

LESSON 4

Giving in Ways that are Thoughtful and Creative

Giving is an essential part of being a disciple of Jesus, and we can be thoughtful and creative when we give.

The focus on this week's lesson is derived from two wonderful passages of scripture that show creativity, thoughtfulness, and worship in the act of giving.

Think About It:

WE CAN GIVE THINGS WE OWN. READ TOGETHER JOHN 12.1-8

In the book of John, chapter 12, one of Jesus' closest disciples tells the story of Mary of Bethany, sister of the recently resurrected Lazarus, relinquishes a very expensive bottle of perfume in what Jesus recognized as an overt act of worship. Her decision to anoint her Savior¹ with something worth a year's wages reveals two important lessons.

First, that her behavior was not impulsive; rather, she had thought it through. Her decision evidenced a premeditated plan to give in a creative way that bestowed great honor and expressed thanksgiving to God. Just like Mary, you may own things of value, whether bought or given to you, that God desires to be released as a resource to help propel His work.

Second, others may see your act of worship as foolish or wasteful. Give anyway. Be lavish toward your Savior. Don't let fear of man, nor the reprisal of those not involved in your decision, hold you back from giving what God asks of you.

Talk About It:

MAKE A LIST OF ITEMS THAT YOU OWN, THAT YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO PRAY ABOUT SURRENDERING AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP AND THANKSGIVING TO THE LORD. (THIS MAY INCLUDE TOYS, CLOTHES, SHOES, COLLECTIONS, JEWELRY, AND SO ON.)

Realize that because they are children, most in your class are not going to possess a significant collection of much. Help them connect the dots to the principle, if not the practical. They can, however, certainly be a catalyst for discussion within their families. (See the "Application" at the close of the lesson.)

Regardless, take them through the exercise, as most of them will have something they would rather not give up – maybe a stuffed animal from their childhood, or a certain book. You may be surprised - who knows!?! Remind them to make it personal; in other words, you are not looking for a general list of things that may or may not be in someone's direct possession.

Use a white board or flip chart to drive this discussion. Kids are energetic and thoughtful; and generally being more

LESSON 4

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selfless than most adults, they will not lack for ideas here. Be cautious not to vocalize your personal valuation upon specific items suggested. The point is to get them thinking while simultaneously nurturing boldness to voice their ideas to the group.

Think About It:

WE CAN GIVE SACRIFICES; OR IN OTHER WORDS, WE CAN CHOOSE TO DO WITHOUT SO THAT OTHERS CAN RECEIVE. READ TOGETHER LUKE 21.1-4.

True sacrifice comes at a cost. King David summed it up this way: “I will not sacrifice ... that which costs me nothing.”ⁱⁱ So the real question is not if we bring a sacrifice, but rather when we do, at what cost will it be to our comfort, convenience, or control? And what is the state of our heart in the process?

We don't have to dig very deep to recognize that taking up our crossⁱⁱⁱ runs at odds with our natural bent. For most present-age American churchgoers, the suggestion of “going without” runs counter to decades of materialistic conditioning fueled by self-gratifying consumer culture. How great the glory to the Father, then, when we give something up – be it entirely, or for a season – and redirect funds otherwise spent on ourselves toward the campaign or ministry vision set before us!

Scripture provides a convicting example of selfless giving in the story of the widow who gave her two mites.^{iv} We are told she gave all she had, and it mattered more to Jesus than the larger amount given by others. We can assume she knew that she would probably go hungry or do without, later. But the Bible doesn't tell us what happened later, does it? This is where our faith is given an opportunity to grow. We have to trust the when we honor God with our giving, that He will take care of us and provide for our needs.

Talk About It:

(A) WHAT DO OTHERS GAIN, WHEN YOU SACRIFICE?

(B) WHAT DID YOU GAIN, WHEN CHRIST CHOSE TO BE A SACRIFICE?

The final question(s) in this 4-week series reinforce the essence of Biblical giving and stewardship. Be diligent to connect the various responses to an understanding of Biblical principles. Drive home that point that God sees the choices we make with what we've been given – including the opportunity to respond to the gift of His son, by acknowledging Jesus as our Lord and Savior – and that He responds accordingly, with love and compassion.

Lesson Summary:

We all have something to give. Especially when it's “valuable” to an individual, versus what society calls valuable, it moves the heart of God when we are willing to give it outright and/or make sacrifices to give it. For most families, a dramatic shift in this area means less clutter, less distraction, and less spending. It translates into fewer unhealthy,

LESSON 4

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unholy demands on our time and resources – the majority of which we create in the first place, often without asking God's input.



Suggested “object lesson” craft or activity:

Color or Draw (Week 2) a scene of giving or sacrifice. This is a great week to work on or finish the Artwork/Projects for the Kids' “Stew-Art-Ship” Display. Even if not doing the formal Art Display, the recommended activity for this week is for each grade class to do a project or artwork showing a personalized act of giving toward the church's campaign/project.



Memory verses:

- 2 Sam 24.24 I will not sacrifice that which costs me nothing.
- Acts 20.35 For it is more blessed to give, than to receive.



Family Action for this week:

- Have you thought about giving something beyond money?
- Examine your perspective on material things, as well as the priorities that consume your time and money. Purpose to move forward in humility in faith, in a new direction.
- Establish an “altar” in your heart upon which you are willing to lay anything that may come before your God and His priorities. Be proactive in prayer and then follow through, as a family unit, on the things God asks you to do and to give, for His use and to His glory.

- i John 12:1-8
- ii Gen 4:3-7
- iii 2 Sam 24:24
- iv Luke 21.1