLE STORY

Talk about how sharing makes people feel good on both sides. Ask one child to hold two jackets; another, two apples; another, two pairs of shoes; and another, pictures of the animal you are planning to purchase through Heifer. Then read Jesus' words from Luke 3:11 and ask the child holding two coats what he/she should do with one. Let that child pass one to another child. Do the same with the apples, shoes and animal. Describe how you are going to share with others by giving an animal to a family in need. Explain the Heifer tradition of Passing on the Gift® to another family.

GAME

Play a card game resembling Go Fish using cards you have made. Deal the cards and explain that players should try to get a matched pair. Go around the circle and allow each child to ask another for one of the cards he/she already holds. If the child who was asked holds that card, he/she passes it on to the one who asked for it. If the child does not have the card, the game continues with the next child asking for a card. Do this until all the cards are matched. Invite children to express their feelings about sharing. Ask:

- **How did you feel when you had a card you could share?**
- **How did you feel when other people shared their cards with you?**
- **What happens when people don't share with one another?**

Review how Heifer helps hungry people get food and how children help Heifer.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Invite an older class to share an activity or information they've learned.
- Create greeting cards to share with people in your church who are lonely.
- Help children prepare a snack and share it with another class.

CLOSING

God, thank you for loving us and for loving people everywhere. Thank you for all the many things you have given us. Help us to share what we have so that other people can be healthy and happy. Amen.

One Big Family

GATHERING

Greet and welcome children. Introduce Heifer and explain how people are helped when they receive animals, trees and training so they can care for themselves and their family. Explain your role with Heifer and discuss goals. Identify the animals that Heifer provides, and choose an animal to purchase.

MAP ACTIVITY

Show images and read aloud photo captions from Heifer's gift catalog. After each explanation, name the country and ask a student (or two) to attach a picture of that animal to the appropriate area on a world map. Younger students may need assistance in finding the correct location. Talk with children about the need to help hungry people all over the world, what a big job that is, and how God calls us to help.

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 2:1–3:12



PREPARATION

- Prepare a summary of Moses' story found in Exodus 2:1–3:12.
- Display a large world map. Attach small pictures or stickers of animals to the map with a pin, glue or tape.
- Cut pictures from Heifer's gift catalog that show people with animals they've received, or download and print photos from www.flickr.com/photos/heifer.

BIBLE STORY

Invite children to talk about their own families—how many people, the kinds of work and chores they do, how family members care for one another and have fun together. Using background material from Exodus 2:2–3:12 and, reading selected verses, tell the story of Moses. Some key points to cover are:

- **Moses' Hebrew mother did everything she could to keep him from being killed.**
- **Moses was raised by the Pharaoh's daughter—families come in a variety of shapes.**
- **Moses had a much easier life growing up than other Hebrew children, who lived as slaves under the Egyptians.**
- **When Moses was grown and saw how the Egyptians treated his people, and his family, he was angry and upset. He couldn't ignore their sadness.**
- **When God told Moses he could help the Hebrew people, Moses did what God told him to do. He returned to Egypt and led the people out of slavery.**

Ask:

- **What choices did Moses have when he learned how the Hebrews were treated?**
- **How do you think Moses felt when he asked the Pharaoh to set the Hebrews free?**
- **Do you think it was easy for Moses to go to the Pharaoh? Why did Moses do it?**

Conclude this activity by emphasizing that we are all part of God's family and whenever we know about someone who needs help, God wants us to do what we can to help that person. Talk about how it is sometimes easy to help someone and other times more difficult. Talk about ways we can help people.

CLOSING

Sing "Jesus Loves the Little Children" and pray.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Discuss ways families take care of one another. Give children magazines, scissors and glue, and help them create a collage that shows people caring for others.
- Let children decorate clothespins to represent their family members. Create a diorama made by decorating the inside of a shoebox to represent the family home.
- Make sock puppets, or paper puppets attached to craft sticks. Using a story from *World Ark* (www.heifer.org/worldark), help children create a puppet play and perform the play for other classes.

We Share The Planet

GATHERING

Greet children and ask volunteers to collect today's offering and mark their progress on the chart. Pray, giving thanks for all the good things you have and for the opportunity to help others. Sing together, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Create your own verses.

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 25:4
Proverbs 12:10



BIBLE STORY

Introduce the idea that we share the Earth with animals and that God cares for the animals and wants us to, also. Begin the Bible lesson with a guessing game. Assign children to one of two teams. Let each team choose 10 letters from the alphabet that they want given to them. For each team, fill in only the letters they have chosen as they appear in the following verse: "Good people are kind to their animals" (Proverbs 12:10, CEV). Each team will be given a paper with their particular letters filled in. Let the teams guess what the verse says. If neither team figures it out, let the teams work together. Then read the verse aloud. Tell children that the Hebrew people used oxen to break the grain away from the husks when the plants were harvested. Explain that if the people put a muzzle on the ox's mouth, the ox had to work a long time without eating. But, if they did not muzzle the ox, the ox could get a bite of grain or fodder to eat as he worked. Ask a child to read Deuteronomy 25:4 and ask:

- What does this verse and the verse in Proverbs tell us about how to treat animals?
- Why do you think God wanted these verses about taking care of animals in the Bible?
- How do you think God feels when we are cruel to animals?

PREPARATION

- Find music for "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands."
- Prepare cards for memory game. Cut playing-card size rectangles from stiff, colored paper. On one side of each card attach a picture of an animal. Make a card that contains the name of the animal and either a picture of that animal's baby or a kind of food it produces to match each animal card.
- Get Bibles, paper and pencils.

CARING FOR ANIMALS

Invite children to tell about their pets or other animals they have helped care for. Children who do not have pets may share information about an animal from one of the cards they have from the memory game or from this book. Explain that before people can receive an animal from Heifer, they have to learn how to care for the animal. Invite children to share their ideas about how one might prepare to receive a cow, a goat, chickens, rabbits or bees, and what kinds of care one must be prepared to give to the animal.



