

**I. Read Luke 21:1-4**

- A. In verses 1-4, Jesus teaches an important lesson regarding our responsibility relative to what has been entrusted to us. Read Luke 12:48 and explain this responsibility.  
**The human tendency is to compare one's *service, financial support, or time* spent on behalf of others/the church to what other people have given. This always leads us to the wrong conclusion about our stewardship. What others are doing is largely irrelevant. It is all about what we are willing to do with what God gives us. This is the reason *the tithe* is a percentage rather than a fixed amount. The percentage (10%) translates into more money depending on our income. Yet *the tithe* properly understood is still not enough. Depending on our circumstances, the amount we give will be greater than 10%. This principle applies to our *service* and *time* as well, though it is much easier to judge one's stewardship of money than the use of spiritual gifts or time.**
- B. Read Matthew 19:16-22 and discuss the reasons we might fail to respond to the challenge stewardship presents to us.  
**The first and most obvious reason we fail to respond to the clear teachings of stewardship throughout Scripture is (1) *the condition of our heart*. The old nature is selfish and greedy. The second reason we fail is clearly seen in the "rich young ruler." (2) *We idolize or worship wealth*. The third reason we fail to respond is (3) *ignorance of the promises of God* in Scripture. (See Malachi 3:8-10.) In Malachi it is clear that God promises to bless generous giving beyond our expectations. The fourth reason (related to the first three) is a simple (4) *lack of faith*. We tend to think of God's resources as finite rather than infinite, as though He might run out of resources and consequently we would also run out. (See Philippians 4:18, 19.)**
- C. In Luke 21:1-4, Jesus seems to denigrate the offerings of the rich. Was this His intent?  
**No, of course not. He is simply using their giving from their "abundance" to demonstrate the extraordinary nature of the gift of the widow in her poverty.**
- D. In very real ways, the standard by which we measure our stewardship should not be what we give or what we do, but what we keep for ourselves. It is there that our motives become evident. How might this help us manage our time better if our desire is to spend our time in a manner which honors God?  
**Most folks today would say that they have too little time. In almost every instance, it is not really a matter of too little time so much as it is a matter of priorities. People tend to do the things they really want to do or the things they think are important. This can be evaluated easily by keeping a time diary during a typical week (don't choose a week in which unusual circumstances create extraordinary time demands on you). If the diary is done honestly, you will find out that you waste a lot of time. Another unpleasant fact will be that you spend much less *quality* time with your children and spouse than you thought (quality time is not spent in front of the television set). What will amaze you is how little time you spend doing things that are explicitly and directly *spiritual* in nature. For example, out of 168 hours each week, you probably spend only 1-1/2 to 3 hours in Sunday School and church. Given that fact, isn't it amazing that so many claim they don't have time for church! Your time spent in prayer, private bible study and devotion will probably not be much more impressive. The reality is that when we take a hard, honest look at how we spend our time, we often see selfishness and waste. If you don't, you're probably not being honest with yourself.**
- E. The most amazing thing about the widow's giving is that she was probably much more fulfilled in life than the rich folks cited. This is related to the *law of reciprocity*. (See Galatians 6:7.) Those

who are *giving, others directed, and focused on Godly objectives* are *always* more fulfilled and happy. Incidentally, they are usually more popular and beloved also. Where should one start if he/she desires to embrace the priorities of the widow in Luke 21:1-4?

**With *confession of sin*. (Read James 2:14-17; 1 John 1:9.) If we are sincere, our confession of selfishness or disobedience should be followed with the *fruits of repentance* and a genuine commitment to change our approach to life.**

- F. Apart from the responsibilities that are clearly commanded in Scripture, i.e., stewardship, giving, serving our church, bible study and prayer, commitment to attend church, etc., are there any simple and straightforward suggestions by which we could begin to change from a self-centered person (a taker) to an *others directed* person (a giver)?

**Yes! Dr. Laura gives the following ten suggestions, all of them quite good and appropriate as an *initial* plan of action. They are only a good *beginning*, though!**

#### **10 Ways to Enrich Your Life – Every Day**

1. **Bring light into someone else's life: Do something for someone – preferably without him or her knowing it.**
2. **Remember the true meaning of your life; don't forget your prayers and blessings to God.**
3. **Exercise! Walk, work out, dance.**
4. **Don't let bad feelings ferment. Don't go to bed without clearing up misunderstandings with those close to you.**
5. **Have breakfast and dinner with your family.**
6. **Read something inspiring.**
7. **Appreciate the beauty of nature.**
8. **Express your gratitude to someone.**
9. **Hug and kiss your family. Tell them you love them. (A further suggestion is to spend time with your children doing the things *they* like to do!)**
10. **Insist on making your contribution to the world: Make a plan for tomorrow.**

- G. What sort of church would we have if everyone in it really began to give more of themselves and of their resources to the kingdom?

**A world-changing church!**

- H. Respond to the following comments sometimes heard in church:

- \* "I'm sick and tired of the preacher talking about money. That has nothing to do with faith."
- \* "Sunday morning is the only time I can really relax and sleep late. Sunday School just comes too early!"
- \* "I know I don't do much for my church, but I do a lot of things through other organizations."
- \* "No, I don't tithe, but that's just because I make too much money. Besides, I still give more than most others in my church!"
- \* "I don't work in church because I already have a job. Besides, we hired a preacher to do all that stuff!"