





**PURPOSE:** To learn about receiving and sharing our blessings;  
To dedicate the Blessing Box offering.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LEADER:**

**Room Set-up:** If possible arrange tables and/or chairs to facilitate and encourage small group discussion.

**Worship Center:** Plan a worship center to focus attention on giving and receiving through pictures of people giving money and other forms of help, pictures of people and places receiving help. A couple of baskets for collecting Blessing Box offerings. Add flowers, or other items to create a pleasant setting.

**Music:** Though there is only one song suggested for the worship portion of the program, feel free to choose a different song and/or to add music.

**Program Presenter:** Be encouraged to involve as many women as feels comfortable to read / lead. Example: One woman can present the Introduction. One women could share the Food for Thought paragraphs, and a second woman can share the discussion questions. Several women can be involved in the closing worship.

**Program materials:** You may wish to make copies of the closing worship.

**Discussion Questions:** Discussion time need not be too long. Better to keep discussion time short to encourage further discussion, than to lose the participants attention. The leader should use her own best judgment about how to use the questions with her own group of women.

**References**

In the Fullness of Time: A History of Women in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);  
Fran Craddock, Martha Faw, Nancy Heimer; Chalice Press, 1999

My Grandfather's Blessings: Stories of Strength, Refuge, and Belonging; Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.; Riverhead Books, 2000

Hymnal: A Worship Book; Mennonite Publishing House, 1992



The Message Remix: The Bible in Contemporary Language; Eugene H. Peterson, Navpress, 2006

Chalice Hymnal; Chalice Press, 1995

### INTRODUCING THE PROGRAM

Disciples women have a long history of deep commitment to stewardship and generous giving. From the beginning days of the Christian Woman’s Board of Missions, 1874 to 1914, until now as the International Disciples Women’s Ministries (IDWM), the power of small efforts to create large results has been evident.

Today’s Blessing Boxes were known as Love Gifts when introduced around 1950. From their beginning, these offerings have been given over-and-above a woman’s financial commitment to the local and larger church. Blessing Box offerings are a woman’s testimony to God’s ever-generous provision in daily life. Blessing Box offerings are a tangible way for every woman to express thanks for the everyday blessings she receives. As every Disciples woman who faithfully uses her Blessing Box knows, there is power in giving God thanks, and in collecting pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. (In the Fullness of Time, pages 98-99)

In the early years, Love Gifts were used to fund scholarships for overseas women to participate in educational and leadership training events. Today, half of all Blessing Box giving supports the mission of the whole church through the Disciples Mission Fund. The other half is used by the IDWM Executive Committee to support Disciples Women’s ministries including, but not limited to—

- Leadership training for regional and constituency representatives;
- Participation and leadership by IDWM officers and Disciples Women staff at leadership events and retreats around the country;
- Support of ethnic constituency groups in leadership training and program development;
- *Just Women* magazine, *Wisdom of Women* DVD series, and other study materials.

When we share in the Blessing Box offerings, we are sharing in the witness and mission of Disciples Women as well as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). When we share through our Blessing Box offerings, we proclaim we are **“blessed to be a blessing.”**

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT & SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

In her best selling book, My Grandfather’s Blessings, Rachel Naomi Remen, a physician as well as author, reminds her readers that life itself is a blessing. She learned this simple, but true nugget of wisdom, as a little girl from her Orthodox rabbi grandfather. Even though he died when she was seven, she has remembered his sometimes strange words and lessons about life. She has come to honor, admire, and respect those “blessings” as she matures and practices medicine with seriously ill patients.

She begins her book by saying that before we can become a blessing to others, we must first learn to receive our blessings. She says—

“Most of us have been given many more blessing than we have received. We do not take time to be blessed or make the space for it. We may have filled our lives so full of other things that we have no room to receive our blessings. One of my patients once told me that she has an image of us all being circled by our blessings, sometimes for years, like airplanes in a holding a pattern at an airport, stacked up with no place to land. Waiting for a moment of our time, our attention.” (My Grandfather’s Blessings, page 17)

Rachel tells about her mother who had a dresser drawer full of silk stockings as young woman. Rachel enjoyed looking at them and enjoying their beautiful colors. She once asked her mother why she never wore them. Her mother replied that they were much too good to wear, and if she did wear them, they might get torn or otherwise ruined.

Then one summer while the family was on vacation, their house was ransacked. Precious books and objects were broken or missing. And yes, all of her mother’s precious silk stockings were gone.

**Question:** Her mother’s loss, was the beginning of Rachel’s learning that perhaps we are all given many more blessings than we receive. **Can you relate to Rachel’s mother’s experience? Do you have something you are holding onto waiting for a special occasion or time?**

Another story Rachel shares about receiving our blessings is about herself and the son of some good friends. The little boy had two Hot Wheel cars that he treasured. Rachel and the six-year-old had great fun playing with them, and he often wished for more.

Though his parents were of modest means and really could not afford more Hot Wheels, Rachel discovered a way to gift her little friend with more Hot Wheels. One of the major oil companies began a Hot Wheels giveaway: one toy with every fill-up. She enlisted the help of friends and colleagues and soon every available toy was collected and delivered to the little boy. Shortly after receiving the generous gift, the boy stopped playing with them. Puzzled, Rachel asked him why he didn’t play with his cars anymore. He sadly replied, “I don’t know how to love this many cars, Rachel.”

