



Date: 3rd & 10th November 2024

Theme: **Offering**

Bible Readings: **Mark 12:38-44**

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please ensure all your group members are aware of the timing of the session, and familiarize yourself with the material and the Bible reading.

Please have ready an offering plate or a small basket, together with some pens and small cards. If possible, copies of *Singing the Faith* (and possibly music) would be useful for the activity later.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

At home, or in a quiet place, take some time to sit and be still. Look around where you are sitting now, or imagine your favourite spot at home. Take some time to relax and breathe. Still your thoughts and invite God to be part of your thinking and reflection.

What is the most important possession you can see in the room? Why is it important to you? Is there a story attached to it? Spend some time thinking about this possession, and your memories of it.

After a while, thank God for the thing you have held in mind. Thank God for this time of stillness.

If you have time, read **Mark chapter 10, verses 38-44**, which is the reading we'll be looking at together.

STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

This prayer can be used either at the start of the session, or after the 'Finding our Roots' section.

Loving creator God,
our words cannot express just how much you have done for us.
Your love for us runs as streams of life-giving water – refreshing and restoring us.
Help us, Lord, as we gather for this time together
to discover and rediscover your power and greatness.
Enable us to draw close to you.
May we go deeper, that our whole lives may be lived as an offering to you.
This we pray in your Name. Amen.

FINDING OUR ROOTS

Opening discussions (perhaps in smaller groups of 2-4 people):

In the preparation exercise, did you think of anything that was particularly special or important to you? Would you like to tell others what it was and why is it special?

Would you ever allow others to use it; would you share it or give it away? Or is it too precious to risk?

Why do you think an offering/offertory is included in most of our church services?

How important do you think this is in our worship?

Do we offer to God what is most valuable to us, or only what we don't mind giving away?

READING THE SCRIPTURES

Read together the Bible passage: [Mark 12:38-44](#)

Background Information:

This two-part reading takes place in Holy Week, after Jesus has entered Jerusalem on a donkey.

In the first part, Jesus is teaching the crowds in the temple courts when he turns the spotlight on the teachers of the law. Notice in verse 40 the phrase “they devour widows houses”. This is key to understanding the second part where the spotlight focuses on the poor widow. The teachers of the law or religious authorities would sometimes mismanage the finances of widows, even taking their house when they were unable to pay, taking advantage of their vulnerability. In contrast, you might like to read [Deuteronomy chapter 14, verse 29](#) and [James 1:27](#), highlighting the care expected of God’s people for widows and orphans.

In the second part, a widow gives all she has to live on as an offering to God. The offering of two small coins could have bought her a handful of flour. The money offered went to the temple treasury which in turn was intended to benefit more of the Jewish community. As a contrast, you might like to read again [Mark 10:17-28](#), where the rich man was unable to let go of his wealth in order to follow Jesus.

DIGGING DEEPER

Discuss these questions together, allowing everyone time and space to share their views:

What do you think Jesus means in verse 43 when he says “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others”?

What is the difference between ‘monetary value’ and ‘personal cost’?

What do you think makes a difference to the widow, in her willingness to give out of her poverty?

Why do you think she put both coins in, and did not keep one of them back?

In the first section Jesus spoke to the crowds, but in verses 43 and 44 he gathered the disciples and only addressed them. Why might this be? Why might he have felt some things were not for the public to hear? (And is this instance perhaps about dignity and confidentiality?)

When we think about offering, so often we think about money. What other ways can we offer back to God as a response to what God has done for us?

How might the widow, and countless others like her, inspire us to be even more generous in our offering to God?

The Lord’s Prayer instructs us to pray: “Give us this day our daily bread”. Do you think a reliance on God for the needs of today might lead us to greater gratitude and more willing hearts to give?

ACTIVITY

Using the pens and small cards write down what you feel you can offer to God in response to what God has done for you.

When they have all been placed in the offertory plat or basket, sing or read together *Singing the Faith no. 566, Take my life and let it be.*

PRAYING TOGETHER

Have an open time of prayer on the theme of offering.

You might like to pray for widows, orphans, people who are disabled or unable to work, and those who rely on benefits or the generosity of others for their daily needs.

Pray for the ministry of the church, and all the ways we support people in need in the local community.

Say **the Lord’s Prayer** together.