

DISCIPLES WOMEN  
GENERAL PROGRAMS

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# Blessing Box (Bag) Dedication

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this program is to help women to recognize their blessings each and every day and to dedicate the Blessing Box Offerings.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS:

- Prepare the Worship Center with various scarves or beautiful materials; a large basket to receive the Blessing Box offerings; an open Bible; and five or six Blessing Boxes and/or Blessing Bags. Arrange on the table randomly but beautifully.
- If the women will be sitting at tables, place a Blessing Box in the center of the table and randomly place pennies and nickels on the table for women to use when they identify something for which they are thankful.
- A week or two before the meeting ask three or four women to be readers and made sure to share the information to be read with them before hand or ask them to go online to [www.discipleswomen.org](http://www.discipleswomen.org) to obtain the program. Tell them which woman/sister you would like them to read. They will read during the study and or during worship.
- Before the meeting arrange for someone to lead music or use a recording.
- Have paper and pen or pencil available for each woman.
- Before the meeting the leader will convert her Blessing Box offering into pennies and nickels to be placed in the Blessing Boxes.
- Set up stations for women to talk and share their thoughts. If this is at tables, place a Blessing Box in the center of each small group area and scatter coins on the table.



## INTRODUCTION:

As the women arrive the leader will welcome the women to the Bible study and worship time. To introduce the study the leader will share that all of us experience situations in our

lives that are challenging. Each of us must decide how we will react. For those of us that are Christian, we have the blessed presence of the Holy Spirit to assist us in meeting every situation. In Detroit there is an employment and training program for young minority males called Flip the Script. It is so named because often people will define a person or situation in a negative manner; however we can always change that language and redefine the strengths and blessings that can be found in any situation. Let's learn about some Biblical and modern sisters that found themselves in unfortunate situations, but were able to "flip the script" and find blessings at every turn.

The leader will begin the study with prayer. She or another woman previously asked will read 1 Kings 17:1-10.

**Leader:** In this scripture we learn that it is a time of severe famine in the land. The Prophet Elijah is frightened and depressed, however he is sent to Zarephath to be blessed and to be a blessing. Elijah was sent to a place where the people had resigned themselves to the fact they would shortly die of starvation. However, one act of obedience resulted in salvation for an entire household. We can only imagine how many people were fed with these meager provisions! Then there were so many greater blessings that came to that household. Even in the midst of the challenges of life, we can find things for which to be thankful if we will only look through eyes of faith. This does not mean that we will always be healthy and wealthy, but it does mean that there will be little things, people, acts of kindness that we perform or that are given to us that will lift our hearts. Our relationship with God, our trust in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit will give us strength to carry on. Remember that everything does not have to be perfect in order for us to have an "attitude of gratitude!" Now we are going to learn from some women of faith.

**Leader:** Dear Sister, please tell us your story.

**Sister #1:** I lived in Zarephath, which belonged to Sidon. It was on a terrible day that I met a little man from Israel. I had gone right outside the town gates to gather a few sticks when he came walking up. I noticed him because he was the only one coming to our town. Everyone who could leave had left by then. But we had no place to go! As I passed him he called out: "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." This I agreed to do as we had stored some water and soon we would not need it. However, as I was going to bring it, he called to me and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." But I said, "As the

Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." But the man said with reassurance: "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth." He spoke with such confidence that I went and did as Elijah (for that was his name) said, and I as well as he and our household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that God spoke by Elijah. I give thanks to God for the blessings of food and endurance!

**Leader:** Thank you dear sister. It sounds like you were in the midst of difficult times, but God provided! (*ask the questions on page 6 or turn to the next sister and say*) Now we will hear from another Biblical sister. Dear Sister, please tell us your story.

**Sister #2:** I also lived in Zarephath, which belonged to Sidon. I was the mistress of the house. It was on a terrible day that I met a little man from Israel. I knew that the woman, a widow, that worked for me had gone to the town gates to gather a few sticks so she could cook a small cake so that she and I and our two sons could eat and die. So you can imagine my surprise when she brought home a visitor! We could not provide for ourselves and she brought home a guest! But he repeated what she had told her: "Do not be afraid; go and first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth." He spoke with such confidence that I did not protest, besides, this one last kindness may help us to meet God in peace. She did as Elijah (for that was his name) said, and she as well as he and our household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah. I gave thanks to God for the blessings of food and endurance!

I had a second situation of blessing and praise. After the miracle of the bread, my son became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. I said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to

remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!" But the man of God said, "Give me your son." He took him from my bosom, carried my son up into the upper chamber where I was allowing Elijah to lodge. He laid my son on his own bed. Then Elijah cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" Then he stretched himself upon my child three times, and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of my son came into him again, and he revived. Then Elijah brought my son down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to me. Then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." So I said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." I will forever praise and thank God for the blessing of restoring my son to me!

**Leader:** Thank you sister for sharing. I can only image the pain and fear of the death of a child. Seldom in our lifetime does one hear of such a story of great celebration and restoration. For some of us we are only comforted by knowing that our loved one is in presence of our God! (*ask the questions on page 6 or turn to the next sister and say*) Dear sister, please tell us your story.

