

# WE OFFER

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## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pencils and pieces of paper; small container
- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Clock or watch with second hand for timing
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

## ICE BREAKER: ON THE SPOT, THE OFFERING VERSION

Write out some of the topics listed below on pieces of paper (you may wish to add your own), fold them, and place them in an opaque container. Have the teens sit in a circle. One at a time, ask each teen to select a question from the container and speak on the topic/question selected.

YOU MAY WANT TO ALLOW FOR ONE “PASS” PER TURN IF TEENS SELECT A QUESTION THAT THEY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE SPEAKING ABOUT. FOR SMALL GROUPS, YOU MAY WANT TO TAKE MULTIPLE TURNS. FOR LARGE (OR TALKATIVE) GROUPS, YOU MAY HAVE TO TIME RESPONSES (FOR EXAMPLE, EACH PERSON HAS THIRTY SECONDS TO ANSWER).

- If you found ten thousand dollars, what would you do with it?
- What is the best gift anyone could ever give you?
- If you could change your age, what age would you rather be and why?
- Talk about someone in history who did something wonderful.
- What do you wish you had more time for?
- If you had no money at all, do you think you could be happy?
- How do you think a famous person can use their fame for good?
- If you had the power to change anything in the world, what would you change?
- What would your ideal life look like?
- Can you think of any reasons why people that are rich might also be miserable?
- If you could have any special ability or talent, what would you pick?
- What kind of charity would you like to give money to, or help or work for?

## 622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

## DISCUSSION: YOURS TO GIVE

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

# WE OFFER

- What are some different ways to show someone you love them? (*Not necessarily romantic love*)
- Can you think of things you might like to be able to give to others, but aren't able to because of your limitations?
- Are there things that you can do that others may not be able to?
- Invite the teens to share any examples that come to mind.

*A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):*

- *There are lots of different ways to show others we love them. We might tell them that we love them in words. We might spend time with them. We might do things for them. We might give them gifts. In a sense, all of these things are actually gifts that we offer: words, time, service, and material things.*
- *There will be times in our lives when we are short of time or skills or money. But there is always something that we have to offer.*

## THE LESSON: MARK 12 + MATTHEW 6

The first part of the lesson begins with a few notes about the offering in the liturgy (and especially in the 622 service). It then looks at what we know about the sort of offering God wants based on what we find in scripture. Some brief references are made to the Old Testament, before introducing the Bible texts (found in the New Testament Gospels). Then the teens are asked to read these (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

Almost every church service includes a time of offering. Normally when we talk about offerings we are referring to the collection of money to help the Church in its work. In the service of Holy Communion our offerings of money are collected at the same time as the bread and wine are placed on the altar. This can remind us that whatever sacrifice we are making pales by comparison with the greater sacrifice that was made by Jesus *for us*.

The prayer that we use for the offering in "622" calls to our attention the fact that what we want to offer to God is beyond a simple sacrifice of money – rather, it is our whole selves! We say, "*We offer ourselves, our work, our play to be used in thy service.*" Perhaps we are not able to offer money, but we all have *something* to offer.

Throughout the Old Testament, we learn that God is not just concerned about receiving a sacrificial offering. He is more concerned about the heart of the person making the offering. The prophet Samuel reminded his readers that obedience is better than sacrifice. The prophet Hosea wrote that God desires "steadfast love" rather than sacrifice. And King David famously wrote in Psalm 51 that God wants us to bring the sacrifice of a repentant heart. These passages are all pointing us to the truth that God doesn't just want empty tokens: he wants a whole-hearted offering from us.

When we turn to the New Testament Gospels, Jesus reveals even more about the kind of giving that pleases God.

Refer to Mark 12:41-44, and Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

# WE OFFER

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- How do you think the poor widow felt when she put her coins into the treasury?
- The passage in Matthew talks about people “sounding trumpets” before they gave gifts. Can you think of different ways today that people might be tempted to draw attention to their offerings and good deeds?
- How can we “lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven”?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *We can't know how the poor widow felt. We can imagine that she may have been very humble, knowing that her gift had very small monetary value. But we do know that Jesus praised her. We might guess that her heart was not just humble, but loving and obedient towards God, wanting to offer what she could even though it was not much.*
- *People might be tempted to go around and tell others how much they gave. They might try to use their gifts to pressure others into giving them their way in something. They might only be willing to give if they receive some recognition or tax benefit.*
- *We can lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven by offering ourselves to God in a whole-hearted manner: this includes our time, our talents and our treasures.*
- *You may want to refer to 2 Corinthians 9:7: “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

## PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

*At home, find a quiet place and then spend a few moments meditating on the words of Colossians 3:17: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

*Next make a quick inventory of what you have to offer: Time? Talents? Treasure? Ask God to show you how you can best use what you have in his service.*

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

*Almighty God, whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honour thee with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(PRAYER FOR FAITHFULNESS IN THE USE OF THIS WORLD'S GOODS, BCP PAGE 734)

# WE OFFER

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## 622 (AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

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### MARK 12: THE BEST GIVER

<sup>41</sup>Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup>And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. <sup>43</sup>And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. <sup>44</sup>For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

### MATTHEW 6: HOW TO HANDLE TREASURE

<sup>1</sup>"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you...

<sup>19</sup>"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.