

# The Abundant Life Garden Project®

offered by Episcopal Relief & Development

This lesson is part of the **Abundant Life Garden Project®**. There are 6 lessons in total, plus an optional end-gathering. These lessons could be used during the following times: Lenten Soup Suppers or Small Groups, as VBS offering for adults, Sunday School/Adult Forum hour, in preparation for beginning a Church Community Garden, or with the existing volunteers and participants of a Church Community Garden.

## GARDEN GOALS

Participants will learn about the concept of abundant life.

### Preview Lesson:

## Abundant Life

- This lesson sets the stage for the theme of the entire study.
- If you are doing the adult study in conjunction with children's study during over the same amount of days (VBS) or weeks, this lesson can be combined with Water (just use one closing litany) or can be done as an Adult Forum or at another time before the official beginning of the study.
- If this study is offered independently you can began your series with the Preview Lesson.

Welcome to the **Abundant Life Garden Project®** offered by Episcopal Relief & Development. For the next several lessons we are going to learn what it means to have and to share the gift of abundant life and we are going to use the example of a garden as our guide to learning. Before we dig in, let us have a moment of prayer:

## Prayer:

### May God be in my mind

(using your right hand, touch middle of forehead)

### May Jesus be in my heart

(using your right hand touch middle of chest)

### May the Holy Spirit be by my side

(using your right hand first touch the left shoulder, then the right shoulder.)

**Amen!**

## Stocking the Tool Shed

These are the items you will need this week:

- A large blank writing surface (paper, poster board, white board)
- At least one Bible (two or more copies preferable)
- Printed or displayed copies of the Closing Litany
- Blank sheets of paper and writing utensils for each class member.
- Printed scripture 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 in the the three translations as listed: NRSV, The Message, and The Voice (You can find and print these from [Biblegateway.com](http://Biblegateway.com))



# Exploring the the Overall Theme: What does Abundant Life Mean?

**Leader:** Hand a blank sheet of paper and pen to each person. Ask them to write their answer to this question in the middle of their paper: **Define the term “abundant life”.** Give them a few moments to reflect, then ask for volunteers to share their definitions.

**Leader:** Abundant means to have plenty, to have more than enough, more than is needed. It means having enough of something to share again and again. Next, draw a circle or oval around your definition. Now, around that oval or circle, write some tactile things that you have an abundance of in your life (electricity, water, toilet paper, food, clothes, gas, water bottles, toys, electronics). Give classmembers a moment to write, then ask for a few people to share some of their answers.

**Leader:** Wonderful. Now, somewhere on your page, where you have room, write down the answer to this question:

**What is something that we can't always see, but through God, we will always have an abundance of?**

Give classmembers a moment to write, then ask for a few people to share some of their answers. (The desired answers here are: Love, Grace, Forgiveness etc.)

**Leader:** So given these two areas - material and spiritual,  
**What do you think it means to “live an abundant life”?**

Allow conversation to flow. Here is one definition that I like:  
**“Through God's love, we will always have enough to share”.**

## Stories from our Faith

### Listening Together, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15



**Note:** Print the following scripture in the the three translations as listed: **NRSV, The Message,** and **The Voice.** (You can find and print these from **Biblegateway.com**)

Invite three volunteers to read the passages, outloud, one at a time, as you practice Lectio Divina, sacred listening, together.

**Leader:** We are now going to do some sacred listening as we dig deeper into what it means to live -and share - an abundant life.

**HEAR: As you listen to the first translation being read aloud, notice which parts of the passage catch your attention. What word or image stood out to you?**

Volunteer reads **NRSV** translation.

Sit in silence for two minutes.



## Stories from our Faith (cont.)

**Leader:** Now we are going to begin to reflect.

**REFLECT:** As you listen to the second translation, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the place where your life intersects with that word or image that stood out to you. How is your life touched by this word or image?

Volunteer reads *The Voice* translation.

Sit in silence for two minutes.

**Leader:** Now we are going to begin to reflect.

**RESPOND:** Now we are going to respond. As you listen to the third translation, ask God to show you where there might be an invitation for you in these words.

Volunteer reads *The Message* Translation.

Sit in silence for two minutes.

**Leader:** Finally, we are going to take a moment to rest in the abundance of God's love for us and in us.

Sit in silence for two minutes.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- *What word, image or phrase stood out to you?*
- *Where did you see that word, image, or phrase intersecting with your life?*
- *What action or invitation did the Holy Spirit reveal to you?*
- *What do you think it means that their "giving simply flowed out of the purposes of God working in their lives."?*

**Leader:** Over the next few lessons we are going to look at what it means to live and share an abundant life, rooted in Christ' unfailing love, and overflowing with generosity. To do this we will be using the framework of a garden, and studying what how abundance can be nurtured - sustaining both the physical life and spiritual life of our neighbors and ourselves.

# Closing Litany

You may ask one or more volunteers to read the leaders portion of this litany.

**Leader:** I will read several prayers about abundance. Please respond to each of these prayers with, **“We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.”**

**Leader:** The Lord be with you!

**People: And also with you!**

**Leader:** Let us pray

**Leader:** Lord, thank you for the gift of this time together, and for the gift of your love. Bless us as we go forth into your world to do the work you have set before us.

**People: Amen.**

Litany Begins

**Leader:** We thank you, Lord, for the abundance of your creation that gives life on earth.

**People: We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.**

**Leader:** We give thanks for those material things that help us thrive: food, for running water, electricity, shelter, and transportation.

**People: We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.**

**Leader:** We give thanks for the example of the early church and what they can teach us about generosity.

**People: We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.**

**Leader:** We thank you, Lord, that your love is never scarce.

**People: We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.**

**Leader:** We give thanks for the opportunity to study scripture in freedom.

**People: We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.**

**Leader:** We give thanks for the opportunity to learn about our neighbors far and wide, and the chance we have to face their need for abundant life with honesty, humility and hope.

**People: We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.**

**Leader:** We thank you Lord, for the invitation to share our abundance with others, both spiritually and materially.

**People: We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.**

**Leader:** We ask your help, O Lord, as we face our fears and prejudice. Please remind us that your grace is sufficient in the face our inadequacies.

**People: We thank you, Lord, for the gifts of abundance.**

**Leader:** Help us to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves. Help us to strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being. **In Christ name, Amen.**