

LESSON 5

Stewardship of Finances

—Randy Tompkins—

Focal Passage: Mark 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:5, 7

Central Truth: Our concept of giving needs to line up with God's definition of giving.

Teaching Aim: At the end of the session today the students will be able to write a statement of why they give gifts to God.

LESSON PREPARATION:

1. Mail the envelopes that were sealed during the first lesson of this series. These should be mailed on Wednesday or Thursday.
2. Ask someone to be prepared to read Mark 12:41-44.
3. Ask someone to be prepared to read 2 Corinthians 8:12 and 9:5, 7.
4. Secure three baskets to be used in the attention pacer. On one basket place a placard that reads "I felt uncomfortable with this." On the second basket place a placard that reads "I felt very comfortable with this." On the third basket place a placard that reads "Not in attendance that day."
5. Prepare a half sheet of paper to give to people as they arrive. Print on the paper:
 - a. "I was in attendance for the first lesson in this stewardship series. I received a sealed envelope this week that I had created during that lesson. In the envelope was a list of things I was willing to give up ownership and become a manager of."
 - b. Please take this half sheet of paper and place it in one of the baskets at the front of the classroom. Thank you for your participation.
 - c. If you were not in attendance for the first lesson please place this sheet in the basket labeled 'Not in attendance that day'. Thank you."
6. Place five pieces of tear sheets or poster boards on the walls around the room. Label one priority; another sacrifice, another bondage; another blessing; and the last cheerful.
7. Ask five people (or as many as feasible for your class) to be prepared to be scribes to mark items on tear sheets or poster boards.
8. Gather index cards to be handed to each person present.

LESSON ACTIVITIES:

Attention Pacer:

1. As people enter the classroom give them a half sheet of paper with the following printed on it:
 - a. "I was in attendance for the first lesson in this stewardship series. I received a sealed envelope this week that I had created during that lesson. In the envelope was a list of things I was willing to give up ownership of and become a manager of."
 - b. Please take this half sheet of paper and place it in one of the baskets at the front of the classroom. Thank you for your participation.

- c. If you were not in attendance for the first lesson please place this sheet in the basket labeled ‘Not in attendance that day’. Thank you.”
2. After everyone has placed their paper pieces in the baskets, count the number in each basket. In most classes the first basket will have the most sheets of paper (I feel uncomfortable). If this is the case for your class explain that “we usually feel uncomfortable with things we do not know a lot about. And we have not studied stewardship to the degree of allowing all of us to feel comfortable in confronting the action called for at the end of lesson one. Today it is my hope that we can further the education process for all of us.”

Purposeful Bible Study: A lot can be learned from this passage of scripture.

1. The location of Jesus – It is probably not an accident that Jesus led his disciples to a place “across from the temple treasury.” There was a lesson to be learned and this was the place to show them graphically that lesson.
2. There was a tradition of the time. Upon entering the outer gate of the temple on the way to pray or conduct other religious activity in the temple, the people would pass the urn where collections could be deposited. The urn was probably metal, and if coins were dropped into the urn from any height above the opening of the urn a loud noise would reverberate throughout the courtyard. Those who were considered the elite of society enjoyed allowing all inside the courtyard to hear the continuous sound of their coins clanging into the urn.
3. Jesus may have directed the focus of his disciples to the widow that was approaching the urn. He didn’t want them to miss what was about to take place.
4. Ask someone to read Mark 12:41-44.
5. Instead of dropping her gift into the urn with a loud clang, this widow probably placed the two small coins on the lip of the urn and gently slides them over into the opening. Quietly as possible she let the coins fall into the receptacle. Her goal was not to call attention to herself, but to make her gift to God.
6. Jesus then spoke of the event and we learn four things from this lesson:
 - a. Stewardship reflects priorities – the widow gave all she had. Her priority was her relationship to God - not what others thought nor what she needed.
 - b. Stewardship requires sacrifice – the important issue of this story is not the amount the widow gave (less than one cent in today’s money) but the fact she did not hold back. She gave everything she had.
 - c. Stewardship rejects bondage – being in debt to someone in the day of Jesus was a very serious matter. If the widow was in debt she placed her life in danger for giving all she had to God. But the wordage of the passage indicates she gave freely and thus implies she was free of debt.
 - d. Stewardship results in blessing – it may or may not be a financial blessing, but there will be a blessing bestowed on those who have a right relationship with God and are good stewards. Even though the Bible does not follow the widow past the point of giving her gift, the result might have been the same as in the Old Testament when the prophet asked the widow to use all of her oil to make him bread, and when she did this she had more oil than she knew what to do with.
 - e. Ask someone to read 2 Corinthians 8:12.

- f. Some translations use the word willingness and others use the word eagerness at the beginning of this verse.
- g. Lead the students in a discussion of the concept of being willing.
- h. Ask someone to read 2 Corinthians 9:5 and 7.
- i. Point out that in verse 5 the actions of Paul are not to be interpreted as trying to coerce people into giving. Apparently the church at Corinth had made statements or overtures to Paul about giving a monetary gift. Paul was sending some folks to the church to explain what the gift would be used for. It was an education trip.
- j. In verse 7 Paul is pointing out the gifts we give to God should not be coerced but given freely. And we are to “determine in our heart” what we are to give.
- k. Also in verse 7 the phrase “cheerful giver” is meant to convey the concept of a happy person giving willingly. When we are in right relationship with God and have been educated as to what God expects and where the gift will be applied to ministry, we can give cheerfully.

Practical Application:

1. Ask the class to divide into two discussion groups.
2. Go to one group and privately instruct them to discuss what priorities mean in today’s society and language. Also what sacrifice means and what cheerful means in society and language today.
3. Go to the second group and instruct them to discuss what bondage means in today’s society and language. Also discuss what blessing means and what cheerful means in society and language today.
4. Give the groups a time limit on their discussion.
5. At the conclusion of the time limit ask the scribes to go to the tear sheets or poster boards and get ready to write.
6. Then call on each group to summarize their discussion about each topic they were assigned. Alternate between each group following the discussion of one topic. Allow both groups to join in the summary of cheerful.
7. After the discussion draw some conclusions between what is listed on the tear sheets or poster boards and what the scripture says.

Follow-through: Write the following phrase on a blackboard, tear sheet, or poster board: “I will give to God (Attitude not amount). Why?” Dispense the index cards to each person in attendance. Ask the students to fill in the attitude that will guide them in giving their gifts to God. Ask them then to complete the task by answering the Why question. Give them a few minutes to complete the task.

Conclusion: Ask the students to place the index cards in their Bible as a book mark for Mark 12:41-44. Ask them to commit to reading the index card every time they open their Bible for the next 30 days. Thank them for participating in this series on stewardship. Inform them of the scripture and topic for next Sunday’s lesson. Close in prayer.