

Jesus and the Widow's Offering

Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

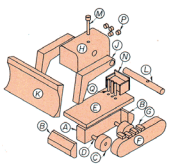
PPT Title

Jesus and the Widow's Offering

Main Point: God notices those who give to Him with a pure heart.

Key Verse: *Man looks at how someone appears on the outside. But I look at what is in the heart.* — 1 Samuel 16:7b

Props: A disassembled toy or other item with multiple parts (preferably one that looks difficult to put together). A box to hold the parts of the toy/item. An assembly manual or a stack of printed papers that look like an assembly manual. A ziploc bag containing four cookies, and a second bag containing half a cookie.



Dump the parts of the disassembled item out onto a table. Flip through the assembly manual while looking perplexed. **Say:** I've been trying to put this toy together for days! But the instructions are really hard to understand. **Act like you're trying to put the toy together.** It says to put piece E in slot J, but it doesn't fit. And I can't even find slot G! I'm totally lost! These instructions make no sense! **Ask:** I think there MUST be an easier way than following all these directions. What do you think? What might help me out? **Listen for answers, and if it's not suggested by the kids, Say:** I think it would be a whole lot easier if the maker of this toy just came here and showed me how to do this. People just learn better that way, don't you think?



You know, Jesus must have known that people need to see things with their own eyes to understand. Today we're going to look at a time when Jesus helped His disciples learn about a confusing idea by showing them someone who was doing things right. If Jesus just told His followers what to do, they might not get it. But by watching someone else do the right thing, the disciples understood so much more.

The person Jesus used as an example in this case was a widow. And even though she was very poor because her husband had died, this widow was a wonderful example of what it means to be generous and to give with a pure heart. Jesus wanted His disciples—and us—to follow her example when we give to God and others.



Say: Remember last week, Jesus had just come to Jerusalem. It was one week before He would give up His life on the cross. When He went to the temple, He saw the money changers and animal traders selling things in the temple. He ran them out boldly, because the temple was a place to worship God, not a place to cheat people out of their money! **Ask:** How did the Pharisees and religious leaders feel about that? *They were angry. They began plotting to kill Jesus.*

Since Jesus is God, He knew the true hearts and thoughts of these religious leaders. He knew that while they looked good on the OUTSIDE—seeming to do everything by the rules—they were filled with wickedness on the INSIDE.

Let's turn to Mark 12:41-44 and read about how the poor widow behaved very differently from these people who seemed so important on the outside.

Teacher note: Even though this passage of scripture involves issues of monetary giving, we should make sure that the children understand that there are many ways to give and be generous. Sure, giving money is good. But people can also be generous with their possessions, with their time, with their forgiveness, with the Gospel, etc. Make sure to focus on the importance of sacrificial giving in all circumstances, not merely on the generous giving of money.

"Sacrificial giving is parting with what we'd rather keep. It's keeping the old and giving away the new or giving away both. The giving of the first Christians was spontaneous, unguarded, and uncalculated.

"Sacrificial giving appears to be unreasonable. In reality, though, it's perfectly reasonable. It brings God glory, meets others' needs, and ensures us eternal rewards. And all the while God takes care of our immediate needs.

"Sacrificial giving makes no human sense. But we are to think like Christ, not the world." — Randy Alcorn, from *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*, p. 203.

TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE, TWO TYPES OF GIVING



Read: *Jesus sat down across from the place where people put their temple offerings. He watched the crowd putting their money into the offering boxes. Many rich people threw large amounts into them.*

But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins. They were worth much less than a penny.

Jesus asked his disciples to come to Him. He said, "What I'm about to tell you is true. That poor widow has put more into the offering box than all the others. They all gave a lot because they are rich. But she gave even though she is poor. She put in everything she had. She gave all she had to live on." — Mark 12:41-44

Teacher note: Jesus didn't just happen to see this scene unfolding, He actually sat down to observe what was going on. He was interested enough in what people were doing with their money to watch them and then to use what He saw to teach His disciples—and us—about sacrificial giving.

Say: While He was in the temple, Jesus decided to watch people putting their gifts into the temple treasury. The Bible doesn't say if the Pharisees were among those making gifts, but it does say that many rich people were throwing money into the boxes. The religious leaders loved to hang out with rich people and had a lot in common with them.



When some rich people in Bible times gave an offering to the poor, they wanted everyone to notice them. They would even have people blow trumpets so that people would stop and watch them make their offering. Here is what Jesus said about that:

"When you give to needy people, do not announce it by having trumpets blown. Do not be like those who only pretend to be holy. They announce what they do in the synagogues and on the streets. They want to be honored by others. What I'm about to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward." — Matthew 6:2

Application: Some people were impressed by all that trumpet blowing! But Jesus wasn't. Jesus didn't want His disciples to think that religious leaders were more important than others. And we shouldn't believe that certain people are better than others, either. No matter how nicely someone dresses, no matter how popular they are, no matter how perfect they seem, no one is better in God's eyes than anyone

else. We should not be impressed by those who LOOK and ACT important. Instead, we should notice those who have pure hearts and think of others as more important than themselves.

