

JESUS SPEAKS ABOUT GIVING (LUKE 21:1-4)

A RESOURCE FOR SMALL GROUPS

To begin, consider:

1. What counts as “financial security” for you?

Read Luke 21:1-4. In this passage, Jesus marvels at a needy widow who offers two tiny coins – all she has to live on – at the temple. He accounts her gift more than that of any others He’s seen, offering large sums from their relative wealth. His evaluation fits with ancient wisdom: that what really signifies is not the size of the gift, but the resource of the giver.

It’s worth noting that there was no minimum – she could have given just one *lepta*, and kept one in reserve. It’s also worth remembering that such gifts are of no direct benefit to the giver: the money collected served for the upkeep of the temple and to maintain its services.

2. Why do you think the widow gave everything, and to a purpose with no direct benefit to her?
3. What motivates your giving? How do you decide how much to give, and where to direct your gifts?

Whatever her exact motivation, it seems likely that this widow felt the freedom of someone deeply dependent on God. She did not have enough to nourish any sense of self-sufficiency. Either someone else cared for her, or she was done for. Giving all as she did as an offering to God was token that she looked to God unreservedly to care for her.

4. To what extent do your financial decisions reflect your trust in God?
5. If you truly trusted the Lord to provide for you, throughout your life, what decisions might you make differently?

To see what freedom looks like in this area, read 2 Corinthians 8:1-2. Here, Paul seeks the Corinthians’ support for a collection for the poor of Jerusalem. Being poor themselves, they will understand the need. But Paul motivates them first by describing the Macedonian churches’ response.

6. What was the “grace of God” given to – or in – the Macedonian church?

The word “grace” is the Greek word *charis*, which equally means “gift”. It seems the gift of God was a spirit of open-hearted generosity, which enabled the Macedonians to give freely and to dig deep. It’s important to register that such a freedom is a gift of God, not a burdensome, laboured attitude we have to conjure for ourselves. We can ask for it, and should; for the Lord does not want us to be enslaved to money

(Luke 16:13) out of fear or naked lust (1 Timothy 6:10). He wants us to put our trust in Him, and so be free in our giving and in our financial stewardship more generally.

Finally, read 2 Corinthians 8:9. Our attitude toward money flows from the actions of Christ Himself. Pray together for God's gift of freedom and joy, and give thanks and praise to the Lord Jesus for the generosity of His self-giving for us.