



2007



TODAY IS THE DAY TO BE A PART OF
CONSERVATION'S POWER
Join in!



Stewardship Program
Church Leader's Guide

Stewardship Week

www.nacdnet.org



conserving
natural resources
for our future



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2006-07

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Please submit information to share with others on your successful stewardship programs or conservation education activities.
stewardship@nacdnet.org
Thank you!



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Stewardship Week

is one of the world's largest conservation-related observances. Since 1955, the NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts) has sponsored the national **Stewardship Week** program.

2007 Week April 29– May 6, 2007

Many celebrate throughout the year!

The concept of **stewardship** involves personal and social responsibility. We have a duty to learn about and improve natural resources as we use them wisely. By doing this we can achieve material and spiritual growth in our own lives, and leave a rich legacy for future generations.

Everyone wants to help improve the world. But sometimes the scope of the world's problems seems beyond the reach of one person. And sometimes we are tempted to believe that large agencies and organizations will take care of this important work, without our help.

Stewardship Week helps reminds us of the power of each person to conserve natural resources and improve the world. When people work together with their local conservation district, that power grows and grows. And as these good deeds multiply across the nation's network of conservation districts, the results can be spectacular!

There are opportunities to be a part of "Conservation's Power." Volunteer with your local conservation district to conduct activities at local schools, assist in their tree sales, or become an associate supervisor. Working together through various organizations, churches and schools, you can be a part of "Conservation's Power."

A 10 page Technical Report Stewardship, Spirituality, and Natural Resources
Conservation: A Short History

http://www.ssi.nrcs.usda.gov/publications/2_Tech_Reports/T015_stewards.doc

**"From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised.
The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.
Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,
Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!"
Psalm 113:3-6**

Scripture

A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. (Deuteronomy 11:12)



"The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23).

"When thou has eaten and are full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee" (Deuteronomy 8:10)

"My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17)

"And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?

Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand:

And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes:

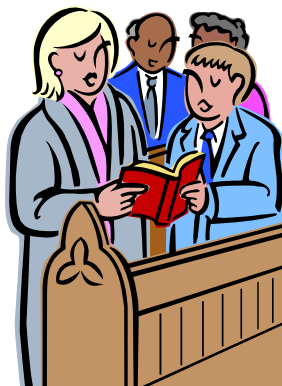
And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.

And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us." (Deuteronomy 6:20-25)

Genesis 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. (Romans 8:19)

Hymns



- **I Sing the Mighty Power of God by Isaac Watts**
- **O Day of Rest and Gladness by Christopher Wordsworth**
- **Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty by Gates Georg Weissel**
- **All Things Bright and Beautiful by Cecil Frances Alexander**

Litany

Leader: Praise God, Father of all creation.

People: We praise you, O God.

Leader: Bless us, your people, that we may be good stewards of your earth.

People: We praise you, O God.

Leader: We celebrate all your goodness as we use your resources wisely.

People: We thank you, Lord, for your soil, water, air, and sunshine which enrich our lives.

Leader: Lord, we listen for your voice in directing us to do your will each day.

People: Teach us to be patient and persistent in our daily lives.

Leader: Help us to release our worries for our children to you. Help them to trust your guidance in caring for your creation and for each other.

People: Remind us to take the time to appreciate the beauty of your creation.

Leader: We give you thanks, O Lord, for your gentle reminders of how we should live.

People: Thank you, O Lord, for allowing us to be your messengers.

Leader: Father, we turn to you, the source of all energy, for divine guidance.

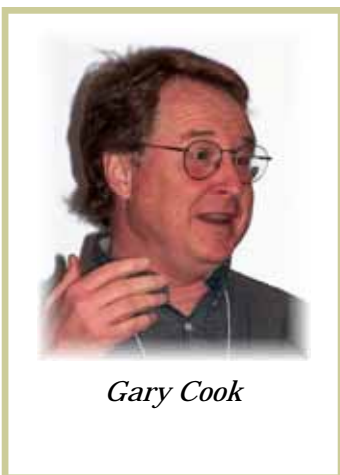
People: Let us see through your eyes the possibilities before us.

All: Amen.