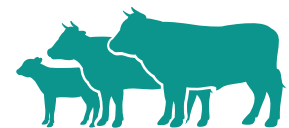
GAME

Play a memory matching game using cards prepared in advance. To play the game, all cards are face down on a table. Children turn over two cards on a turn. If they make a match they keep the cards. If they do not find a match, the cards are turned face down again and the next child takes a turn. Do this until all cards have been matched.

CLOSING

Sing "Jesus Loves the Little Children" and pray.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER



- Invite a veterinarian who specializes in livestock care to the class to talk about the care of farm animals.
- Present information about dogs for the blind, deaf and people with other special needs.
- Make a trip to a pet store, farm or zoo, and ask a worker to explain some of the special needs of different kinds of animals.

We Care For The Earth

GATHERING

Greet children and ask volunteers to collect offering and note progress on the chart. Begin with a game of tree or plant bingo. After the game, talk about the different kinds of plants in the world, how vegetation differs from one geographical area to another, and the many uses for plants and plant products. Show some pictures of food-supplying plants common to your area and ask children to tell the food the plant gives and how it might be used. You might also choose to serve a "dirt" snack. (See Youth, lesson 3.1)

BIBLE STORY

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 1:26 and 1:29–31. Allow children to ask questions about these verses, and answer their questions, even if only with, "I don't know." Explain the concept of dominion or rule. Suggest that one could use the word "caretakers" to describe the role of humans in relation to all of creation. Ask children to share ideas of how people can take care of creation. Show a series of pictures cut from magazines or printed from the Internet. For each picture, ask them to explain or describe how people are enjoying, caring for or hurting some part of God's creation.

Present the following scenarios, and ask children to share how they might feel in the situation of each character. You can choose to discuss as a group or divide the students into small groups for discussion.

- **You loaned one of your favorite books to your friend. Your friend left it in the rain, and, when you got it back, it was all wrinkled and dirty.**
- **Your brother/sister let you borrow their bike. You left it in the street and a car ran over it. Now it's bent and broken.**
- **The family next door asked you to water their garden while they were out of town. You forgot and never watered it. When they returned, all the flowers were dead and the vegetables dried up.**

Ask:

- **What do you think God expects from us as caretakers of creation?**
- **What are some things we can do to take care of creation?**
- **How do you think God feels when we don't take care of the Earth?**

CLOSING

Close with prayer and a song, such as this 17th-century one, titled "Let All the World in Every Corner Sing." It is found in most denominational hymnals:

Let all the world in every corner sing. My God and King! The heavens are not too high. God's praise may thither fly. The Earth is not too low. God's praises there may grow. Let all the world in every corner sing. My God and King!

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:26
Genesis 1:29–31



PREPARATION

- Get Bibles and music.
- Create bingo cards, at least one per child. Draw lines on a piece of plain paper to create nine or 16 spaces, or search online for a bingo card generator. In each space write the picture and name of a tree or plant. Put these in a different order on each card.
- Cut pictures from magazines or download and print some that show people caring for, enjoying or abusing some part of creation.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Take children on a nature walk around your church and identify plants and trees.
- Invite an herb grower to visit you and talk about uses of herbs.
- Do a produce scavenger hunt. Give children pictures cut from seed catalogs that show pictures of food likely to be found in a local produce store. Have pairs of children find the matching foods.
- Start or extend a recycling program in your church or community.

Sharing Is Fair

GATHERING

Greet children, ask volunteers to collect the offering and note progress on the chart. Give children magazines and instruct them to find pictures of people sharing things, including time together. When everyone has a picture, invite them to show their pictures and tell about what is being shared. (Option: Use these to create a collage.) Talk about the pictures and ask:

- What are some things people share with you?
- What are some things you share with other people?
- What would it be like if nobody shared things with other people?
- What is the best thing anyone ever shared with you?

BIBLE STORY

Distribute pictures to illustrate the story of Jesus sharing the fish breakfast with the disciples or assign each child one or more elements in the story to make from modeling clay. Tell the story, reading selected verses found in John 21:3–13, 15–17. Include (1) Jesus' willingness to share his help in getting the fish; (2) Jesus' help made a big difference to the disciples; (3) Jesus also built the fire to help out; (4) the disciples shared their fish with Jesus; (5) Jesus told Peter to share the good news with people all over the world. As you tell the story, invite children to post pictures in sequential order or add their clay figures to the scene. Let children choose simple costumes from a box of sheets, towels, curtains and robes. Set out props made in advance. Assign the roles of Jesus, Peter and the disciple Jesus loved. Assign everyone else roles as disciples in the boat. Tell the story again, giving simple directions for children to role-play as you tell it.

Begin a discussion of the story with these questions:

- Who needs help in the story?
- Who needs help in today's world?
- How does it feel when you need some help and there's no one to help you?
- When the disciples got to the shore with the fish, what did they do?
- How do you think Peter felt when Jesus told him to share with others?
- How can we share with people who don't have enough food?

CLOSING

Review the work of Heifer as a way of sharing with others. Describe the tradition of Passing on the Gift®. Have the students think of ways they can help others. Make a list as they go. The leader can help craft this list into a responsive prayer for the closing.

For example:

Leader: When someone is angry. **Students:** Let us be kind.

SCRIPTURE

John 21:3–13
John 15–17



PREPARATION

- Gather magazines, scissors, paper and glue.
- Provide modeling clay to illustrate the Bible story scene.
- Collect costumes. Make or collect props: something to serve as a boat (like a table turned on its side), wood or charcoal for fire with paper flames, paper fish for cooking, paper bread for eating with the fish, fish nets.
- Find a story in *World Ark* (www.heifer.org/worldark).

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Present the role-play of the Bible story to other classes.
- Use resources in *Animal Crackers* to talk about the animal you will purchase.
- Share a fish breakfast of fish-shaped crackers.
- Make greeting cards or cookies for people who are sick or lonely.
- Plant seeds to raise plants that can be used in a community garden for people in need.
- Do a clean-up project in your church or community.

People Are Amazing

GATHERING

Greet and welcome students. Ask them the following questions:

- **Where does food come from?**
- **How do you get food?**
- **How do people without money get food?**

Describe the goals and the work of Heifer. Explain how you will participate in that work by purchasing an animal to send to a family who needs help. Set goals for fundraising and choose an animal to purchase. Collect offering today. Make a progress chart to record money collected.