The widow in this story was a person with a pure heart. Jesus wanted the disciples to follow her example, not the example set by the religious leaders and those who showed off when they gave.

GIVING WITH A PURE HEART

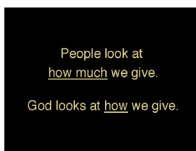


Say: Let's look at how the poor widow made her gift. Remember Mark 12:42-44? It said,

...a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins. They were worth much less than a penny.

Jesus asked his disciples to come to Him. He said, "What I'm about to tell you is true. That poor widow has put more into the offering box than all the others. They all gave a lot because they are rich. But she gave even though she is poor. She put in everything she had. She gave all she had to live on."

Ask: How can this be? How can a penny be more than \$100? How can the widow's gift be the one that Jesus finds the most beautiful? It's because the widow gave generously and with a pure heart.



People might look at how much money rich people give. But God cares more about HOW we give than HOW MUCH we give. God knows what we are thinking and feeling when we give. If we are giving to impress people, He knows it. If we are giving because we love God and love others, He knows that, too.

1 Samuel 16:7 says, *Man looks at how someone appears on the outside. But I look at what is in the heart.* So when the people were making their gifts in the temple that day, and Jesus was watching them, He saw more than the size of their gifts. He saw how generous and pure their hearts were as they put their money in the box.

Jesus knew that the woman was not just a poor widow. She was truly NEEDY. Those two coins were all she had, and when she put them in the box, there was nothing left. The widow's offering demonstrated her deep love for God. And it showed that she trusted that God would provide food, clothing and everything else that she needed. Her gift was a beautiful sacrifice.

No one in the temple noticed this poor woman...BUT JESUS SAW HER! And He used her as an example to teach His disciples about what it means to give sacrificially.



Application: A sacrificial gift is one that isn't easy to give. The widow's coins were a sacrifice because they were all she had. There are other ways to give sacrificially, too. Let's do a little demonstration to see how we might follow the widow's example. I need two volunteers.

Have one volunteer sit on the floor while the other stands in front of you. **Say:** My friend here has a problem. He/she is really, really, really hungry. And I have a bag full of delicious cookies. Hold up the bag of four cookies for everyone to see. **Say:** Friend, ask me if you can have a cookie. After the volunteer asks for a cookie, take one cookie out and hold it up for everyone to see. **Say:** I guess you can have one, but this is my favorite kind of cookie. If I gave you all of them, then I wouldn't have any left for myself. But if anyone asks, make sure you tell them it was me who shared with you, OK? Give the cookie to the volunteer and send them back to their seat.

Ask: Was this an example of sacrificial giving? No! I wanted the cookies for myself, but I also wanted people to think I was a good person. That's why I offered my friend just one of the cookies in the bag. Now let's see how this situation would be different if I followed the example of the poor widow in the temple.

Have the second volunteer stand in front of you. Say: This friend is very hungry, too. Everyone in the class has a snack except him/her. When I packed my snack for today, there was only half a cookie in my pantry. **Hold up the second bag containing the half cookie for everyone to see.** I've been thinking about that half cookie all day long. It's finally snack time, and I am very hungry. But my friend is hungrier. He/she didn't have anything to eat for breakfast! **Say:** Friend, ask me if you can have my half cookie. **After the volunteer asks for your cookie, take it out of the bag and hold it up for everyone to see. Say:** I know you're extra hungry, friend. Even though I only have half a cookie to give you, it's delicious. I hope you enjoy it! **Give the cookie to the second volunteer and send them back to their seat.**

Hold up the first bag that still contains three cookies. Say: Even though the whole cookie from this bag was bigger than the half cookie from the other bag, it was not a sacrifice for me to give it to my friend. I still have three cookies left for myself. **Hold up the empty second bag.** But when I gave my friend the half cookie from this bag, it was all I had to give. It was a very small snack, and when I gave it away, I had no snack left at all. That was a sacrifice. And I gave it with a generous and pure heart. Remember, God doesn't look at HOW MUCH we give. He looks at HOW we give. So in God's eyes, the half cookie was the bigger gift.



Say: Jesus knew that it is very easy for people to get confused about doing the right thing. Sometimes people tell us one thing and God tells us another. That's why Jesus tried to give us examples to follow. Remember when we talked about building the complicated toy at the beginning of the lesson? It's easier to imitate someone who is building the toy correctly than it is to follow confusing instructions.

Jesus knew that we might be confused about sacrificial giving. That's why He gave us the example of the poor widow to follow. She had almost nothing to give, yet she gave everything she had. Religious leaders and rich people might be noticed by people, but the widow's sacrificial gift was the one that GOD noticed.

The poor widow in the temple truly understood what Jesus was saying in Matthew 6:19-21...

"Do not put away riches for yourselves on earth. Moths and rust can destroy them. Thieves can break in and steal them. Instead, put away riches for yourselves in heaven. There, moths and rust do not destroy them. There, thieves do not break in and steal them. Your heart will be where your riches are."

By giving with a generous and pure heart, the poor widow was storing away rewards that would last FOREVER!

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PPT Main Point

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