

GENERAL PROGRAM BLESSING BOX DEDICATION

DISCIPLES WOMEN



DATE: 2011

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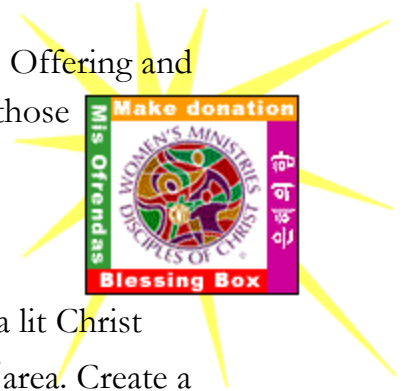
Blessing Box Dedication

Purpose:

The purpose of this program is to dedicate the Blessing Box Offering and to lift up the Giver of Blessings through a remembrance of those blessings.

Suggestions for Leaders:

- Prepare a Worship Center with a cross in the center, a lit Christ candle, and several unlit candles around on the table/area. Create a spot on the worship center for the women to bring their offerings forward. This can be done in several ways: a large representation of the Blessing Box to put all offerings in, a spot to place all the individual boxes or baggies, even a bowl to pour the offerings in would work.
- Prepare to have someone lead music or download music ahead of time to play. Select one or more women to assist as “readers” during Worship.
- Have pen and paper available for those women who may want to write their blessings down. An alternative to having women tell their blessings would be to have all women write them down and post the notes on a poster made to look like a Blessing Box.



Introduction:

How do you count your blessings? Have the Leader ask this question and allow women to share with one another in small groups of two or three. After a few minutes, draw the women back together with a reading of Philippians 4: 4-7.

Lesson:

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The Blessing Box is a wonderful gift from our Church Mothers. Many of our older members remember the need to save and reuse items from their childhoods. Others in our congregations grew up in a *throw-away* world where products and packaging were made to be disposed of after use. At one point a dress made from paper was even marketed, although I don't believe that it ever caught on. Those who grew up in times of plenty have been blessed by those who learned how to save and to dream and to be creative in working towards their dreams.

We have entered a new world for many of us. The economy has not simply bounced back. People are looking at ways to slim down their spending. Many people are facing financial uncertainty.

I remember being in CWF groups where women would simply pull out their check books and write a check when it came time to receive the offering, including the Blessing Box offerings. They were able to give without much thought or sacrifice. While there are those who can still do this today, there are many others who no longer have spare money to share. Blessing Boxes have taken on a new significance for these women.

When times are tough, the inclination is to cut back on non-essentials. How does this impact our Blessing Boxes? Is giving to the Church and its ministries a non-essential in our lives? When we are worried about foreclosures and bankruptcies and health care are we awake to our blessings?

Awake! Awake!, the theme of the 2010 Quadrennial Assembly urges each of us to wake up and recognize the blessings in our lives. The ability to be

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thankful and to recognize blessings in the hard times is truly life-giving. Television reporter, Deborah Norville, in her book, *Thank You Power*, writes,

“As a television reporter for nearly three decades, I’ve been sharing the stories of ordinary Americans, trying to make sense of the situations in which my story subjects have found themselves. It’s not easy: The mother of the brain-damaged accident victim. The family of the teen killed by a drunk driver. The woman battling a life-threatening disease. But I have always marveled that certain people, even in the face of heart-stopping obstacles and the most difficult of circumstances, are able to go forward with smiles on their faces and optimism in their outlooks.

As a reporter, you look for the anomaly: the fact that seems a bit off, the story that just doesn’t fit. And it didn’t make sense to me that, over and over again, people in absolutely the worst imaginable situations seemed relentlessly optimistic. They looked for a better day to come and expected it with certainty.

How was this possible? In each instance, it ultimately came down to the same answer: they were grateful. In each of their sometimes heartbreaking situations, they had found something for which they could be thankful, because being thankful was a long-held habit.” (Norville, pp. 4-5)

In my own life, I can look back and see how God has been at work in the most difficult times in my life. It is often the times where we end up without utilities that we remember to be thankful that normally we have

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them available. It is those times without employment that help us know what a blessing it is to not have to worry about money. It is those times when we are betrayed by those who are close to us that give us a glimpse of how Jesus must have suffered. In all things we can find blessings.

As we count our blessings, we can grow them by dropping coins into our Blessing Boxes. We have a tangible reminder ourselves and we have a way to offer a small amount of hope with others. When our bit is added to the gifts of others, that hope is multiplied, and the world is blessed in Christ's name.

As we dedicate our Blessing Boxes, I want to encourage us to be awake to those blessings that may not be as obvious, to those blessings that arise out of the hard times in our lives as well as those from the good.

Worship:

Call to Worship:

Leader: In everything you do, give thanks to God through Jesus.

***Reader:** Oh right. I'm supposed to be thankful that my mother has dementia and no longer knows who I am and my daughter can't keep a job. How can I be thankful?*

Leader: Rejoice in the Lord always.

***Reader:** How does foreclosure even work? Do I need to file bankruptcy? I want to pay my bills; I just can't. Rejoice? Give thanks?*

Leader: Enter God's gates with Thanksgiving!

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Reader: *Does anyone have any idea what goes on behind the gates at my house? The fighting? The struggles? I'm lucky if I don't break down in tears. Do they really expect me to put a smile on my face?*

Leader: We also have joy with our troubles, because we know that these troubles produce patience. And patience produces character, and character produces hope. And this hope will never disappoint us, because God has poured out love to fill our hearts, through the Holy Spirit, given to us.

Reader: *Could this mean that my troubles might actually lead to good things? Are there truly things to be thankful for in my life?*

Leader: We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love God.

Reader: *Nothing can separate me from the love of God through Christ Jesus my Lord. Thank you God! Amen.*

Hymn: Blessed Assurance *Chalice Hymnal* p. 543

Invitation to Offer Blessing Boxes: How do you count your blessings? As you bring your boxes forward, you are invited to light a candle from the Christ candle. You may share a blessing in your life by writing it down on paper or by telling us. Awake! Awake! Come and share your blessings!

(Soft, instrumental music can be playing in the background as people come forward.)

Prayer of Dedication: Gracious God, waken us to be aware of the many blessings you pour into our lives. Stir up within us a spirit of thankfulness. This offering represents so many different kinds of

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blessings that we have experienced. We pray that your power and grace may be known through the giving of this Blessing Box offering and that the world may come to know You and Your Love and be blessed as we have been. Amen.

Closing Hymn: If you have access to *Count your Blessings* you may want to sing it. Another option is Give Thanks *Chalice Hymnal*, p. 528.

Potential Service Projects:

- Find a service organization in your community where you can help hands on. It may be rocking babies in the hospital. It may be at a Child Abuse Center or a Center for Special Needs children.
- Deliver Meals on Wheels. Sign up to take a permanent route or to be called on as a substitute.
- Go as a group to a Nursing Home to read books, lead worship, or play card/board games.
- Offer to help people fill out job applications at an employment center.
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter.

Reference:

Norville, Deborah, *Thank You Power*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007.