OPENING PRAYER

God, thank you for the gift of people for us to love and to love us. Help us spread your love all over the world and to care for one another. Amen.

STORY

Many people in the world are trying to feed themselves, but they need just a little help. Sometimes, receiving one goat and some training can make a big difference for a family. Tell a story from *World Ark* (www.heifer.org/worldark) that shows how Heifer helps people learn how to provide for themselves. Talk about the ways our choices affect other people's lives. There really is enough food in the world, but some people use more than their share, so others get less than their share. Invite students to talk about their own attitudes toward food.

Begin a discussion with these questions:

- **What is the longest time you have had to go without food? How did you feel?**
- **Are you aware of times when your family wastes food? Why does that happen?**
- **What does it mean to be caretakers of the things God gives us?**
- **How can we help hungry people get the food they need?**

GAME

Remind students that Heifer provides animals, seeds or trees, and training to people to help them get food. Give each person a sheet of paper and tell them to write the following categories on their papers: an animal; a kind of food; a tree or plant; something people can share; the name of a place. Choose a letter of the alphabet and ask students to name something in each category that begins with that letter.

SCRIPTURE

2 Kings 4:38–41



PREPARATION

- Prepare notes on work and goals of Heifer and gather material to make a progress chart.
- Get Bibles, paper and pens.
- Choose a goal to help other kids around the world.
- Choose and print photos from *World Ark* (www.heifer.org/worldark) or *National Geographic* www.nationalgeographic.com that show different people around the world. You can also choose to bring in print issues of those magazines and allow student to choose their own photos.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Give students 3x5-inch unlined index cards, pens and markers. Ask them to design Heifer postage stamps. This can be done in teams or small work groups.

CLOSING

Remind the students about the people in the photos they selected. Ask them to write a short prayer for the people in their photo. Invite students to share their prayers with the group.

Animals Are Extraordinary

GATHERING

As students arrive, ask volunteers to create pictures of the animals you have chosen to use in the map activity. Provide art supplies and give specific directions about size. Get students together. Collect the offering and chart progress.

OPENING PRAYER

God our Creator, you made everything that lives on the Earth. You made plants and animals and people. We know you love all of us. Help us to take care of and appreciate all that you have given to us. Amen.

MAP ACTIVITY

Give each student information or a Heifer Animal Insert about one of the animals. Let students take turns reading about how the animal will help people in a particular part of the world, and then attach the picture of that animal to a world map. Create a diagram that shows the cycle of interdependence of land, people and animals. For example: A cow provides milk, which provides food and energy for people; and it can also be used to pull carts or plows. The manure can be used to enrich the soil, thus yielding a better crop. The cow may pull a wagon when harvesting the crop. The grain will be used to feed the people; the fodder will feed the cow. Show the diagram to the students and talk about how it works.

BIBLE STORY

Say that the Hebrew people used oxen to separate grain from the husks once it had been harvested. The oxen either trampled the husks so the grain would fall out and then it could be collected, or they pulled heavy boards across it to knock the grain loose. If a muzzle was put on the mouth of the ox, the ox might have to work a long time with no food. If a muzzle was not put on the ox, the ox could get a bite of fodder now and then as it worked. Ask a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 25:4 and Proverbs 12:10. Ask:

- According to these verses, how are we to treat animals?
- For those of us who don't use oxen, how specifically can we care for animals?
- What pets do you have, and how do you care for them?
- What do your pets do for you in return for your care?
- What would happen to your pets if you did not care for them?

These verses remind us that animals and people need and care for each other. Geese fly in a V formation, otters tie themselves together while sleeping in water, and people depend on animals for certain nutrients.

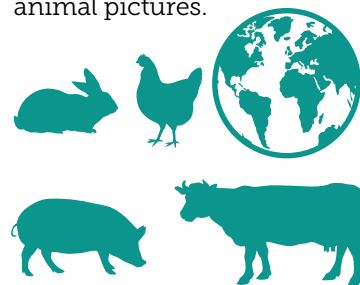
SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 25:4
Proverbs 12:10



PREPARATION

You will need Bibles, stories from *World Ark* magazine (www.heifer.org/worldark), a large world map, paper and markers or stickers to make animal pictures.



OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Get information, or a guest speaker to present information on special care dogs—dogs for people who are blind, deaf, or have other special needs.
- Ask a veterinarian to visit the class and talk about large animal care.
- Read together Psalm 23. Talk about the characteristics of a good shepherd.

CLOSING

Read the "Canticle of the Sun" or the lyrics of "All Creatures of our God and King." You might also choose to sing the hymn arrangements or play them from a CD or MP3.

Enjoy The Environment

GATHERING

Greet students and ask volunteers to collect the offering and note progress on the chart. Give each person a card with one of the following:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Cocoa/Chocolate | 7. Aspirin (original source) | 13. Chicle (first chewing gum) |
| 2. Cacao Tree | 8. Willow Tree | 14. Chicle Tree |
| 3. Quinine (Malaria Drug) | 9. Rubber | 15. Cinnamon |
| 4. Cinchona | 10. Rubber Tree | 16. Ceylon or Cassia Tree |
| 5. Brazil Nuts | 11. Kola (cola flavoring) | 17. Maple Syrup |
| 6. Brazil Nut tree | 12. Kola Nut Tree | 18. Maple Tree |

Ask them to match the tree to its product by finding the person who has the match to the card they hold. Discuss the importance of trees in providing things for everyday life. Discuss trees as a resource for: fuel, food for people and animals, making tools, household items and paper products. Trees also offer shade and decrease erosion. Define erosion and talk about the farming practices Heifer teaches. Explain that Heifer helps people grow trees and plants that are best suited to their locale and offer the greatest benefits.

ACTIVITY

Take a walk together. Collect leaves from different trees. Return to the classroom and make a booklet, labeling the types of leaves.