The Land as Gift: A Sunday School Lesson or Sermon Starter NACD Stewardship Week—April 29 through May 6, 2007

by Gary D. Cook—NACD Stewardship & Education Committee Advisor



Gary Cook

I have been associated with Conservation Districts in one way or another throughout most of my professional life. As a classroom teacher, a District Manager, a Conservation Education Specialist, and now as the director of a national water education program, conservation education through Conservation Districts is a common thread that runs through my career.

As I have struggled through the years to find the best ways to educate people about the values of natural resource conservation I have received more than a little advice. Much advice I've either intentionally or inadvertently plowed under and forgotten, but some of it has taken root. One word of advice in particular I have remembered. The director of a state conservation agency I worked for told me: "You know, Gary, conservation is just good common sense."

I think one of the reasons I have remembered that comment is that I quarrel with it. If conservation is common sense, why is it not more commonly practiced? If it is true that conservation makes good sense, and if the good sense of conservation is commonly known, why do we need agencies and incentives to encourage us to practice conservation? Why does there seem to be a disconnect between the common sense of conservation and the common practice of conservation?

The charitable answer is that conservation is not common sense. That is, conservation practices and their values are not commonly known and we can, therefore, be excused for not practicing what we do not know how to practice. As I said, that is the charitable answer, but I also believe it is wrong. For though conservation practices may not be common knowledge, access to knowledge about conservation is certainly commonly and readily available anywhere in the United States through local Conservation Districts.

How, then, can we answer? I believe a better answer is this: We have forgotten the ancient biblical lesson that the land is a gift. Our forgetfulness has allowed us to believe that we own the land and that we can use it to our own purposes without answering to anyone. And our forgetting is communal. As a culture, we have, intentionally or inadvertently, plowed under and forgotten that biblical lesson. Our forgetfulness is the true common sense in our society, out of which grows our common failure to practice conservation.

Wendell Berry, in his essay entitled "The Gift of Good Land," makes a biblical case for remembering that the land is a gift and for recalling our responsibilities as recipients. With his permission, we shall summarize a portion of his argument here, quoting extensively, but always recommending his entire essay which has recently been reissued in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, published by Shoemaker and Hoard.

"The land" in this lesson is used in a broad sense, and often refers to all the created or natural resources of God's good earth: soil, water, air, plants, animals, etc. It is also sometimes very specific, as the ground we live upon and draw our sustenance from, as well as the Promised Land of the Old Testament.

The Land as Gift continued

Berry suggests that to understand the land as gift, the biblical “story of the giving of the Promised Land to the Israelites is more serviceable than the story of the giving of the Garden of Eden, because the Promised Land is a divine gift to a *fallen* people. For that reason the giving is more problematical, and the receiving is more conditional and more difficult.”

Stories of the giving of the Promised Land are found in the speeches Moses delivered to the people before they entered the land. These speeches and their numerous references to the giving of the land are recorded in Deuteronomy. As a representative example, we can take Deuteronomy 6:20-25.

When your son asks you in time to come, “What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the LORD our God has commanded you?” then you shall say to your son, “We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes; and he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land which he swore to give to our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.” (RSV)

Notice three things. First, notice that the testimonies, statutes, and ordinances that God has commanded are meaningful, and the meaning is to *remember* who we are and who God is. Second, notice that *God gives* the land because He is faithful to his covenant promise, not because the Israelites deserve it. And third, notice that the land is *given with conditions*: do all these statutes and fear the Lord.

Berry argues from the speeches of Moses that the land is “a gift—not a free or a deserved gift, but a gift given upon certain rigorous conditions.” How so?

It is a gift because the people who are to possess it did not create it. It is accompanied by careful warnings and demonstrations of the folly of saying that “My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17). Thus, deeply implicated in the very definition of this gift is a specific warning against *hubris* which is the great ecological sin, just as it is the great sin of politics. People are not gods. They must not act like gods or assume godly authority. If they do, terrible retributions are in store. In this warning we have the root of the idea of propriety, of *proper* human purposes and ends. We must not use the world as though we created it ourselves.

The Promised Land is not a permanent gift. It is “given,” but only for a time, and only for so long as it is properly used. It is stated unequivocally, and repeated again and again, that “the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is” (Deuteronomy 10:14). What is given is not ownership, but a sort of tenancy, the right to habitation and use: “The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me” (Leviticus 25:23).

