

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 21:1-4

As we approach this passage, it is important to remember that when Luke originally wrote this there was not “chapter break” that we know as “chapter 21”. This passage/paragraph needs to be seen as connected to the previous one, in which Jesus warns the people about the teachers of the law and their showy ways. And in 20:47 Jesus specifically mentions “widows” then immediately turns around and uses a widow as an object lesson. Coincidence? Not likely.

The giving of money or other resources as a religious act of worship has been around since as long as people have been religious...so, basically, forever.

An interesting, and very important, difference between giving offerings to YHWH (the God of the Bible) versus other deities from other religions or belief systems, has to do with the reason WHY. In other faiths the goal is to get the deity in question to be favorably disposed to you, so that things will work out well for you. (And if things don't go well in your life, then you're clearly doing something wrong...is how the thought progression goes.)

When it comes to YHWH, we're responding to Him as He has already proven to be favorably disposed to us. He loves us immensely and so we're responding to that love. This changes everything from a motivation perspective. We don't give offerings (or do anything else for that matter) in order to get God to love us. He already does!

So that dispels one possible bad reason to give offerings to God. Another bad reason is the attempt to appear righteous in front of other people. (The teachers of the law, in this case, would be an example of that.) So this begs the question, “Who, in fact, is a good/righteous person?” Jesus seems to be answering that question in this passage, and He does so by contrast. It is not those who would be typically assumed to be “good & righteous”—the teachers of the law (and we could probably throw in there the Pharisees and Sadducees as well), instead Jesus highlights this poor widow. She had the good and right heart.

This has been a consistent pattern in Luke—actually, it's a consistent pattern with Jesus in all the gospels—the upside-down-ness of the Kingdom of God forces us into a paradigm shift regarding what is truly good and right. (That's sort of the basic premise of the greatest sermon ever preacher, the Sermon on the Mount.)

So, then, what are good and right reasons to give offerings to God? We highlighted 5 of them in the sermon on Sunday.

First, it is an act of Worship. Following the pattern established in the Old Testament, as an act of worship it demonstrates both a relinquishing of control as well as sacrifice. When the Israelites conquered the Promised Land, they were often instructed to “devote” the plunder to God as opposed to keeping for themselves. This was very counter-cultural at the time (or

probably any time). It's a way of saying "we have no claim on this". Which leads to the second reason...

Second, as a demonstration of Stewardship. God owns EVERYTHING, we own NOTHING. We are but managers of the resources that He has entrusted us with, and we will give an account. Regular giving is an important, good, and healthy reminder of that fact. This is also counter-cultural. Most people (non-believers) operate as if their stuff is theirs and they can do with it what they wish.

Third, as a practical way of displaying Trust. This can be a challenge for many of us, because many of us are good at being self-sufficient and independent. For all practical purposes we don't need to trust God in our daily lives. And that is a very dangerous and unhealthy place to be, from a Kingdom perspective. So giving, especially sacrificially so, can be an important and healthy exercise in trust.

Fourth, the calling we have been given to Advance the Kingdom of God through the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel costs money. Regularly giving financial offerings is a way of participating in our calling/mandate.

Fifth, giving is a way for us to experience true Freedom. If we don't consciously fight it, money will master us. So by leaning into the first 4 reasons mentioned, we experience the sort of freedom God wants for us when it comes to our relationship with money.

As was mentioned in the sermon, if we're functioning from a place of stewardship, then thinking of money as a personal/private matter would be inconsistent. It should be a topic we freely and easily talk about. (And let's face it, it's probably an area we all need more accountability in.) With that said, ideally, our Home Groups can be a great place to openly discuss real life stuff like our relationship with money and how it's effecting our lives, especially as we're trying to live Kingdom lives. So the questions below are simply fodder...there are many good questions and talking points around money that can be had in a HG setting, go with what the Spirit leads you to go with. You know the people in your HG better than I do, so guide the conversation with their needs in mind.

One scenario that was not mentioned in the sermon but might be worth noting: What do you do about giving if you're a believer married to an unbeliever? I would draw your attention to the very first reason that we mentioned...worship. You might have to worship in others ways besides giving financially. (Obviously it depends on the situation between the spouses, but that would be the reality for some.) Secondly, it is good for us to focus on what we CAN do, and not on what we CANNOT do. God understands our situations and limitations. Instead of bemoaning what is out of our control, focus on what is within our control. Regardless of spiritual status of married couples, ideally money is a topic in which unity is strived for, as opposed to being a divisive issue.

Q. Of the 5 reasons for giving mentioned, which is the most compelling to you?

- Q. What is your motivation for giving? (guilt; love; scoring brownie points with God; wanting to help others...some mixture of various motives, etc.?)**
- Q. What sort of struggles with money have you experienced in your life? (“Struggles” can—often do—include more than simply a shortage of money...i.e. comparing ourselves with other people financially; having bad attitudes towards on how they use money; good stewardship of discretionary money, etc.)**
- Q. What do you think of the concept of tithing?**
- Q. To whom do you give money on a regular basis? What was your process like in deciding to do that?**
- Q. For those that are married, what sort of tension points have you experienced while trying to become unified on use of money?**
- Q. What does trusting God look like for you in real, practical, tangible ways?**
- Q. In what ways do you actively participate in Kingdom advancement? (Or, in what ways would you like to?)**
- Q. On the spectrum of bondage on one end and freedom on the other, where are you on that spectrum when it comes to money?**
- Q. How would you articulate “financial freedom” from a Kingdom perspective versus “financial freedom” from a worldly perspective? (Both perspectives would say “financial freedom” is good and should be strived for...but likely mean different things by that.)**
- Q. Financially speaking, do you feel you are where God wants you presently? Why or why not? What will it take to get you to that place?**
- Q. (Possible icebreaker) Hypothetically, let’s say you were given \$10k that you must give away somehow (i.e. you can’t keep it, save it, or in any way spend it on yourself), what would you do with it? Who would you give it to (you can break it up however you’d like).**