

A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus

The Widow's Offering

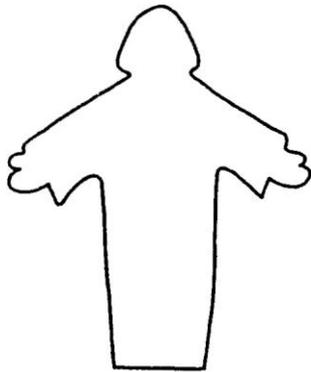
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THE WIDOW'S OFFERING MATERIALS

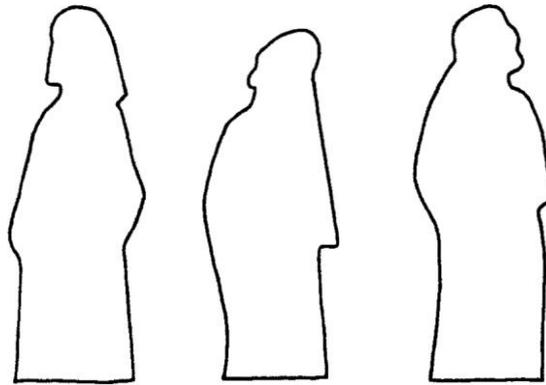
- medium wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden figure of Jesus
 - wooden figure of widow holding coins
 - 3 wooden figures of rich people
 - wooden money box



Jesus



Widow



Rich People

THE WIDOW'S OFFERING •.. LUKE 21:1-4

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the story basket next to you.

During the silence, gently stroke one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the Jesus figure just slightly to the right of center.

Place the three rich people at left center, the widow to the left of them, and the money box in the center of the storytelling area.

Move the three rich people, one at a time, to the right, past Jesus. Have each stop briefly at the money box.

Move the widow to the right, close to the money box.

Touch the figure and shake your head sadly.

Hold up two fingers.

Speak softly and emphasize the word "both".

Touch the Jesus figure as you speak, gesturing to the widow and then the rich people as you mention each of them.

Reverently touch the widow and move her right, close to Jesus.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me I will find all the words to this story.

Jesus was in the temple in Jerusalem.

He saw many people giving their gifts of money when they went to the temple.

Jesus saw the rich people put in many coins. They gave a lot of money.

Then he saw a woman whose husband had died.

The widow had almost no money.

She had only two copper coins.

When she came into the temple she gave both of her copper coins.

Then Jesus said, "This is true. The widow has put in more than all the other people. "

"They gave a little from all that they had, but even though she is poor, she put in all the money she had."

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder why the widow would give all her money to God?

I wonder how she felt after she gave her money?

I wonder how she got food to eat if she had no money to buy things?

I wonder how the rich people felt when they listened to what Jesus said?

Carefully place all the wooden pieces back in the basket.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to handle them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to the shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Be certain each child has had the opportunity to choose their work before dismissing the children all together to their response time.

I wonder what you will choose for your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide what each of us will do.

THE WIDOW'S OFFERING ••• TEACHER HELPS

It's important to know that in Mark's gospel, which was the source for Luke's account, this story immediately precedes Jesus coming into the temple and throwing out the money-changers. There was a place outside of the temple where the offerings of money were received. They were placed in one of thirteen boxes, but everyone could see what others gave. It's obvious that Jesus sat there for a while and watched the people give their gifts and offerings.

What about the widow who had so little to give? In Judea, the closest male relative was the protector of the individual. When the woman's husband died, she would have been cared for by her son. It is likely that the widow did not have a son. Even so, she probably would not have inherited any property her husband left. It would have gone to the nearest male relative.

Therefore, she was at the mercy of the city and the temple. Yet, this woman had enough faith to give all that she had, but what she had was very little. The "copper coins" the woman gave are called leptons. A lepton is the smallest denomination found in the Greek and Syrian financial system. Together, those two small coins would equal the smallest Roman denomination, the quadrans. (The New Oxford Annotated Bible, edited by Herbert May and Metzger Bruce, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.1277)

There must have been those who scoffed at the little offering the woman brought to the temple. I picture her with her head held high, giving, with a smile on her face, every bit of money she owned. She knew it meant she would have to go out into the fields outside the city to glean grain and probably beg for some food. I've always wondered what happened to her. Did she come upon any wealth? Did she follow Jesus and share his food? Did she go back to whatever tiny home she had and live the rest of her life in poverty? We don't know. But these are some of the issues we will talk about in our discussion questions with the older children. Jesus held her up as an example in the faces of the wealthy Pharisees with their fine robes and many coins. She gave the most, because she gave her all.

In the first wondering question we consider why the woman would have given all her money to God. What was it that made her do it? The children may be able to think of a time when they gave away something that was really precious. That will be the only link where they might really be able to understand why someone would give so much.

We follow that by wondering how the woman felt when she gave so much. Many of the children will say that she was happy, and I believe she was, although we don't know. There are those who will say the woman was sad or worried. Don't discount those answers. They present a very real concern on the part of children who understand that it takes money to eat and live.

Third, we wonder how the woman ate and lived after she gave her coins to God. The children may respond that she had friends who helped her or that Jesus helped her. Others will say that she needed to ask other people for food or find a job to earn money. This is a good place to point out that many children won't understand why the woman didn't get a job in the first place. Remember that we are the generation who has seen more two-income families than any other in our history. You may need to remind the children that it was not acceptable for a woman to have a job, at least not one without her husband, from which she could make a living.

The final wondering question talks about how the rich people must have felt when they heard Jesus' words. No doubt they felt put down, but did any of them learn or change anything they did? Maybe one of the wealthy people decided to help the widow. We can only wonder.

While we must help the children understand that this is an important lesson in giving, it is more important that we help them understand that it is a lesson in humility. I'm sure the widow did not come to the temple feeling good about what she had to give. She knew it would

look very poor in the light of what everyone else would give. The story is not only about what the woman gave, but by example, about what the others did not give. They gave what was commanded by law, the tithe no doubt, and felt very self-righteous for what they had done. On the other hand, the woman gave 100%. This allowed Jesus to remind the wealthy people in the crowd that to do what the law commands is merely obedience; to do what the woman did was giving, giving out of love.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

Consider what happened to the woman after she left the temple that day. Think of three or four different ways she might have lived after that. What do you think happened to her?

You are a wealthy Pharisee. After you leave the temple you go to your home and tell your family what you saw and heard today at the temple. Your wife (Pharisees were always men) suggests that you go find the woman and bring her to live with you. What would you say and why?

Think in terms of money, something you own or your time. What is the greatest amount of giving you have ever done? How did you feel when you did that? Would you do it again?

Tithing is when you give one tenth of everything you have to God. It was a law for the Israelites and expected of every family. John Wesley said, "Earn all you can, save all you can and give all you can." How is that like tithing? How is it unlike tithing? Which do you like better? Which do you think God likes better?