The Land as Gift continued

Berry continues:

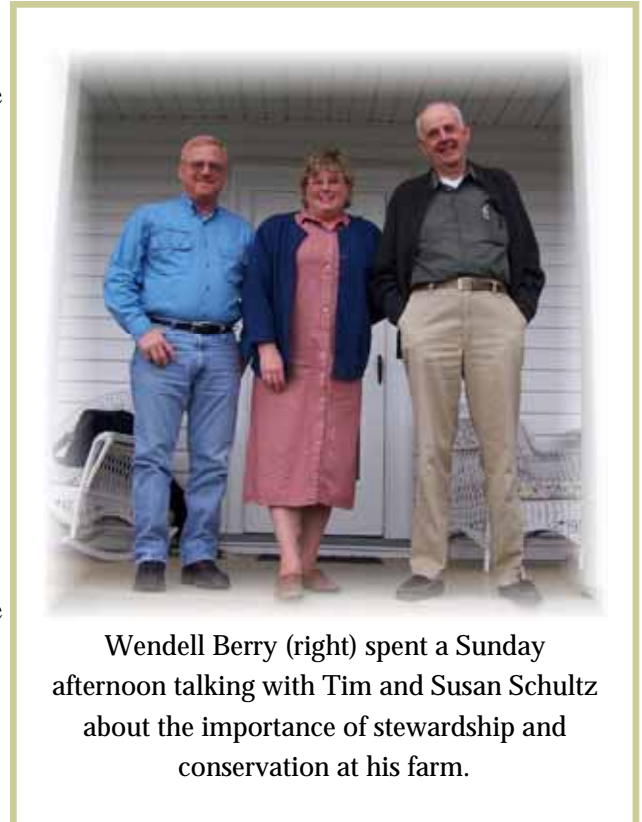
Finally, and most difficult, the good land is not given as a reward. It is made clear that the people chosen for this gift do not deserve it, for they are “a stiff-necked people” who have been wicked and faithless. To such a people such a gift can be given only as a moral predicament: having failed to deserve it beforehand, they must prove worthy of it afterwards; they must use it well or they will not continue long in it.

In these paragraphs, Berry has described for us and called us to remember the ancient biblical lesson that the land is a gift. His method is similar to that of the parent of the inquisitive son in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy (see above). The difference between then and now, perhaps, is that the son in Deuteronomy may have actually asked the question. But that difference is purely trivial: as we face the requirements of land tenancy (Do all these statutes. Fear the Lord.), we are responsible, whether or not we ask the question.

Berry has asked the next logical question for us: How are the Israelites to prove worthy of the land which they have been given? He continues:

First of all, they must be faithful, grateful, and humble; they must remember that the land is a gift: “When thou has eaten and are full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee” (Deuteronomy 8:10).

Second, they must be neighborly. They must be just, kind to one another, generous to strangers, honest in trading, etc. These are social virtues, but, as they invariably do, they have ecological and agricultural implications. For the land is described as an “inheritance;” the community is understood to exist not just in space, but also in time. One lives in the neighborhood, not just of those who now live “next door,” but of the dead who have bequeathed the land to the living, and of the unborn to whom the living will in turn bequeath it. But we can have no direct behavioral connection to those who are not yet alive. The only neighborly thing we can do for them is to preserve their inheritance: we must take care, among other things, of the land, which is never a possession, but an inheritance to the living, as it will be to the unborn.



Wendell Berry (right) spent a Sunday afternoon talking with Tim and Susan Schultz about the importance of stewardship and conservation at his farm.

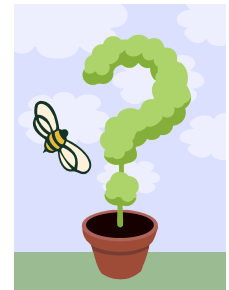
The Land as Gift continued

And so the third thing the possessors of the land must do to be worthy of it is to practice good husbandry.

And good husbandry, as we know, is another way of saying good conservation practice. These, of course, are not the only conditions to be worthy of the land. Deuteronomy contains a plethora of ordinances, statutes, and commandments. But good husbandry of the land which was given as an inheritance, as a gift, though often consigned to a lower rank among the ordinances and commandments, is certainly a commandment with implications as grave as all the others. We forget it at our risk, and, more importantly, at the risk of our children.

