

General Programs

Blessing Box Dedication



2012

Authored By:

Brenda Etheridge
Detroit MI

Blessing Box Dedication

Purpose:

The purpose of this program is to help women 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; rocks of various sizes; bowls of various sizes, colors and materials (fill one bowl with cereal; another with beans; another with rice, leave the other bowls empty, these will be used to receive the Blessing Box offerings); a potted plant; an open Bible; five or six Blessing Boxes; books on faithful women; and a current newspaper. Arrange on the table randomly but beautifully.
- If the women will be sitting at table, 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.
- Before the meeting ask each woman to bring a book about a Christian woman or devotional book that she has found spiritually helpful and is willing to share with another. She is to put her name and telephone number in the book so the book can be returned.
- Before the meeting arrange for someone to lead music or use a recording. Also select women to be readers during the study and during worship.
- Find a recent newspaper article on a woman who is doing something positive in your community.
- 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 they are to place their book on the worship center. The leader will welcome the women to the Bible study and worship time. To introduce the study, the leader will point the women's

Blessing Box Dedication

attention to the worship table. The rocks and the plant symbolize the earth that God had made for us to inhabit. The Bible is for God's Word and the teaching that we find in it. The bowls with the cereal, beans and rice symbolize the abundance of resources that God has given to be shared by all. The empty bowls symbolize each of us and we can fill them with good things, especially by inviting Jesus into our lives and living the Christian life. The Blessing Boxes symbolize our lives of gratitude for God's blessings. The books on women of faith or devotionals symbolized our mothers, sisters, teachers, mentors, and friends who support and encourage us. The newspaper symbolized the current social, cultural, economic and political environment which we live.

The leader will begin the study with prayer and read or have someone read 2 Corinthians 4:6-10.

We all have things for which we are grateful and thankful. This does not mean that life is always easy and stress-free. In fact the human condition is one in which we all have pains and disappointments. However for many of us, because of our relationship with God and Jesus Christ, and others find many people, things, and situations for which to be grateful. In our study today we are going to practice gratitude. So every time we talk about or you think about something for which you are grateful, fill free to put a coin in the Blessing Box. Remember that everything does not have to be perfect in order for us to have an "attitude of gratitude!"

Ask the women to divide into groups of three to six (depending on the size of the group). The leader will say: **"We are going to read today about women of faith. Our Old Testament mother/sister is Hannah, a woman who was of victim of bullying, but found hope and peace. She had issues of infertility, but turned to God for her joy and self-worth."** Read 1 Samuel 1:1-20; 2:1-21 or if you have *All of the Women of the Bible*, read pages 87-92.

Ask the following questions:

1. *What were the situations that Hannah faced that were similar to women of our time?*
2. *What were the situations that Hannah faced that were different from the women of our time?*
3. *From the reading, what are the things that Hannah was thankful?*
4. *What things in your life make you grateful after hearing Hannah's story? For each thing named, place a coin in the Blessing Box.*

After 5 minutes or when the room quiets and most groups have finished discussing the questions about Hannah it is time to introduce our New Testament mother/sister Priscilla. **"Priscilla is our New Testament sister. She was married to an older man and they were bi-vocational, co-ministers in some very interesting**

Blessing Box Dedication

communities.” Read: Acts 18: 1-4, 18-20, 24-28; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19-20 or if you have *All of the Women of the Bible*, read pages 227-230.

Ask the following questions:

1. *What were the situations that Priscilla faced that were similar to women of our time?*
2. *What were the situations that Priscilla faced that were different from the women of our time?*
3. *From the reading, what are the things that Priscilla was thankful?*
4. *What things in your life make you grateful after hearing Priscilla’s story? For each thing named, place a coin in the Blessing Box.*

After 5 minutes or when the room quiets and most groups have finished discussing the questions about Priscilla it is time to introduce our contemporary sister. **“Most of us know that Leymah Gbowee won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in organizing to bring an end to 14-year civil war in Liberia, but do you know the rest of her story?”** Read from *The Christian Century*, November 29, 2011, pages 32-36 or read about her life from Wikipedia.

Ask the following questions:

1. *What were the situations that Leymah faced that were similar to women of our country?*
2. *What were the situations that Leymah faced that were different from the women of our country?*
3. *From the reading, what are the things that Leymah was thankful?*
4. *What things in your life make you grateful after hearing Leymah’s story? For each thing named, place a coin in the Blessing Box.*

After 5 minutes or when the room quiets and most groups have finished discussing the questions about Leymah it is time ask the women to write their prayers of thanksgiving (or if you have enough time you can share the stories of a women doing positive things in your community and give thanks for their contributions). **“On the paper that has been provided write down the things for which you are grateful in the areas of: family, church, other people, employment, community, world, arts, music, nature, books, or other.”** Give the women a few minutes and invite them to place the list inside their Bibles to remind them of God’s many blessings throughout the year.

Blessing Box Dedication

Worship

Call to Worship:

Leader: I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

People: **I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.**

Leader: Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.

People: **For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?
Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD,**

Leader: O LORD God of hosts, who is as mighty as you, O LORD?
Your faithfulness surrounds you.

People: **You rule the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, you still them.**
**The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours;
the world and all that is in it—you have founded them.**

All: **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.**

Hymn: "Just As I Am", *Chalice Hymnal*, 339

Blessing Box Dedication

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 teaching 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 in these earthen vessels. Lord we give you thanks for the arts, music, literature, and theater. Lord we thank you for children, whether they live in our homes or are a part of our community. Lord we thank you for our ministries in our churches, to 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 eyes to see all the wonderful things that you provide. For your holy word and the ability to read and understand we give you thanks. For your blessings of salvation and a wholesome relationship with you we give you thanks. Now Lord, we ask that you will bless these gifts and that they will be used to advance your reign on this earth. Amen.

Bringing their offerings:

Ask the women to come to the worship table to give their Blessing Box gifts by putting the money into one of the empty bowls. Invite the women to also select a book from those available. (She will find the name and telephone number for the owner so that she can return it when finished reading it.)

Closing Hymn: "Siyahamba," *Chalice Hymnal*, 442 or a hymn of your choice.

Potential Service Project:

- Volunteer to tutor for children or adults at a local literacy program.
- Volunteer at a feeding program or homeless shelter.
- Volunteer to do grocery shopping for a member of your congregation.
- Purchase or make hats, scarves and gloves for a children's program.
- Start a community garden.
- Share a skill with a child (knitting, sewing, baking, etc.).
- Take a full dinner to someone who is ill.
- Offer to be a prayer partner for someone you know has a high stressed life.
- Go visit 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

The Christian Century, December 13, 2011 (magazine article)

Blessing Box Dedication

I am grateful for:

FAMILY

CHURCH

OTHER PEOPLE

EMPLOYMENT

COMMUNITY

WORLD

ARTS

MUSIC

NATURE

BOOKS

OTHER