

The Widow's Offering

38 Jesus also taught: "Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they like to parade around in flowing robes and receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces. 39 And how they love the seats of honor in the synagogues and the head table at banquets. 40 Yet they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, they will be more severely punished."

41 Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. 42 Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.

43 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. 44 For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on."

Mark 12:38-44 (NLT)

**Observation** (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

**Discussion/Topic Starters** (Ice Breakers)

- What are the different feelings you've had when (if) you were in a church and the offering plate was passed?
- Describe things where more is actually less (and/or less is actually more). When is a little actually a lot?
- : What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

**V38-40**

○: This passage ends a packed chapter 12. How would you summarize the basic problem that was corruption the religious system of the first- century? What/how can we learn from this for our church/time period?

Follow-up: What's your impression of Jesus in this chapter? Personality, abilities, etc.

○: In most bibles, v.41-44 are a section, set-apart via a heading. Why is it critical to look beyond these breaks (which are not part of the original bible) to fully grasp the meaning at v.41-44? *Note: this is where you can push the group members to always think "context".... Not just in verses, but instead in passages and the overall story of the Bible.*

○: In the church today, the "really big sins" that get talked about seem to be sexual promiscuity or drug abuse. While certainly not minimizing these, what "big sins" does Jesus point out in v.38-40.

Follow-up - why do you think He focused on these? Why are they so serious

A: What warning to us is present in Jesus' rebuke about the teachers of the law?

A: What might Jesus be calling into question in regards to your life?

**V41-44**

○: What made the poor widow's tiny contribution greater in Jesus' eyes than the large sums from the wealthy?

○: In contrast to the teachers of the law (v.38-40) and the rich (v.41), what motivated the widow's actions (v.42)?

l: Jesus commends the widow for what seemed to be a very small amount. How does the widow's offering foreshadow Jesus' own coming sacrifice (Note: also see the contest of how ch. 13 begins)?

l: Jesus stated earlier in Mark (Mark 12:29-31) that love God & love your neighbor were the greatest commandments. How does the widow's offering v.41-44) as well as the religious leader's actions (v.38-40) illustrate these commands from Jesus?

Follow-up: How does the widow's actions/heart fulfill the great commandment?

l: What can this passage tell us about the differences between how Jesus views the world and how we typically view the world?

A: How are you/we caring for the poor, widow, outcast, stranger? How could we respond to God's heart and do more?

A: How are you/we worshiping God with our resources, as well as with a right heart/motivation?

**Recommended Follow-up:**

- **Pray:** Pray for us to have yielded hearts and attitudes, yielded spirits and resources, and for us to be open to what God had for us and what HE wants to accomplish through us.
- **Respond:** Reflect upon the emotions and heart you have when you give, especially give sacrificially. Pray and reflect upon how God might want you to yield more (everything) to Him.
- **Read:** Next week's sermon (3/20/2011) will focus on Mark Chapter 13. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the chapter, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.

\* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. These guides rely heavily on a few different study guides; including "LifeChange Series" (ISBN 0891099107), N.T. Wright's guide (ISBN 9780830821822), James Hoover's guide (ISBN 9780830830046), and the Serendipity NT for Groups by the Young Life ministry (ISBN is N/A)