

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-23 Christian Stewardship: Offerings

Have you ever observed the amounts of money people put in the offering when they meet together with other believers? Some groups use a closed box, others an open pan, still others just place the offerings on the altar. Jesus was watching one day as people were putting their money in the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:41-44).

From this short story, we learn that it’s not how much a person gives that matters. It’s what they give compared to what they have left.

The New Testament gives much more information about a Christian named Joseph. His relative Mark can tell you about him. He might say, “We nicknamed him Barnabas because he was such an encouragement to the rest of us. I didn’t see him much in the early years because he was born and raised on Cyprus. Born a Levite—part of the Jewish tribe that carried out the temple duties—he soon found himself mainly in Jerusalem. Barnabas lived up to his name, which means, ‘Son of Encouragement.’ Over his life he was usually seen helping others, active in the church, warmly welcoming all.

“As part of the early church, Barnabas too devoted himself ‘to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. . . . Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved’ (Acts 2:42-47).

“Barnabas was no slouch. He was a busy man, whom I admire greatly. Barnabas excelled in all areas of the church. He was excited about what was happening. He saw clearly that Jesus, now in heaven, was building his church by his Holy Spirit. Many new believers were being added to the church daily. Revival was breaking out and Barnabas was determined to be a part of it. ‘All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them’ (Acts 4:32-34).

“Barnabas was an example of generosity. He sold some land that he owned. He was determined to help in any way he could to get the Good News to those who were lost. He brought his offering. He is my hero. He wasn’t waiting for someone else to do the work. He dug right in, demonstrating his zeal to help others and to obey our Lord. Anyway, he sold his

property on Cyprus for cash. That cash, all of it, he gave to the apostles to help those who were in need.

“After Stephen was stoned, some of the workers went to Antioch to witness to the Greeks there. They told them the good news about the Lord Jesus. Barnabas ‘was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord’ (Acts 11:24).

“The outstanding thing Barnabas was able to accomplish was to introduce to the Jerusalem church, his friend Saul, who had been renamed Paul. The Twelve were afraid of Paul, but Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them Saul’s testimony, about meeting the risen Jesus on the Damascus Road. He convinced them that Paul was an apostle, preaching fearlessly in the name of Jesus. In fact, this cousin of mine, with Paul taught great numbers of people in Antioch for a year. Then the elders in Antioch laid hands on him and Paul, sending them out on the apostle Paul’s first missionary trip (Acts 13:3). The early church was shaped, to a large degree, by Barnabas and Paul, as they looked to Jesus Christ.”

Barnabas set the example of a generous Christian with his sacrificial offerings to the church. The church’s offerings have helped to bring the Good News around the world. Barnabas would be excited to see the body of Christ reaching out to those who are in need and have not yet heard how our Lord Jesus died for them. Jesus’ commission to his followers was, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). Jesus called Barnabas to bring offerings, setting an example, so that the Word of God could reach those who had not heard yet.

Paul continued to teach new believers about giving. He wrote to the church in Corinth about the believers in Macedonia. He said, “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. ... They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will. ... See that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2Cor 8:2-7).

God blesses those who respond to the voice of the Holy Spirit when he tells them to give. No one can ever out-give God.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us that our generous missionary heart and offerings set a wonderful example for the church people. The offerings also help the church to fulfill Christ’s command to make disciples. The more you give, the more God will provide for your needs and bless you in other ways as well.

The **main truth** of this lesson is to challenge us to develop a generous heart toward the needy and the lost, so that Jesus Christ will be honored in our lives and so that the good news will be spread. It is God’s plan that the tithes and offerings of his people will enable the church to fulfill its work to reach men and women with the Good News.

Your **review** questions are:

1. In this lesson what is the great command that Jesus gave his church? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” you have answered correctly.

2. What was Barnabas's purpose for selling his land? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, "Barnabas sold his land so that he could bring an offering to the church for those in need and to help the church spread the good news of Jesus Christ," you are correct.

3. Were there any needs in the church as people regularly brought their offerings to the leaders of the church? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, "As each one brought an offering there were no needs in the church and the Word of God could be spread," you are right.

Your **assignment** is to listen to the lesson on offerings several times. Catch the truth that our sacrificial offerings are to help others in the church and in the world. We provide for their needs and share with them the good news. Think about what is it that you could do to imitate Barnabas in his encouraging and generous heart? This week do one thing that is similar to Barnabas and his love of the body of Christ.

May the Lord lay up for you in heaven great treasures because of your generous heart. Amen!