BIBLE STORY

Ask volunteers to read aloud Psalm 104:1–25. Then ask students to share images they especially liked from the psalm. Ask:

- **What is the purpose of this psalm? What is the attitude of its author?**
- **How do plants, animals, humans and God relate in this psalm?**

Read Genesis 1:26, then ask:

- **What role has God given humankind in creation?**
- **What does “to have dominion” mean?**

Suggest rewards and responsibilities of being caretakers of creation.

STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITY

Pass around a prepared bag containing common items. Ask each person to take one item from the bag. Then have people take turns telling what item they have and how that item relates to an issue of caring for creation. Ask:

- **What does that item remind you to do to make the world a better place for everyone to live?**

Encourage everyone to join in the discussion and come up with as many ways to care for creation as possible.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 104:1–25
Genesis 1:26



PREPARATION

- Get Bibles and copies of opening prayer and songs.
- Prepare cards for tree matching activity.
- Place several common items (example: can opener, keys, light bulb, soap, shoe) in a bag for the stewardship activity.
- Gather construction paper or poster board, markers, crayons or other art supplies.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Illustrate Psalm 104.
- Ask a naturalist to be a class guide on a nature walk. Identify local plants, and describe how these plants benefit people and animals. Talk about the care they need.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Common Ground: The Water, Earth, and Air We Share by Molly Bang.

CLOSING

Choose a story from *World Ark* (www.heifer.org/worldark) to share.

Give A Little—Get A Lot

GATHERING

Greet students and ask volunteers to collect the offering and mark your progress chart. Open with prayer and sing a creation hymn.

SCRIPTURE

2 Kings 7:3–16



BIBLE STORY

You may prefer to tell rather than read it, or read only selected verses. Give children this information: There was a terrible famine in Samaria, and the Aramean army was attacking. The people of Israel were holed up behind the city walls to protect themselves from the Arameans, but they were starving to death. God made the Arameans hear sounds that made them think they were being attacked, so they deserted their camp. Four men with leprosy, who were not allowed inside the city, decided to turn themselves in to the Arameans and beg for food. They found the camp empty, but food, animals and supplies had been left behind. They ate and drank what they wanted and were going to hide the rest. Then they decided that would be wrong, so they told the king of Israel about their find and shared the goods with the other starving people.

Discuss the events of the story. Ask:

- **What thoughts might the men with leprosy have had as they sat outside the city wall? When they found the food in the camp? When they were able to share with others?**
- **What could the men have done rather than share the food?**

PREPARATION

- Get Bibles, copies of songs and prayers, and material for posters.
- Prepare costumes and props or puppet-making material for drama.
- Choose a blessing and get a rainstick or other item to pass around the group.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Write a psalm that expresses praise and thanksgiving for all of creation.
- Review information on the animal you plan to purchase and discuss how that animal can help hungry people.
- Work in a community garden.
- Plan a night of group baby-sitting for young children in your church. Collect donations toward your goal.
- Collect food for a local food pantry.

DRAMA

Give students an opportunity to present the story in some dramatic form. Some possibilities are: (1) Make puppets together and let children retell the story in their own words, using puppets as props; (2) Provide simple costumes and props and invite children to present the story as you narrate it; (3) Assign participants to small groups. Ask each group to create a hypothetical conversation the leprous men might have had while trying to decide what to do with the food—hide it or share it. Let each group present their conversations.

ACTIVITY

Lead a discussion on sharing:

- **What kinds of things do you share and with whom do you share?**
- **Talk about a time when someone refused to share with you. Think about groups of people who are excluded (like the lepers). How are they treated?**

Celebrate the gift of sharing by creating posters to be used in the Intergenerational Celebration.

CLOSING

Pass on a blessing. Everyone should stand in a circle. Choose an item, like a rainstick, to pass. Give the group a blessing that each person can say as he/she passes the rainstick on.

God's Gift of People

SCRIPTURE

John 4:4-27



MATERIALS NEEDED

Bibles, modeling clay

PREPARATION

- Take some time to locate two or three local ministries or agencies in your area that provide outreach services to homeless people.
- You might like to invite a representative to speak to your students. If your students choose to take action (see "help bags" in the Faith in Action section in Youth 1:2), these individuals can help them choose appropriate items and other ways to help.
- Choose a goal to help other people around the world.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

—PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS

DISCOVER

Have the students read John 4:4-27. Ask them to try to determine why the disciples were so shocked that Jesus was talking with the woman. We know that many of their concerns with her were also reasons others rejected her.

Some of the reasons are listed below:

- **She was a woman**
In the ancient Near Eastern culture, women were seen as property and held little to no status or rights.
- **She was alone**
There is some indication that because she was at the well alone at midday, she may have had no friends. This time of day was hot, inconvenient and a dangerous time to travel to the well.
- **She was a Samaritan**
This was a religion that was in conflict and, in many ways, a bitter rival with the faith that Jesus and his disciples practiced.
- **She had many husbands**
This was another sign of rejection. At this time men were allowed to divorce their wives and leave them with very little, if any, rights or compensation. There is also the indication that she was living with a man who was not her husband, which afforded her no rights by his name either.

Ask:

- **How was this woman treated by others?**
- **How did Jesus treat her?**
- **How can we treat people who are different than we are, who do things we disapprove of, or are even our enemies, in ways that reflect how God sees all people, like in the verses we heard earlier?**

God's Gift of People (continued)

ACTIVITY

Give each student a small square of clay. Tell them to hold it in their hands and that after a short moment of silence you will begin to read verses from the Bible. As you read these verses, the students will begin to shape and create a person. Tell them to take time and care when they are molding their shapes and to form the person into a beautiful creation of God. The person can be joyful, worshiping or anything else that expresses the goodness of creation. There will be eight verses read, so they should take their time shaping the clay.

Read the verses slowly and give a 15 second pause between each verse.

Verses: Genesis 1:26-30, Jeremiah 1:5, 29:11, Zephaniah 3:17, Isaiah 41:10, Psalms 136:1-9, 23-26, Romans 8:35-39, 1 Peter 5:6-7, John 13:34-35

Questions:

- How does it feel to try to make something from clay?
- Can you imagine how God formed you?
- Which of the scriptures that were read stood out to you, and why?
- How does understanding God as the creator of ALL people change your view of God, of other people, of yourself?

