



## Divine services for children

Suggested at least once a quarter, on a local or regional basis, a children's service should use the special Divine Service Guide that is provided for that quarter. Children's service Divine Service Guides replace the Sunday morning Divine Service Guide and should not be used in addition to the Sunday Divine Service Guide for that day.

The purpose is to:

- give the children a special word that is understandable, memorable, and relevant
- clearly put them in the center of the congregation
- create opportunity to connect multiple generations within the congregation
- strengthen the value of the divine service and increase their knowledge of Christ and the Bible

In order to help build excitement and to ensure that the entire congregation is prepared for these unique services, they should be announced well in advance. It is encouraged to consider setting a consistent frequency of the services (i.e. the last Sunday of the first month of each quarter). Where possible, the children can participate in some of the congregational functions (ushering, greeting, as the choir, etc.). The person giving the children's message should be someone that has the capability to communicate and connect well with the children. For example, a Sunday school teacher, young adult, etc. that is dedicated to prepare for this responsibility.

### Liturgy

The divine service is opened in the normal way with the invocation, opening prayer, Bible verse, and response hymn. Thereafter, the minister at the altar can introduce the theme and a few thoughts, which should not exceed 5 minutes.

The person giving the children's message then begins in front of the altar, speaking directly to the children, who should be sitting in the first rows.

The unique children's portion is per the recommendations set out by the Children's Work Group that accompanied the Children's service Divine Service Guide for that given quarter. This section of the divine service can be anywhere from 15-25 minutes, depending on the number of students and their ages, and can include methods such as speaking, props, skits, demonstrations, and simulation. Questions and dialogue between the children and facilitator are encouraged.

During this time, the priests should sit in the congregation. The children's component can end with a congregational hymn, which allows the priest to return to the altar. The officiant can then summarize the children's component and prepare the congregation for Holy Communion, which should take no longer than 10 minutes. From then on, the service liturgy continues as normal.

It is also suggested that lunch or refreshments with the congregation be available after the service to highlight and celebrate these children services, and to provide additional opportunity for generations to interact with each other.



## We praise God with our offerings

### **Bible Text:**

*Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.*

-- Mark 12:41-42

**Message:** Jesus looks into our hearts and sees that we bring our offerings out of love and gratitude.

### **Introduction**

God is omnipotent and omniscient; nothing is hidden from Him. He even sees the smallest offering that we bring. By the example of the widow in our Bible text, our children can learn that offering is important and pleasing to God. And here God does not look at the amount, but rather at the heart of the giver.

### **Main part**

#### **The example of the widow illustrates a God-pleasing offering**

Although she herself only had very little, she did not go into the temple to beg for alms but to bring her offering there. Being a widow meant that she was very needy; she hardly had any money from which to live. Yet she brought her offering faithfully. Jesus observed all of this with great interest. He called His disciples over and told them that this woman had given all the money she possessed, and that her offering was therefore greater than that of the wealthy (verses 43–44). But what touched Him the most about this woman's offering was her attitude of heart. She gave her last two coins in complete trust in God, and thereby commended her whole life into His hands.

#### **Our attitude of heart when we offer**

God sees beyond the offering itself and looks into our hearts. Let us offer faithfully, even if our circumstances are not as we would like them to be. Just as a child can move the heart of a mother or father with a simple gift or gesture of love, we can move the heart of Christ with even the smallest offering, if it is brought to Him out of love.

#### **Offering out of love**

God does not expect the children to give Him their last bit of pocket money. What is decisive is that they offer out of love. When offering they should think about Him. They should also be mindful of all the things He has already done for them, and still desires to do for them. It should be the desire of our hearts to be thankful to God and to bring Him joy by giving of that which we have.





### **Offering out of gratitude**

We take time and reflect on all the things the Lord has already given us. We are grateful for the sacrifice of Jesus and the many great gifts that we receive today and that which we will still experience in the future. We are aware of the fact that we cannot earn our redemption, but that we are completely dependent on the love and grace of God. The Lord desires to redeem us and will always remain at our side. Let us be thankful for this!

