

# Using Children's Literature to Share Stewardship Themes

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There is something about the “child within” in all ages that engages us in the art, creativity, imagination, and simple messages in children’s literature. When these stories are read aloud, adults and youth listen as raptly as young children and connect with the themes as much as youngsters ~ sometimes even more deeply. Though the list below is divided into several areas of stewardship, some books apply to a variety of topics. You probably know more titles!



## CHOICES

1. The Butter Battle Book, Dr. Seuss. Random House. *Children get the idea right away that there are better choices. This book provides a great way to begin a discussion about conflict.*
2. You are Special, Max Lucado. Crossway Books.
3. Just the Way You Are, Max Lucado. Crossway Books
4. The Coat, Lauren Mills. Little, Brown & Company
5. The Spyglass, Richard Paul Evans. Simon & Schuster.
6. I'm in Charge of Celebrations, Byrd Baylor. Charles Scribner's Sons. *The story and southwest-style illustrations by Peter Parnall help open us to the delights in daily life and show how we can choose to celebrate each moment with deep gratitude to God.*
7. For Every Child, adapted by Caroline Castle from “The UN Conference on the Rights of the child in Words and Pictures”
8. Counting Blessings, Debby Boone. Harvest House Publishing

## CREATION

1. Old Turtle, Douglas Wood. Pfeifer-Hamilton Publishing. *Watercolor illustrations by Cheng-Khee. This fable is a good introduction to gaining a deeper understanding of the earth and our relationship with all the beings who inhabit it. Some proceeds from the sale of the book are donated to projects promoting environmental healing and international understanding.*
2. A Prayer for the Earth, The Story of Naamah, Noah's Wife, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Jewish Lights Publishing
3. A River Ran Wild, An Environmental History, Lynne Cherry. Harcourt, Brace & Company
4. Down to Earth, “Garden Secrets! Garden Stories! Garden Projects You Can Do!”, Michael J. Rosen. Harcourt Brace & Company
5. Grandad's Prayers of the Earth, Douglas Wood. Candlewick Press. *A young boy recalls how his grandfather eloquently taught him many qualities of prayer by observing creation.*
6. The Lorax, Dr. Seuss. Random House
7. This is the Earth That God Made, Lynn Downey. Augsburg Fortress
8. Nature Crafts for Kids, 50 Fantastic Things to Make with Mother Nature's Help, Gwen Diehn & Terry Krautwurst. Sterling Publish Company
9. Good Earth Art, Environmental Art for Kids, Mary Ann F. Kohl & Cindy Gainer. Bright Ring Publishing. *The activities in this book are suitable for “children of all ages.”*
10. Forest of Dreams, Susan Jeffers. Dial Books for Young Readers
11. Brother Eagle, Sister Sky, Susan Jeffers. Scholastic Book Club

12. Play Lightly on the Earth, “Nature Activities, Experiments and Ideas About Living Lightly on Planet Earth”, Kathryn Sheehan & Mary Waidner, PhD. Council Oak Books. *A bibliography at the end of each chapter lists more books to share with children, as well as resources for parents and teachers. A “notes” section gives more information or helpful suggestions, approaches, poems, resources, and/or illustrations.*
13. Miss Rumphius, Barbara Cooney. Puffin Books
14. The Mountain That Loved a Bird, Alice McLerran. Aladdin Paperbacks. *Beautiful torn-paper art by Eric Carle. A touching story of how long, loyal friendship and faithfulness can transform the driest of places (or creatures) into warmth, playfulness and protection.*
15. She Who Watches, told by Willa Holmes. Binford & Mort Publishing
16. Hailstones and Halibut Bones, Mary O’Neil, John Wallner illustrator. Doubleday. *A delightful celebration of colors.*

