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Family Faith Talks: The Widow's Offering

Mark 12: 41-44

Week 1

Listen: Mark 12:41-44

Unpack: This month we are going to practice something called "Lectio Divina". Each week, we will read the same short passage that you just read. Sounds repetitive, right? But each week, we will focus on something different. This week, I want us to consider how Jesus felt watching these people give money at the temple. In your church, you probably take up an offering each week. In my church, this looks like a plate that is passed from person to person along each pew. People give an offering to the church because they believe the work the church does is important. There are a lot of other things we could spend our money on, so giving to the church can be a sacrifice. I wonder how God feels when God sees that we are giving generously to our churches?

Discuss: Talk about the things that an offering goes towards in your church. Who are your church's mission partners? What good work is your church doing in your town, or even across the world, because of the money people give? If your family is comfortable discussing it, talk about how much money your family gives to church, and why that giving is important.

Pray: Generous God, teach us to see giving through your eyes. Help us to let go of thinking that we have to have a certain amount of money or things to make us happy. Remind us that all that we have is truly Yours, and so with our offering we are only giving back what was never ours. Amen.

Do: See how much loose change you can find in your house. Then find a jar or a bowl to put it in. Throughout the month of November, drop any extra change or cash into the jar. At the end of the month, put whatever you have gathered into the offering plate at your church. If you would like, discuss as a family how much money each of you will try to commit to giving, and why you want to give it.

Week 2

Listen: Mark 12:41-44

Unpack: As you read the Scripture this week, I want you to imagine that you are one of the rich people throwing a large amount of money into the temple treasury. How much do you think they might have put in? When these people gave a lot of money, they still had a lot of money to keep for themselves. Even though they were giving to the church, they knew they would still have enough to buy food, clothes, & other things they needed. Part of what Jesus cares about when we give an offering is WHY we are giving. If we are giving just to show off how much money we have, or so that other people can see that we are giving a lot, that is not what an offering is about. Our offering, no matter how big or small it is, should come from our heart. We should be giving because we want to be a part of the work God is doing in our world. So even though it might seem impressive to see someone give hundreds of dollars to the church, Jesus knows the heart of the giver. One of the reasons we give might be to show our gratitude for all that God or the church has done for us.

Discuss: What are reasons that it can be hard to give money to the church? When it is hard to be generous, what are things we might be able to think about or say that could help remind us why giving is important? What are some things that you have to be grateful to God for?

Pray: God, thank you for caring most about our hearts. We know that even if we don't always have much to give, your love is not dependent upon that. Remind us to keep gratitude and thankfulness at the center of our thoughts this month as we consider all that You have provided for us. Amen.

Do: Do you keep medium or large-sized pumpkins in your house around this time of year? I do! If you do too, consider making one of them your "Grateful Pumpkin". Use a sharpie to write things you are grateful for all around the outside of your pumpkin, and add to it as the month goes on and you think of more. If you don't have a pumpkin, this could be as simple as a piece of paper stuck to the fridge that your family can add to all month long. At the end of November, read them all aloud!

Week 3

Listen: Mark 12: 41-44

Unpack: As you read the Scripture this week, I want you to imagine being the poor widow who gave all that she had, two copper coins. Even though she gave so little, Jesus said that she gave more than all the other people who put in large amounts. What this tells us is that for Jesus, giving is not just about the AMOUNT that we give. This is kind of an upside-down way to think about money. In our world, \$100 is always more than \$10, and \$10 is always more than \$1. That's just how it works! But to Jesus, it is about the heart of the giver. What made her offering of two small coins so BIG to Jesus is that he knew she was giving all she had, even though she didn't have enough left over for herself. The gift she gave was a big sacrifice, because it meant that she probably wouldn't have anything at all left over for her. The story doesn't tell us why

she decided to give all she had, but she must have thought that giving to the temple was very important.

Discuss: Think about the word “enough”. What does it mean to have enough of something? What happens when there isn’t enough of something? What are things that you always have enough of in your life? Do you have enough food? Enough love? Enough shelter? How hard would it be for you to give like the woman in this story did? Why?

Pray: Generous God, thank you for reminding us that no matter how much we have, we are always enough for you. In a world that always tell us that we need more of everything, help us to listen for Your voice telling us what we truly need. Help us to also be sensitive to the needs of those around us, and to be share what we have when we can. Amen.

Do: As a family, decide on something you have more than enough of. Maybe it is clothes, food in your pantry, or even toys. Gather up some of these things & go together to give them to a local donation center.

Week 4

Listen: Mark 12: 41-44

Unpack: This week as you listen to the Scripture, I want you to focus on what Jesus said about the widow’s gift; that it was worth more than all the others because she had given all that she had. Lucky for us, Jesus never said that we have to be like this widow and give every cent that we have. In fact, God knows that sometimes (especially as kids) we don’t have any money to give at all! However, that doesn’t mean we can’t find ways to give to the church. If we can’t be generous with our money, there are plenty of other things we can give; our time, our talents, our kindness. Never limit what you can offer to God by thinking it is only important if it is money. God gifted each of us with different skills & talents, and they can all be used generously for God’s church.

Discuss: Have each family member come up with 1-2 things they could offer to the church that are not financial. If someone gets stuck, help them out by thinking about what they are best at. Does someone sing well? Could someone read Scripture in a worship service, or serve in the nursery? As a family, could you try to offer something to the church that is not money before the end of the year?

Pray: God, thank you for valuing what we have to offer, whether that is money, our time, or special gifts that you have given us. Remind us that our whole life is to be an offering to You. Amen.

Do: Sometimes it can be difficult for us to recognize the gifts we have in ourselves. Choose a meal when your family is most often together during the week. Each night at that meal, voice a

gift that you see in another family member. It can be a specific skill/talent or just something about them that you really appreciate.