CONNECTION TO CORNERSTONES

Heifer International's work is guided by our 12 Cornerstones for Just and Sustainable Development. These are the principles that have guided families toward self-reliance for more than 70 years. One of those Cornerstones is Genuine Need and Justice.



Genuine Need and Justice ensures that those most in need are given priority in receiving animals and training. Genuine need exists everywhere, not just in developing countries. So does discrimination and bias. Be generous with your time and resources, and be mindful of respecting people from different backgrounds. To learn more about our Cornerstone of Genuine Need and Justice, visit www.heifer.org/cornerstones.

CLOSING PRAYER

Form a circle and pray together.

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains fall soft upon your fields and, until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

—TRADITIONAL GAELIC BLESSING

FAITH IN ACTION

"All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake up in the day to find it was vanity, but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible."

—T.E. LAWRENCE, SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM: A TRIUMPH

Here are some ideas to put your faith in action.

- Make "Help Bags" to keep in your cars. Distribute in church for families to have when they encounter someone who is homeless. These bags could be backpacks donated and filled with non-perishable food (crackers, canned meats, nuts, trail mix), water bottles, travel toilet paper roll, socks, a small tarp, small fleece throw for warmth, laminated list of all of the homeless services in your area, and a Bible.
- Encouraging notes and cards from the children in the congregation are also a wonderful addition.
- Ask students to brainstorm and research issues related to human dignity (examples may include homelessness, modern-day slavery, orphan care, refugee services).
- Encourage students to share what they learn with the rest of the student ministry, parents and the church.

God's Gift of Animals

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:26–30



MATERIALS NEEDED

Bibles, birdseed, recycled materials like plastic bottles or containers.

PREPARATION

- Read the instructions and gather materials for the bird feeder activity. You may want to invite students to bring some of the materials or birdseed.
- Visit www.flickr.com/photos/heifer/ to gather images of Heifer animals. Allow students to select which images to print and display as they build an ark.

OPENING PRAYER

O God, grant us a deeper sense of fellowship with all living things, our little brothers and sisters to whom in common with us you have given this Earth as home. We recall with regret that in the past we have acted high handedly and cruelly in exercising our domain over them. Thus, the voice of the Earth, which should have risen to you in song, has turned into a groan of travail. May we realize that all these creatures also live for themselves and for you—not for us alone. They, too, love the goodness of life, as we do, and serve you better in their way than we do in ours. Amen.

—BASIL THE GREAT

ACTIVITY

Read aloud Matthew 6:26–30. We know that the traditional interpretation of this passage is an example of how the people of God should not worry about what they do or do not have. If we look deeper we notice that the birds of the air are held up as being so dear to God that they are taken care of as well. They are used as an example: if God loves them that much, how much more does God love us? Their songs, flight patterns and lives all point back to a God who cares for all of creation. We are called through the creation passages in Genesis to be co-caretakers of God's creation.

Create bird feeders from recycled items. Encourage the youth to hang them up around their homes where they can be seen during the day; reminders of how we are to be co-caretakers of the animals with God.

- Remove the heavy plastic bottom and label from a 2-liter plastic soda bottle.
- Paint the outside of the bottle with colorful images; let each student decorate his or her own.
- Make several holes in the bottle, either with a drill or a hot wire. Make holes in the bottle as follows: $\frac{1}{8}$ inch hole in the bottom of the bottle; four $\frac{5}{16}$ inch holes near the shoulder of the bottle so that dowels can be inserted for perches; and four feeding holes about 1 inch above the perch holes. The feeding holes should be $\frac{5}{16}$ inch if you intend to fill the feeder with black sunflower seeds, and $\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{8}$ inch if you will be using thistle seed.
- Take a 14 inch clothes hanger or other stiff wire and make three bends at one end. Insert the wire, straight end first, through the mouth of the bottle and into a $\frac{1}{8}$ inch hole in the bottle's bottom. Pull the wire through the hole and fashion a loop from which to hang the feeder. Cut off any extra wire. Insert two dowels to serve as perches.
- Fill the feeder with the desired seed and suspend from a branch. This type of feeder will attract several species of finches and chickadees.

God's Gift of Animals (continued)

DISCOVER

Have a few students read Job 12:7-12 aloud to the group. It is a good idea to use several different versions of the text when doing this to give listeners multiple ways to understand the text. In these verses there is a certain wisdom and knowledge attributed to the animals, even to the point where they have a special relationship with God: they know God, what God chooses to do. This can be an example to humans about God's work in the world. Ask the students to name some animals and what they can teach us about life and God's promises and relationship with creation.

A couple of examples:

- **Dog: Trust, love and loyalty**
- **Birds: God takes care of the smallest and most fragile among us, etc.**

Questions:

- **What is God's relationship with animals?**
- **Does God see animals as equivalent to humans?**
- **What should our relationships be to animals? How should we treat them; how should we be "co-caretakers" of them with God?**

CONNECTION TO CORNERSTONES

Improved Animal Management means that project participants learn how to keep their animals safe, healthy and productive. Training and preparation for livestock often takes the entire first year of a five-year Heifer project. Project participants learn animal health and husbandry, integration of livestock into the ecosystem and improvement of the environment. Preparations for animals include building shelters and planting fodder. Heifer also trains community animal health workers who can administer vaccinations and other medicines to keep gift animals healthy.

To learn more about our Cornerstone of Improved Animal Management, visit www.heifer.org/cornerstones.



CLOSING PRAYER

Form a circle and pray together.

O Lord our God, how wonderful your name in all the Earth. You have given him rule over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field. O Lord our God, how wonderful your name in all the Earth. The birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas. O Lord our God, how wonderful is your name in all the Earth.

—THE BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS, ST. FRANCIS (BASED ON PSALM 8)

FAITH IN ACTION

"All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake up in the day to find it was vanity, but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible."

—T.E. LAWRENCE, SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM: A TRIUMPH

Here are some ideas to put your faith in action.