**Sister #3:** I am a modern sister and I live in the middle of the United States. I am especially thankful for God's many blessings, great and small. It has been an interesting and blessing filled time recently in my life. I have been humming "Count Your Blessings... name them one by one." I had the blessing of sharing a story to honor Kathy Jeffries, our former Vice President of Women's Ministries, when her congregation celebrated her and her contributions to the "Church" – so I put a coin in the Blessing Box! At church we had just enough Holy Communion to serve everyone present – there was no need to take communion to the sick because all were present – so I put a coin in the Blessing Box! Even our 97-year-old Ruth was up and in attendance after her recent fall and rehabilitation – so I put a coin in the Blessing Box. My husband Leroy, who had been in the hospital due to chest pains and had a heart catheterization was told that his arteries were great – so I put a coin in the Blessing Box. The following Sunday Leroy accompanied me on an "all day Sunday" making the hour drive to church each way, attending worship, and staying for a District Assembly – so I put a coin in the Blessing Box! My girlfriend Diane accompanied us to the District Assembly to share her knowledge of anti-bullying – so I put a coin in the Blessing Box! That same day we shared a Thanksgiving fellowship meal as a congregation

– so I put a coin in the Blessing Box! A few days later Dick, Gail, Trudy and I visited a member that is not able to attend worship because his living facility is about 70 miles away, so we went to wish him a belated 95<sup>th</sup> birthday – so I put a coin in the Blessing Box! For the time Leroy fell asleep when he was cooking and Rosco the dog woke him up – I put a coin in the Blessing Box. For the fact that my friend Mitzi not only celebrated 50 months of marriage to Van, but God blessed them with 111 months, – I put a coin in the Blessing Box. As you can imagine I was running out of change so I signed up for giving my Blessing Box offering online – for that I give thanks!

**Questions:** *(depending on the amount of time, these or similar questions can be asked between each sister's story or only at the end):*

1. To which of these three sisters do you most closely relate? Why? Or if the questions are used after each woman's story "do you relate to this sister's story? Why?"
2. How are you able to see your blessings in the midst of the challenges of your life?
3. In what ways do you show your gratitude to God for the blessings that you receive?
4. What suggestions do you have for others when it is hard for them to see their blessings? (Please write these down on the paper provided so they can be shared with others.)

If the questions are used between each story: after five minutes or when the room quiets and most women have finished discussing the questions with their neighbors, the leader will introduce the next sister. If the leader chooses to use the questions only once and at the end, allow about 15 minutes of sharing or until the room quiets. If time permits, ask a few women to share one thing their group shared.

Leader will thank all the women for their participation and invite them to a time of worship.

## **WORSHIP**

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

**Leader:** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**People:** who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

**Leader:** just as God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world  
**People:** to be holy and blameless before him in love.  
**Leader:** God destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ,  
**Leader:** according to the good pleasure of his will,  
**People:** to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

**Leader:** Each of you must give as you have made up your mind,  
**People:** not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

**Leader:** And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance,  
**People:** so that by always having enough of everything,

**Leader:** you may share abundantly in every good work.

**People:** Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy,

**Leader:** love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

**People:** Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse;

**Leader:** but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing.

**People:** It is for this that you were called—

**All:** that you might inherit a blessing.

**Hymn:** For Each Day of Life We Thank You, *Chalice Hymnal*, 605; or I'll Tell It Wherever I Go, *African American Heritage Hymnal*, 514; or a hymn of your choice.

**Prayer of Dedication:**

Gracious and Loving God, we are so thankful for all that you do for us. You have given us life and the good earth. You have given us the resources that feed and nurture us. You have

given us teachers and role models. You have given us parents, family and friends. You have given us joy and peace and love. You have given us your Holy Spirit. Lord we thank you for children. Lord we thank you for our ministries in our communities and to our larger world. Lord, for the opportunity to share with each other and to give back to you a small part of what you have given to us we give you thanks. Lord give us understand to see all the wonderful things that you provide. For your blessings of salvation and a wholesome relationship with you we give you thanks. Lord we give you thanks for all. Now Lord, we ask that you will bless these gifts and that they will be used to advance your reign. Amen.

### **Bringing their offerings:**

Ask the women to come to the worship table to give their Blessing Box gifts by putting the money or check into container provided.

**Closing Hymn:** I've Got Peace Like a River, *Chalice Hymnal*, 530; or Your Grace and Mercy, *African American Heritage Hymnal*, 270; or a hymn of your choice.

### **Potential Service Project:**

- Visit an elderly member of your congregation at home or in an assisted living facility.
- Volunteer to work with Angel Tree Ministries or another program that helps provide Christmas for children with a parent in prison.
- Collect hats, gloves and coats for a homeless program in your community.
- Knit or sew caps and gloves for a children's program.
- Volunteer to help in a community garden or start a community garden.
- Volunteer to read at your local school or library.
- Volunteer to help children make holiday crafts at your local library.
- Take a full dinner to someone who is not able to get out and stay and have dinner with them.
- Offer to be a prayer partner for someone.
- Write a letter of encouragement to someone who is caring for a loved one.

### **References:**

All of the Women of the Bible by Edith Deen, Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1955