## **COMMUNITY**

1. See Old Turtle, above.
2. Faith the Cow, Susan Bame Hoover. Brethren Press. *The story of Dan West, the genius behind Heifer Project International.*
3. Grandpa’s Hammer, Ronald Kidd. Habitat for Humanity International. *The ultimate children’s story for learning about Habitat for Humanity.*
4. Stone Soup, Marcia Brown. Aladdin Paperbacks. *Like multiplying the “loaves and fishes” a community learns to share its resources to make something delicious together.*
5. Because Nothing Looks Like God, Lawrence Kushner & Karen Kushner. Jewish Lights Publishing. *This book is endorsed by Protestant, catholic and Jewish leaders alike. It asks, “Where is God?” and “What Does God Look Like” and goes on to ask, “How does God make things happen?”*
6. Grandpa’s Soup, Eiko Kadona. Eerdman’s Books for Young Readers. *A grieving grandfather remembers the delicious meatball soup his deceased wife used to make for him. He tries to copy the soup and finds the aroma brings new visitors to his door. He discovers that sharing with new friends is the best cure for loneliness.*
7. The Other Side, Jacqueline Woodson. G.P. Putnam’s Sons. *A lyrical narrative told in the hopeful voice of a child confused by the fence someone else has built in her yard and the racial tension that divides her world.*
8. The Sneetches and other Stories, Dr. Seuss. Random House. *Sneetches is a comical story about prejudice and stereo-typing that cause division between people and cultures.*
9. God In Between, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Jewish Lights Publishing. *A wonderful tale of how people discover God’s presence in their relationships – “in between.”*
10. Children Just Like Me, Barnabas & Anabel Kindersley, United Nations Childrens Fund. DK Publishing, Inc. *Celebrates and teaches about children around the world.*
11. If the World Were a Village – A Book about the World’s People, David J. Smith. Kids Can Press. *Gives statistics about the “global village,” including nationalities, ages, languages, religions, food, air and water, education, money and “stuff,” electricity, and history and future of the village.*
12. The Gift of Nothing, Patrick McDonnell. Little, Brown and Company. *A character wants to give a gift to a friend. After a long struggle to decide, he gives “nothing” but the gift of sitting and being with his friend.*



## **GIFTS AND TALENTS**

1. The Dance, Richard Paul Evans. Simon & Schuster
2. In God's Image, Janet Neff Brewer. BRIDGE Resources
3. Earth Child, Kathryn Sheehan & Mary Waidner, PhD. Council Oak Books
4. Henry's Song, Kathryn Cove. Eerdman's Books for Young Readers. *Much to the dismay of friends, an off-tune bunny sings praise every morning. The story tells the value of everyone's gifts in the eyes of the Creator.*
5. The Peddler's Gift, Maxine Rose Heer. Dial Books for Young Readers. *Tells about a peddler "cut from a different cloth" who gives a gift to last for all time.*
6. Designed by God So I Must Be Special, Bonnie Sosé. Character Builders for Kids, Winter Park, FL
7. Badger's Parting Gifts, Susan Varley. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books. *A book that deals with the death of someone special, but also helps us see the value of sharing our gifts with others while they are alive.*
8. The Friendly Beasts - an Old English Christmas Carol, illustrated by Tomie de Paola. Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers. *One by one the creatures at the manger tell of the gifts they shared with the newborn Christ-child. A simple arrangement of the music is included.*



## **WELLNESS: BODY/MIND/SPIRIT**

1. On the Day You Were Born, Debra Frasier. Harcourt Brace & Company
2. Whoever You Are, Mem Fox. Harcourt Brace and Company
3. God's Paintbrush, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Jewish Lights Publishing
4. See Designed by God So I Must Be Special, above.

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE**

1. All You Ever Need, Max Lucado. Crossway Books
2. All Through the Day, All Through the Year, "Family Prayers and Celebrations", David B. Batchelder. Augsburg Fortress
3. In God's Name, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Jewish Lights Publishing.
4. The 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment, "Wisdom from our Children", written and drawn by the children of America. Jewish Lights Publication. This book asks, *"If there were an 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment, what would it be?"* A blank page invites children to share their visions for a more holy world. Adults see the world from this hopeful child's view.
5. My Journal, "A Place to Write about God and Me", Janet R. Knight & Lynn W. Gillian. Upper Room Books

## **TIME**

1. The Quiltmaker's Gift, Jeff Brumbeau. Pfeifer-Hamilton Publishers. *A modern-day fable with designs in the quilt-blocks that gives clues to the story. A website helps expands the rich heritage of this book with puzzles and games, stories of generosity from around the world, quilt block lore and quilting activities for all ages.*
2. The Giving Tree, Shel Silverstein. Harpercollins Childrens Books, 1964.
3. A Rose for Abby, Donna Guthrie. Abingdon Press. *A thoughtful and touching true story about a little girl who comes up with a way to help homeless people.*

## **POSSESSIONS**

1. The Table Where Rich People Sit, Byrd Baylor. Simon & Schuster. *A family sits down at their old wooden dining table and discusses how "rich" they are. The teenager is incredulous and cannot imagine how the parents actually believe they are rich - until they put a monetary values on EVERYTHING they hold dear in their lives.*
2. Francis, the poor Man of Assisi, Tomie de Paola. Holiday House, Inc.
3. The Giving Box, Create a Tradition of Giving with Your Children, Fred Rogers. Running Press. *This kit includes messages for parents and children, multi-cultural folktales and fables for varying perspectives, and a small "giving box" for children to save their money.*
4. In God's Hands, Lawrence Kushner and Gary Schmidt, Jewish Lights Publishing. *A delightfully humorous tale of how rich man and a poor man who attend the same synagogue learn about the miracles of sharing.*