- Fund a Project with Heifer International: Have students go to www.heifer.org/fundraise and learn about different projects that they could partner with Heifer to accomplish, spread awareness about and do fundraising for.
- Build an Ark: In this project the students will go to Heifer's catalog page and print off pictures of animals and other items. They will then make an ark in the church (this could be made of paper, boxes or even wood) and tape the pictures of the animals with the prices on the ark. Place it so that people in the church can stop by, choose a picture, and buy that animal through Heifer to populate the ark. Also, encourage the youth group to decide on an animal or animals to purchase.

God's Gift of Land

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 104



MATERIALS NEEDED

Bibles, paper cups, ice cream, Oreos (crushed), plastic spoons, crayons or markers, toothpicks, paper (many colors), scissors, tape, glue, other art supplies.

PREPARATION

- Prepare the "dirt" cups. You'll need enough for each student and a few extras for guests and leaders. (See the Activity section for instructions). Gather the art supplies.
- Print copies of "Canticle of the Sun" for each student. (If you don't have it readily available, it can easily be found with an Internet search.)
- Download (if you don't have it already) "All Creatures of Our God and King," a song by David Crowder.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, may we love all your creation, all the Earth and every grain of sand in it. May we love every leaf, every ray of your light. For we acknowledge to you that all is like an ocean, all is flowing and blending, and that to withhold any measure of love from anything in your universe is to withhold that same measure of love from you.

—FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

ACTIVITY

Before this session, gather enough paper cups for each student attending (add a few more for guests). Get a bag of Oreos, one cookie for each person plus a few more for guests and put them in a food processor or Ziploc bag. Crush the Oreos into a fine powder. At this point the Oreos should look like potting soil. Take the cups and fill them $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way up with vanilla soft-serve ice cream. Put a layer of the Oreo "soil" over the ice cream so that it looks like a cup of potting soil. Place in the freezer until meeting time. Have crayons, markers and other art supplies set out with paper and scissors, toothpicks and tape for the students when they arrive.

Read aloud Psalm 56:5-13. The New Revised Standard Version of this passage is especially well-written.

Have the students create the most beautiful flower they can imagine from the materials supplied, while the leader reads the passage several more times. Once finished, have them tape the flower to a toothpick and "plant" it into the Oreo dirt. Have spoons ready! (It's kind of fun to not tell the students that it is actually Oreos and ice cream. Just wait and see how long it takes them and who is brave enough to actually try to eat "dirt.")

CONNECTION TO CORNERSTONES

Caring for the Earth is a huge part of every Heifer project. Animals are chosen based largely on how appropriate they are for the local environment. Reforestation is a facet of Heifer projects in denuded areas, and manure and crop residues are used to reinvigorate anemic soil. Environmental degradation is a problem to which we all contribute, so we all have a responsibility to help the Earth heal. Be mindful of how your choices of what to eat, how to travel and where to live affect people, animals and ecosystems around you.



To learn more about Heifer's efforts toward Improving the Environment, visit www.heifer.org/cornerstones.

God's Gift of Animals (continued)

DISCOVER

Have the students read Psalm 104 aloud to the group. Then tell the group to use paper and pens to write down everything the land is used for in the verses.

Questions:

- **What is the land used for in the verses we just heard?**
- **What would happen if those things were taken away?**
- **How does God seem to view the land?**
- **How do we as humans usually view the land and nature?**
- **What things are done in your area to take care of the land?**
- **What things done in your area do not take care of the land?**
- **Is taking care of the land an environmental issue or a theological issue?**

Encourage the students to download "All Creatures of Our God and King," a song by David Crowder. Also, print out and give them a copy of St. Francis' "Canticle of the Sun" to keep with them this week. Tell them to either read the canticle or listen to the song each morning when they wake up this week and go through the day looking for God's beauty in creation.

FAITH IN ACTION

"All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake up in the day to find it was vanity, but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible."

—T.E. LAWRENCE, *SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM: A TRIUMPH*

Here are some ideas to put your faith in action:

- Have the students go through the week with the camera on their phones, a digital camera or even a disposable camera, and take pictures of beauty wherever they see it in God's creation. They should be on the lookout from the time they wake up until the time they go to bed for the beauty around them. Have the students send the pictures to the youth leader before the next meeting. Print the photos and let the students make a collage of beautiful things to hang in your meeting space. This activity can be done many times during the year, especially during the changing of the seasons.
- Ask the leaders of your church if there are any areas the youth group could help beautify. Possibilities include planting a flower garden, mulching and weeding, or planting box gardens around the church with vegetables and herbs. If you are able to plant and maintain a vegetable and herb garden, invite members of the church who have gardening experience to join the youth in the planting and upkeep. When you begin to harvest, allow the youth to taste what you have grown. Have the youth research and choose a local food bank or homeless shelter that could benefit from your produce donation.

CLOSING PRAYER

Form a circle and pray together.

Hold on to what is good even if it is a handful of earth. Hold on to what you believe even if it is a tree which stands by itself. Hold on to what you must do even if it is a long way from here. Hold on to life even when it is easier letting go. Hold on to my hand even when I have gone away from you.

—PUEBLO POEM

God's Gift of Generosity

SCRIPTURE

Luke 10:30–37



MATERIALS NEEDED

Bibles, several sheets of colored paper, writing paper, pens/pencils

PREPARATION

Gather materials. Visit www.heifer.org/cornerstones to learn more about the practice of Passing on the Gift®.

OPENING PRAYER

Empower me to be a bold participant, rather than a timid saint in waiting, in the difficult ordinariness of now; to exercise the authority of honesty, rather than to defer to power, or deceive to get it; to influence someone for justice, rather than impress anyone for gain; and, by grace, to find treasures of joy, of friendship, of peace bidden in the fields of the daily you give me to plow.