Questions for discussion

1. Deuteronomy 11:12 states that the Promised Land is “a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it.” What does it mean for the Lord to care for a land, to always keep His eyes upon it? What difference should that make for those who live upon the land?
2. One of the assumptions we have made in this lesson is that we in the twenty-first century United States can learn from the biblical experiences of the Israelites several millenniums ago. Is this a valid assumption? Why or why not? Compare our experience with the land in the United States to the Israelite’s experience with the Promised Land. How is it similar? How is it different? What obligations do we in the United States have to the land? Can we prove ourselves worthy or unworthy of the land today? How?
3. At the beginning of his essay, Wendell Berry writes: “That those who affirm the divinity of the Creator should come to the rescue of His creature is a logical consistency of great potential force.” Why would this be so?
4. How do you experience the land as a gift? What is the proper response upon receiving a gift?
5. Monotheism has been described thus: “There is one God, and you are not it. Neither am I.” How could an improper use of the land be construed as idolatry?
6. How does Berry’s argument about our responsibility to the land differ from arguments made using the Genesis passage which refers to dominion (Genesis 2:15)?
7. Romans 8:19 states that “the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.” Why would the creation be waiting eagerly for the revealing of the children of God? What difference would that make to the creation?
8. The Israelites were herders and pastoralists, or farmers. Few of us today have such a direct connection to the land. We work in offices, we purchase food in stores, we have lawns, not fields and orchards. Do we have a different obligation to the land? Does it reach beyond the ground at our feet to include the air, the atmosphere, the oceans, and other living things?



Author Wendell Berry’s essay passages used with permission of Mr. Berry 4-2-06



Stewardship Products and NACD

**Program
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Litany



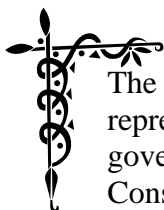
Bookmark



Program Insert



**Additional Stewardship products
available for sale online at
www.stewardship.nacdnet.org**



The **National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)** is the nonprofit organization that represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts, 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards.

Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Districts work with more than 2.5 million cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on nearly 98 percent of the private lands in the United States.

NACD's mission is to serve conservation districts by providing national leadership and a unified voice for natural resource conservation. The association was founded on the philosophy that conservation decisions should be made at the local level with technical and funding assistance from federal, state and local governments and the private sector. As the national voice for all conservation districts, NACD supports voluntary, incentive-driven natural resource conservation programs that benefit all citizens.

NACD maintains relationships with organizations and government agencies; publishes information about districts; works with leaders in agriculture, conservation, environment, education, industry, religion and other fields; and provides services to its districts. NACD is financed primarily through the voluntary contributions of its member districts and state associations.

The association's philosophy is that conservation decisions should be made by local people with technical and funding assistance from federal, state and local governments and the private sector. The association's programs and activities aim to advance the resource conservation cause of local districts and the millions of cooperating landowners and land managers they serve.

NACD Education Partners have made some of their activities available for our use for the 2007 Stewardship program.

We encourage you if you have not already completed training in these programs to locate your state contact and attend a workshop to receive all the activities in these outstanding programs. You will find your local contact information from the websites below.

Education partnerships with

- National Energy Education Development Project - NEED www.need.org
- Project Learning Tree www.plt.org
- Project WET www.projectwetusa.org
- Food Land and People www.foodlandpeople.org/
- Billy B Productions www.billybproductions.com
- Wendell Berry - Author—information site: <http://www.brtom.org/wb/berry.html>
- America's Energy brochure—Available on Stewardship download site www.stewardship.nacdnet.org
(special thanks for utilization of select photos)
Partners:
National Association of RC&D Councils www.rcdnet.org
Natural Resources Defense Council www.nrdc.org
National Association of Conservation Districts www.nacdnet.org

PDF activity files from Project WET and Project Learning Tree will only be available until October 31st, 2007. Permission granted for use of materials for the 2007 NACD Stewardship program.

Please locate the activities on our free [download page](#). The files are too large to add directly into this guide.