**Question:** Rachel learned that she should not have “more Hot Wheels than she can love.” **What do you have too many of to love?**

Receiving our blessings leads us to becoming a blessing. As we name and express gratitude for our blessings, we are able to share our blessings and ourselves with others.

Another lesson Rachel learned from her rabbi grandfather came from ancient Jewish tradition about the eight levels of giving. In paraphrased form, here is what her grandfather told her—

- At the eighth and most basic level, we buy a coat for someone in need when we are asked, give it in the presence of witnesses, and wait to be thanked;
- At the seventh, we give a coat without waiting to be asked, but still in the presence of witnesses, and with the expectation of thanks;
- At the sixth, we give more openheartedly, with no expectations;

- At the fifth, giving happens openheartedly in private;
- At the fourth, we openheartedly and privately give our own coat;
- At the third, we give our own coat openheartedly and anonymously, knowing the identity of the recipient;
- At the second, we give a coat openheartedly, with the recipient knowing who has given the gift.
- And finally, at the first and purest level of giving, we give our own coat, without knowing who will receive it, and without the recipient knowing who has given it.

Rachel, being not yet seven years old, found her grandfather's words confusing and challenging. Maybe our response is similar. And though his words may sound quite legalistic to us, her grandfather's closing words may help us understand. He said, "...Some things have so much goodness to them that they are worth doing any way you can." He went on to say that it is "better to bless life badly than not to bless it at all."

My Grandfather's Blessings, page 87.

**Questions: What does it mean to give openheartedly?**

**What do suppose Rachel's grandfather meant when he said, "it better for us to bless life badly than not at all?"**

Rachel's grandfather taught her many lessons in the few years she knew him. I have shared from those lessons which may teach us something about being "blessed to be a blessing."

**Questions: Do you feel blessed?**

**How did you learn to give to others?**

Our Blessing Box offerings are monetary. **Are there ways of blessing that are not monetary?** Name some of those ways.

## RECEIVING AND DEDICATING OUR BLESSING BOX OFFERINGS

**Called to Be A Blessing** (in unison)

**Gracious God, we thank you for blessings that belong not to us alone,  
but to all our sisters and brothers,  
since they, too, are created in your image.  
Let their need become our need;  
let their hunger become our hunger;  
and grant to us also a portion of their pain,  
so that in sharing ourselves,  
we discover the Christ walks with our brothers and sisters. AMEN.**

(Hymnal: A Worship Book, #750)

**Scripture:** **Matthew 5: 3-10**, responsively

L: You're blessed when you feel you're at the end of your rope.

With less of you there is less of you and more of God and his rule.

**ALL: YOU'RE BLESSED WHEN YOU FEEL YOU'VE LOST**

**WHAT IS MOST DEAR TO YOU. ONLY THEN CAN YOU BE EMBRACED  
BY THE ONE MOST DEAR TO YOU.**

L: You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less—  
that's the moment you find yourselves proud owners  
of everything that can't be bought.



**ALL: YOU'RE BLESSED WHEN YOU'VE WORKED UP A GOOD APPETITE FOR  
GOD. HE'S FOOD AND DRINK IN THE BEST MEAL YOU'LL EVER EAT.**

L: You're blessed when you care.

At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

**ALL: YOU'RE BLESSED WHEN YOU GET YOUR INSIDE WORLD—  
YOUR MIND AND HEART—PUT RIGHT.  
THEN YOU CAN SEE GOD IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD.**

L: You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or  
fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

**ALL: YOU'RE BLESSED WHEN YOUR COMMITMENT TO GOD  
PROVOKES PERSECUTION.  
THE PERSECUTION DRIVES YOU EVEN DEEPER  
INTO GOD'S KINGDOM.**

### **Bringing Our Offerings**

**Singing Our Thanks: "Give Thanks"**

Chalice Hymnal, page 528

**Prayer of Dedication & Benediction** (in unison)

**Accept , O God, the gifts we bring of spirit and of clay,  
Transform them into blessings on those we serve today.  
Rekindle deep within us all the passion to fulfill**

the ministry disciples have, empower'd to do your will.

(words by Mary Anne Parrott, 1982, Chalice Hymnal, page 379)

Rev. Gloria Hernandez Bucher, Bluffton, Ohio

### To Process Your Offering ~

Offerings may be converted to a check made payable to *Disciples Mission Fund*, labeled as *Blessing Box offerings*, including your congregation and city, then mailed to:

OGMP-Treasury Services  
P.O. Box 1986  
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986

Offerings may also be made via the Disciples Mission Fund online system. Visit [docgeneralassembly.webconnex.com/dmf](http://docgeneralassembly.webconnex.com/dmf) for a secure connection. In the "Special Designation" option select "Blessing Box" for proper processing of your offering.

To learn more about or to order Blessing Boxes and the new Blessing Bag visit [DisciplesWomen.org/blessing-box](http://DisciplesWomen.org/blessing-box).



### POTENTIAL SERVICE PROJECTS:

How can your group be a blessing to others? Reread the eight levels of giving before deciding.

- Support a local homeless shelter with your donation of goods
- Volunteer at a local food pantry
- Learn more about human trafficking in your state and organizations that need your donation or volunteer time ~ [discipleswomen.org/linkbylink](http://discipleswomen.org/linkbylink) ~ for more information
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