—TED LODER

ACTIVITY

Explain the Heifer tradition of Passing on the Gift®, giving the animal's first female offspring, or the equivalent value, to another family in need. Show the magnitude of this kind of giving in this way:

Give a quarter of the people a sheet of colored paper—each person should have a different color. Ask them (group one) to tear their papers in half and give the other halves to the people (group two) who have no paper. Then ask both groups to tear their papers in half. Group one may keep theirs (to build up their herds) and group two may pass theirs on to group three. Tell everyone to tear their papers in half. Group two may keep both halves. Groups one and three pass on their other halves, and so on. Discuss how many more people, besides the first recipient, benefit from a Heifer gift.

CONNECTION TO CORNERSTONES

Passing on the Gift allows families who received Heifer gifts to become donors as they pass these gifts on to other families. After their projects are established, families that received resources from Heifer—such as livestock, seeds or training—pass on these gifts to other families in need in their community. This allows them to help others as they have been helped, and to share the resources they now have in abundance.



In what specific ways has someone helped you or your family in the last month? Using the spirit of that gift, how can you pass it along to someone else in need? Whether reaching out to old friends or a stranger, the idea is to help someone in the way you've been helped, a way that might not have occurred to you before.

God's Gift of Generosity (continued)

DISCOVER

Read aloud the story of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:30-37. This story is very interesting because it shows how generosity goes above and beyond normal courtesy and kindness. It is also important to note that the Samaritan and the Jew were cultural enemies because of some pretty major religious differences. It was scandalous for Jesus, a Jew, to have two very high-ranking religious leaders pass by the man of their same religion, for the injured man to then be helped by someone of a rival religion. Jesus is calling us to be generous beyond what is accepted and what is comfortable.

Questions:

- What would have been a "common courtesy" thing to do in this situation?
- How did the Samaritan man go above and beyond common courtesy in his actions toward the man who was stranded?
- How are we called to do the same sort of things in our lives?
- What are some ways you can go above and beyond in your life at school, home and in your extracurricular activities?
- What are some ways people have been generous with you in your life?

CLOSING PRAYER

Form a circle and pray together.

May I reach that purest heaven—be to other souls the cup of strength in some great agony; enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love, beget the smiles that have no cruelty. Be the sweet presence of a good diffused, and in the diffusion ever more intense! So shall I join the choir invisible whose music is the gladness of the world.

—GEORGE ELIOT (AKA MARY ANN EVANS)

FAITH IN ACTION

"All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake up in the day to find it was vanity, but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible."

—T.E. LAWRENCE, *SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM: A TRIUMPH*

Have the students form groups of three or four people, and provide them with paper and pens. Ask them to answer the following questions in each group and record the answers. Allow two to four minutes for each question.

- How have you been challenged?
- How have your views changed?
- What pieces of the study have lit a fire in you to want to go out and do something in the world?

With students still sitting in groups, have each group report their answers to the questions. Take note of the answers to the last question.

When all of the groups have spoken, review the ways they answered the last question. Write those answers on half sheets of paper or card stock and lay them around the room on the floor. Ask the students to sit around the subject they are most passionate about and write their names on the sheet of paper with their chosen project. For the remainder of the gathering, help the students brainstorm ways each group can work together over the next few months to raise awareness and funds and do work for their projects. It will be important for the leader(s) to check on the groups weekly, encouraging, helping, resourcing and bringing attention to their subject matter. At the end of a month, have the teams report on their progress to the rest of the group.

The Gift of People

GATHERING

Welcome participants to the class, describe the work and goals of Heifer, make a group decision on animals to purchase and set goals for raising funds. Open with a prayer.

BIBLE STUDY

Read aloud 2 Corinthians 8:9. Offer Paul's description of Jesus' life as an example of how we should live. What does it mean to you? Jesus treated all people with love and respect.

Assign participants to one of four groups and give each group one of the following scripture references: Matthew 8:1–3; Luke 18:15–17; Luke 19:1–10; John 4:1–15. Instruct groups to read assigned passages and answer the following questions:

- How is the person, or group, generally regarded within the community?
- What is uncommon or surprising about Jesus' encounter with the person?
- What does Jesus offer the person?
- How does the person respond to Jesus?
- What lesson does this story give about how to treat people?

Call everyone back together. Invite each group to tell about the story they read and to share their responses to the story. Review the events of the story of Moses found in Exodus 2:11–3:12, though you probably won't want to read all of it. Discuss these questions:

- How do you think Moses' life differed from the lives of typical Hebrew people?
- What were Moses' choices once he saw how the Egyptians treated the Hebrews?
- What events of justice or injustice appear in the story?
- Why do you think God chose Moses to lead the people out of slavery?
- How did the lifestyle of the Egyptians affect the lifestyle of the Hebrews?
- In what ways do our lifestyle choices affect the standard of living of other people?
- What do you believe to be your responsibility in determining the standard of living of other people?

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 2:11–3:12
Matthew 8:1–3
Luke 18:15–17
Luke 19:1–10
John 4:1–15
2 Corinthians 8:9

PREPARATION

Get Bibles, pens and paper, and choose a story from *World Ark* (www.heifer.org/worldark).

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Discuss the rules, laws and traditions that address hunger issues.
- Identify and learn more about organizations in your community that help hungry people.

DEFINING COMMUNITY

Give each person a piece of paper and a pen. Instruct them to draw four concentric circles on the paper and write their family name, or names of family members, in the smallest, center circle. Write the name of their town, school, or workplace in the next larger circle, the name of their country in the next circle and EARTH in the last circle.

Assign participants to small work groups or let individuals answer specific questions about each part of their world community. Ask them to answer these questions:

- What needs have you met within each of these four communities?
- What gifts and talents do you bring to the community?
- What responsibility do you have to the people in each community?
- Are we responsible for ensuring everyone has enough food? Why or why not?

CLOSING

Close by telling a story from *World Ark* and reading Psalm 146 responsively.

The Gift of Animals

GATHERING

Welcome people and introduce today's topic. Collect the offering and open with a prayer or a unison reading of Psalm 148.

BIBLE STUDY

Begin by saying that many stories in the Bible include information about animals. You may wish to review the story of creation given in Genesis 1–2 and talk about the meaning of dominion. Discuss what rights and responsibilities are given to humankind as caretakers of God's creation, including care of animals. Give background information before asking a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 25:4. Tell the students that oxen were used to separate the harvested grain from husks. If an animal was not muzzled, it could get bites of fodder as it worked. Ask:

- What seems to be the intention of this law?
- What does it say to us about how to treat animals?

