

STEWARDSHIP SERMON SEED STARTERS



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Mark 12:41-44: Widow's Mite

Preachers have used this text more than any other when talking about giving. While it is a short story, it is rich in possibilities:

- Stewardship is a lifestyle where giving comes from our internal relationship with God rather than external rewards.
- Giving requires that we trust God more than we trust our stuff. Living by faith requires giving by faith.
- It's not the cash value that counts but the proportionality.
- There are different reasons for giving, such as legalism, fear, ego, obligation. The widow, however, gave out of another motivation: trust in God over all else.

Genesis 11:31-32: The Saddest Statement in the Bible

Before there was Abram, there was his father Terah who was called to go to a new place called the Promise Land. On his way, he 'settled' in Haran. He never made it to the destination (in fact he died there) where God had both called him and where God had plans for him. Instead, he settled for something less. That is the story of giving for so many: they settle for something less than generosity and miss the impact that giving can have on them.

Matthew 25:14-30: Parable of the Steward

Everything we have is a gift from God. We are responsible for how we use those resources.

Luke 10:25-28: Conversation with a Lawyer

The person who questioned Jesus about eternal life wanted it all, which was the problem. He wanted it all without having to give anything to others. Possessions were more important to him than the call of discipleship and generosity.

Matthew 14:22-33: Get out of the Boat

John Ortberg's sermon is a classic: if you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat. We all have our own boats that we cling to for security. For some it is money and possessions. Letting go requires faith to step up to the call of generosity. Only then can we experience the joy of walking on water (and the joy of giving).

2 Corinthians 8: The Joy of Giving

The church at Macedonia, out of their own poverty, gave abundantly and out of grace to give gifts to others. The people had a willingness to give that sprung out of their love for Jesus, which changed their hearts and lives and which resulted in giving with a sense of joy.

Matthew 19:16-22: Rich, Young Ruler

Jesus responds to one seeking the Kingdom to go and sell all that he has and give to the poor. Jesus offers a radical Gospel, intended to transform our lives rather than one where we seek to fit Jesus' message into our own comfortable boxes. Tithing is certainly part of the radical teachings from Jesus.

Malachi 3:6-12: The Tithe

This scripture offers the basis for giving a tithe (10%) of one's income. The idea that giving less than 10% is robbing God because we are keeping what belongs to God. The greatest message is the blessing that is experienced when we give God priority with the management of all of our resources.

A sermon on tithing can look at tithing from different perspectives: how tithing impacts the life of the giver, how living in the image of a generous God who *gave* His son connects the giver to something bigger than self/stuff, or how tithing clarifies priorities and strengthens faith.

Luke 12:16-31: Parable of the Barns

Greed speaks to our human need for security, happiness and fulfillment in a culture where it is proclaimed that "greed is good."* But greed cannot meet those needs within us. Generosity makes our world larger, deepens our gratitude, brings joy to life and more intimately connects us to God.

*quote from Gordon Gekko (played by Michael Douglas) from the movie Wall Street.

Consider using a clip from the movie.

Matthew 15:21-28: Crumbs from the Table

The disciples implore Jesus to send a Canaanite woman who is seeking help to go away. Even Jesus says He came only for the lost sheep of Israel. She persists and Jesus grants her request. The disciples offer a perspective of scarcity. They want to keep Jesus and all He offers for themselves. There is not enough to give away. The Canaanite woman possesses a perspective of abundance in that even the crumbs are enough to sustain her.

Genesis 32:24-30: Jacob's Wrestling Match

Jacob had a wrestling match with God that resulted in his name being changed. What are the ways in which we wrestle with God? Money may be at the top of the list. What is at the core of the conflict we have with money and giving?