Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Stewardship Learning Community
Living in God's Economy
Jesus Knows

Opening Prayer

Scripture Read **Luke 21:1-4.**

Introduction

One author describes this story of the widow's mite as "stewardship at its best."

What do you suppose he means?

Explain how the widow was acting on each of the following stewardship principles:

- Sacrificial giving
- Giving as an act of worship
- Trust

How would you describe "stewardship at its best?"

"Jesus spoke about money more frequently than any other subject except the kingdom of God. He gave an unusual amount of time and energy to the money question. In the moving story about the 'widow's mite,' we are told that Jesus intentionally sat in front of the treasury and watched people putting in their offerings (mark 12:41). By design, he saw what they gave and discerned the spirit in which they gave. For Jesus, giving was not a private matter. He did not—as we so often do today—glance away embarrassed at prying into someone's personal business. No, Jesus considered it public business and used the occasion to teach about sacrificial giving" (Richard Foster, *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life*, page 19).

- How common is the idea that giving is a private matter?
- Why do people feel that way?
- Respond to Foster's statement that Jesus considered giving public business.
- Who should know what I give?
- How does the fact that "Jesus knows" impact every aspect of my stewardship?

A Stewardship Prayer

Lord Jesus. You ask us to give so that we do not forget You and all You do for us.

Thank You for giving us all that we need for this body and life.

Thank you for giving us Your own dear Son and the salvation that comes only in Him.

Forgive us when we have failed to trust you completely.

Guide and direct our thoughts, our words, and our deeds so that they reflect Your love to those around us.

We ask this in Your holy name,

Amen.

My relationship with God?

My relationship with myself

My relationship with others?

My relationship with creation?

Jesus turns things upside down. How can Jesus say that the widow who gave two small coins (the copper lepton was the smallest Greek coin in circulation. It took 128 of these leptons to equal one denarius—a day's wage.) "put in more than all of them?"

Jesus turns things upside down. The way we think of things is not how Jesus sees them. How are each of the following passages "upside down" to our way of thinking?

Luke 6:20, 24

Luke 16:15

Luke 16:22,23

Luke 12:21

Luke 12:30,31.

Matthew 6:20

Matthew 6:24

"Several key ideas emerge from Jesus' message in this story. Attachment to wealth can compete with and unseat the rule of God in our lives. When God becomes truly King of our lives, God transforms our economic values and practices." The Upside-down Kingdom, page 119.

- How can attachment to wealth compete with and unseat the rule of God in our lives?
- What does it look like when God transforms our economic values and practices?
- How can the widow's action be applied to my life?

In *Jesus and Money*, author Ben Witherington III makes the following points about the widow's offering:

1. Jesus is commending sacrificial giving to his disciples, not mere tithing (10 percent of income).
2. One does not need to be rich to be generous or to have a generous spirit.
3. We must all live by faith, trusting God.

Discuss the following Questions:

- How do ***you*** practice sacrificial giving in ***your*** life?
- What did Jesus mean by saying that the wealthy "gave out of their abundance?"
- What does it mean to have a generous spirit?
- How do ***you*** show trust in God by putting money in the offering plate?

Closing Prayer

Provide time at the end of each session for questions, comments and group prayer. The prayer can take one of the following forms or be done in a way the group decides.

Adoration…
Confession…
Thanksgiving…
Supplication…
Praise…
Remember…
Ask…
Yield…

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