

Giving Study Sheet

Aim: A series of sheets to prompt group discussion around giving. This discussion may primarily lead to individual action. It should not lead necessarily to action within the group. The discussion may lead to different ways of doing things in the life of the church.

This study should help unpack the concept of 'generous giving' in our times, and help develop a pastorally sensitive view of giving in a context where some have more to give than others.

Text: Luke 21: 1 - 4

¹As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ²He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³"Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." (New International Version)

¹Jesus looked up and saw some rich people tossing their gifts into the offering box. ² He also saw a poor widow putting in two pennies. ³ And he said, "I tell you that this poor woman has put in more than all the others. ⁴ Everyone else gave what they didn't need. But she is very poor and gave everything she had." (Contemporary English Version)

Reflection

Sometimes those in great need themselves are the most generous givers. At a recent school's harvest celebration, the head teacher decided NOT to ask the children to bring donations towards Bath Food Bank, as she is aware of several families who have been in receipt of their help and many others close to this point. One little girl from a single parent family, living with her dad and disabled brother, quietly came up to the vicar at the end of the harvest service and handed over two tins of beans.

Or to give another recent example, a single elderly lady provided all the cheese for her church's recent parish lunch, one of the most expensive items offered. This would surely have meant her going without something herself that week.

In the Bible text, the widow was commended by Jesus for giving 'all she had to live on', which was proportionately considerably higher than other gifts given by wealthier people. Jesus measured people's giving, not by how much they gave, but by how much they had left, how much their giving cost them.

Giving to the church is an individual matter, different for each of us, formulated by each household's income and circumstances.

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Discussion Points

These are suggestions – address as many or as few as your group wishes to do. There are no right or wrong answers.

- Was the head teacher in the first example right to ask the children not to bring in harvest donations and why? What does the example of the little girl bringing in the tins of beans tell us?
- Should the vicar in the last example approach the elderly lady about her sacrificial offering of cheese and suggest she contributes a less expensive item in future? Or should the church encourage and commend such sacrifice?
- Should those in a community who live on low incomes be encouraged to cover all their basic needs before giving? How do we help people to decide what their basic needs are? (eg rent, utility bills, clothing, food, a family holiday, smart phones, computers?) What is 'essential' today, and what might it be reasonable to consider sacrificing in order to give generously to church?
- How can we encourage a healthy culture of giving in a church community, so that those on a very low income do not feel guilty, whilst those in a more comfortable position are challenged to give sacrificially? Could those with a large disposable income be encouraged to give more than a tenth and those on very low incomes less? How can we help one another to discern what is the right amount?

Concluding thought

Has engaging with this study changed your view of who is a generous giver in your church?

Music

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
Give thanks with a grateful heart
I will offer up my life (Matt Redman)

Giving and Funding Team
Diocese of Bath & Wells