### **Summary**

- The widow is an example of how we can bring offerings to God out of love and gratitude.
- The Lord sees all the offerings and gifts we bring Him, no matter how large or small they are.
- The more we understand the love of God, the more we want to respond to this love with our gratitude and actions.

### **Didactic tips**

The children should understand that God has already given them a great deal out of love. If we appreciate what He has given us, we will gladly bring our offerings and thereby show Him our love and thankfulness.

The children can think about what might have moved the widow to put money into the temple money box despite the fact that she was so poor.

To help the children to better understand this theme, you could ask them questions, such as:

- Can you remember a time when you made a special effort to bring joy to someone you love by making him or her a special gift?
- Why did you want to make this gift for that person?
- What feelings went through you when you saw the joy of the person who received this gift?
- Why was Jesus more impressed with the offering of the widow than the offerings of everyone else?

## **Supplemental Notes and Activity Ideas:**

### ***Luke 6:38***

Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.



### Going Deeper...

#### **Love is the motivation – Matthew 22:37-40**

<sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Throughout Jesus’ life, we see the compassion that He had for the needs of those around Him. He gave beyond what the law required at that time because of the compassion and love He had for people, and because of His desire to do His Father’s will. Out of this same desire, we see that a Christian gives beyond the tithe to honor God and to provide others with what they need because we feel compassion for the needs of others. Jesus gave beyond the law. He gave everything, including His life, because He loved God, and thereby became the embodiment of God’s love towards us. It was what God wanted and what we needed. Christian giving is a function of our love towards God and each other, and is our response to meet the needs of others. (*Giving is Love*, Autumn 2017 Vision Newsletter)

### Visual Aids

#### **The Offering Bowl**

Tell the children that, together, they are going to bring an offering to God. Ask them to perhaps do extra chores at home to earn some money. (Inform the parents of this activity beforehand so they are aware of what’s being asked. Also tell them that the point isn’t for the children to earn a lot of money, but to sacrifice their time in order to make an offering to God, and so the chores don’t need to cost a high amount.)

After 2-3 weeks, have the children bring in the money that they have collected and put it all together in a bag or container. Make sure the children understand that it does not matter who much they brought or if someone brought more than them, but rather that they were willing to sacrifice their time to bring an offering to God.

After celebrating their hard work, the children can bring the offering to the offering box together and put it in. You might even consider praying together, asking God to accept their offering and to share that it was brought out of love for Him.

#### **Banana Budget**

You’ll need ten bananas for this activity. Tell the children that the bananas represent money and you are going to create budget together. Ask the children to name some things that they might need to set aside money for (i.e. food, school supplies, clothes, etc. This doesn’t have to be too adult-like.). As the children list their items, put a banana aside for each item.





## Children

Once the bananas have all been set aside, ask the children if they may have forgotten to budget for something. For example,

- Did we forget something in our budget?
- Is there something perhaps church-related that we should save our money for?
- Should God be a part of our budget?

Explain to the children that our budget should always include our offering that we plan to bring to God. You could even redo the “banana budget” starting with setting aside a banana for offering. (If the children initially include their offering as part of their budget, complete the budget and then congratulate them on including God as an important part of how they spend their money.)

### **Congregation project**

Have the children share a time they gave a gift to someone because they loved that person (a present for a sibling or parent, etc.)

Explain that every week, they have the opportunity to show God how much they love Him by giving an offering.

Then have the children talk to a few members in the congregation and ask them why they bring their offerings to God. After they have talked with these members, gather together as a group and talk about the multiple reasons why someone brings an offering to God (i.e. love for God, thankfulness to God, praising God, etc.). Ask the children to consider bringing an offering the following week for one of these specific reasons and to think about what they want to show God by bringing that offering.