Activity	Education Partners	Page program's guide	Program Guide				
				K-1	2-3	4-5	Adult
	PLT-Project Learning Tree - www.plt.org						
1	Energy Detectives	pg 24	Energy & Society	K-1	2-3	4-5	Adult
2	Planning the Ideal Community	pg 239 #55	PreK-8 guide	K-1	2-3	4-5	Adult

NEED - National Energy Education Development Project www.need.org							
3	Energy Squares	pg 37	Games & Icebreakers	adaptable	2-3	4-12	Adult
4	Energy Bumper Stickers	pg 34	Games & Icebreakers	adaptable	2-3	3-8	Adult
5	This Week in Energy Conservation	pg 19	Games & Icebreakers	adaptable	2-3	4-12	Adult

(from Energy Games & Icebreakers activity guide)

Project WET www.projectwetusa.org							
6	Cold Cash in the Icebox	pg 373	K-12 guide	K-1	2-3	4-5	Adult
7	Energetic Water	pg 242	K-12 guide	K-1	2-3	4-5	Adult

Food Land & People -FLP www.foodlandpeople.org							
8	Don't Use it all Up	pg 81	FLP guide	K-1	2-3	4-5	Adult

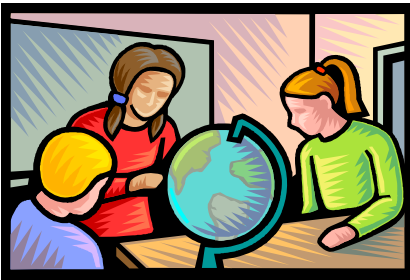
Bible School Ideas

Utilize the theme Conservation's Power for your Bible School or summer youth program.

On the NACD Stewardship website - you will find 8 downloadable activities that can be utilized by children in grade Kindergarten through 5th grade. A list of these activities can be found on page 12 in this guide. These hands on activities will increase the participants knowledge of energy, conservation, stewardship and caring for our earth.

Utilize the scripture versus in this guide.

The National Energy and Education Development Program has a large portfolio of lessons to teach students about energy efficiency and conservation. The [Energy House](#) and [Energy Conservation Contract](#) help students and their families learn simple ways to reduce energy consumption at home and to reduce energy costs.



Visit the NEED website for additional information and to attend a training near you.

NEED—www.need.org

List of state contacts visit: <http://www.need.org/stateandlocal.php>

Project Learning Tree had an Energy and Society program kit visit: www.plt.org for additional information.

Project WET (www.projectwetusa.org) and Food Land and People (www.foodlandpeople.org) also have some great activities to assist in your Bible school program.

There are many songs relating to energy and conservation to incorporate as well. Download the Program and Educators Guide for additional information as well as lyrics to a couple of energy songs and the website to order the Energy and Me music CD. The [NEED Songbook](#) provides the music and lyrics to many new energy songs.

Participants can also engage in community outreach activities such as:

- 1) Design an energy awareness exhibit to be placed in your church or local library.
- 2) Promote the Energy Star program on page 14 and 15 of this guide.
- 3) Design a pamphlet on easy energy conservation tips to send home or make available to various local businesses.
- 4) Encourage carpooling, recycling, composting and other energy saving activities.
- 5) Participate in local litter clean ups.



Change a Light Pledge



Take the ENERGY STAR **Change a Light** Pledge

Change just one light and see how a small step can make a big difference.

"Make a commitment to do your part to save energy and help protect the environment. Join us and take the ENERGY STAR Change a Light Pledge to change at least one light at home to an energy-efficient one, and help us reach our goal of 1000 pledges. It's a small step that's already making a big difference."

Be sure to select -

National Association of Conservation Districts

when reporting your pledge. Register your pledge by [clicking here](#). For a news release to promote Energy Star Change a Light Pledge in your community send an e-mail to: stewardship@nacdnet.org.



Putting Energy into Stewardship save up to 30% of your budget's energy dollars!



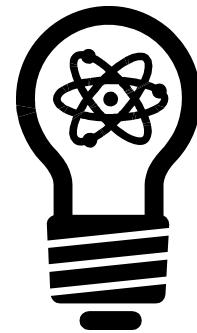
Visit this site for complete information

http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small_business.sb_congregations

Most congregations can cut energy costs by up to 30% by investing strategically in efficient equipment, facility upgrades and maintenance. With free, unbiased information and technical support from ENERGY STAR, your congregation can more easily improve stewardship of your budget's energy dollars, and of the earth by reducing energy waste and energy costs, while protecting the environment.

What You Get

- Free, accurate, unbiased information
- Technical support through our Email a Technical Question service
- "How-to" guide for analyzing and upgrading your facility
- Energy equipment and service contractors and utilities
- Information about ENERGY STAR labeled products
- National and local recognition
- Public relations materials to promote your efforts.
- Marketing Resources



Congregation Information in Spanish:

http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=sb_espanol.sb_index



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