Say that other Bible stories support the idea that animals have significance to God. Assign small groups to read these scripture passages and then report back to the larger group about the significance of the animal in the story and the message the story relates.

1. Raven—1 Kings 17:2–6
2. Worm and cattle—Jonah 4:6–11
3. Fish—Matthew 17:24–27

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Mark 11:1–11. Then, discuss the roles of the animal in this story. Ask:

- What details about the donkey are given?
- How is the donkey a means of delivering a message to the people?
- In what way does the donkey define who and what Jesus is?
- In what ways do animals define who we are? (What kinds of animals do we own? What benefits do we get from animals? How do we care for our animals?)
- In what ways are project participants' lives defined or changed by receiving an Heifer animal?

CLOSING

Close in prayer for a peaceful Earth.

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 25:4
1 Kings 17:2–6
Jonah 4:6–11
Matthew 17:24–27
Mark 11:1–11



PREPARATION

- Get Bibles and copies of discussion questions.
- Prepare animal information and large world map for the map activity.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

Ask someone from your local animal shelter to speak to your group and offer suggestions on how you can better care for animals.

MAP ACTIVITY

Review the work of Heifer and include information about training in animal husbandry and preparations that occur before a family receives an animal. To explore the ways animals make a difference in the lives of hungry people and to get an idea of the scope of Heifer's work, visit www.heifer.org.

The Gift of Land

GATHERING

Greet participants and collect offering. Pray the words to a creation hymn from your hymn book.

BIBLE STUDY

Inform participants that the people of Israel were given specific laws about caring for the land. Assign people to small groups and assign each group either the passage from Leviticus or Deuteronomy. Ask the groups to read the verses and discuss these questions:

- What do these verses tell us about the proper attitude toward the land?
- What do these verses tell us about ownership of the land?
- What is the intent of the law?
- How do these verses correspond to the lessons in Genesis 1:26 and Psalm 24:1?
- List the roles and responsibilities of humans with regard to the land.
- What lessons are there for us, today, about treatment of the land and how can we respond in an active way?

TREE ACTIVITY

Begin by matching trees to their products. Explain how Heifer works with project participants to find the animals best suited to their needs and the available food sources.

Share these examples of how indigenous trees enable people to care for themselves and their animals:

- In parts of India camels eat the leaves of wild Pala trees
- In the Dominican Republic, goats eat the pods from mesquite trees
- Heifer promotes the use of nitrogen-fixing trees that put nutrients back into the soil. In Zimbabwe, Heifer helps children grow Leucaena trees that produce livestock fodder and firewood. They help stop erosion of the soil.

Describe the concept of zero-grazing pens and discuss the advantages of this type of feeding plan, versus letting animals graze at will on limited pasture.

CLOSING

Read Psalm 104:1–24 responsively.

SCRIPTURE

Hosea 4:3
Leviticus 25:1–7
Leviticus 18–23
Deuteronomy 26:1–3
Deuteronomy 26:12–13



PREPARATION

- Gather Bibles, copies of prayers and songs, materials for stewardship bingo and items for the stewardship activity.
- Gather information about zero-grazing pens.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

Find out how you can help with local tree planting and soil conservation projects.

STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITY

Use common, everyday items to prompt discussion about ways to be good stewards. Give all participants a paper and instruct them to mark off 16 squares on a 4 x 4 inch grid. Brainstorm ideas for caring for the land. As items are named, participants write them in the squares—each person will write the items in a different order on the grids. Play the game like regular bingo.

The Gift of Generosity

GATHERING

Greet participants and collect offering. Tell a story from *World Ark* (www.heifer.org/worldark).

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 19:9–10
1 Kings 17:8–16
Psalm 104:10–23



OPENING PRAYER

Great, O God, are all your works. We praise you for gifts of food and water, for plants and animals, and for your great love for all people. Help us to be good stewards of all you have entrusted into our care—enjoying the magnificence of your creation, but taking only what we need, always mindful of the needs of others. Give us hearts eager to share and hands eager to do your work in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PREPARATION

Gather Bibles, music, index cards, pens and sheets of colored paper.

BIBLE STUDY

Review Psalm 104:10–23 and explain that the psalmist celebrates God as both creator and provider. Distribute blank index cards and ask participants to write a two-part sentence that praises God as creator and provider. Collect the cards for use in closing worship.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Leviticus 19:9–10, then ask:

- **How would you define generosity within the context of this law?**
- **What do these verses say about ownership and stewardship of the land?**
- **What responsibility do land owners and managers have to the poor, orphans, widows and foreigners?**
- **What attitudes are valued, and what attitudes are discouraged?**
- **What lesson from these verses speaks to you?**

Illustrate the principle of leaving for others something you could rightfully claim as your own with examples from your own life. Talk about your reactions to the instructions in these verses. Ask participants for specific examples of how to act on them. Read a story about sharing in 1 Kings 17:8–16 and look for details that define the widow's generosity, including her willingness to share, even though she and her son were in need. Generate a list of suggestions for following her example.

TREE ACTIVITY

Explain the Heifer tradition of Passing on the Gift®, giving the animal's first female offspring or the equivalent value to another family in need. Show the magnitude this way: Give a quarter of the group a sheet of colored paper—each person should have a different color. Ask them (group one) to tear their papers in half and give the other halves to the people who have no paper (group two). Then ask both groups to tear their papers in half. Group one may keep theirs (to build up their herds) and group two must pass theirs on (to group three). Tell everyone to tear their papers in half. Group two may keep both halves. Groups one and three pass on the other halves, and so on. Discuss how many more people benefit.

OTHER WAYS TO LEARN TOGETHER

- Plan a group project to benefit people in your church or community who need help. For example, plan a work day at the homes of homebound people or donate some time to a local homeless shelter.
- Prepare and serve a simple meal of beans and rice. Share goals and suggestions for achieving a simpler lifestyle.

CLOSING

Say a prayer of thanksgiving.