

# Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."  
Isaiah 40:31*



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## Giving Everything

Giving to God is a ubiquitous part of our religion; we all know it and practice it.

But a simple story reveals that our giving habits may be blinding us to a greater obligation.

*"And He . . . saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, 'Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had'" (Lk. 21:1-4).*



The principle of giving something of value to God lies at the core of the Bible message. Even pagans grasp the importance of sacrifice as an essential ingredient in serving their gods. But the story of the widow's mites reveals an angle on this principle that we rarely think about.

Let's start by addressing a simple question: How do we measure value? The most obvious way is by assessing purchasing power; that is, how many goods or services can I buy with what I possess? Typically we define that value in terms of a dollar amount. So a million dollars is more valuable than one dollar.

But there is another way of measuring value that takes into account a differ-

ent factor: *What is available for use?* A bottle of water that normally sells for less than a dollar can fetch ten times that amount in an emergency (that's why price gouging is so common in natural disasters). The less there is of something, the more valuable it is to the one who possesses it (or wants it).

Which brings us back to the story of the widow in the temple. The rich men were donating gifts to the treasury that far surpassed in dollar value what the widow gave. But as Jesus noted, their donations came "out of their abundance." There was plenty more where that came from, and their lifestyle was not impacted by their gifts.

The widow, on the other hand, though the monetary value of her gift was negligible (a "mite" was a small copper coin worth a fraction of a modern penny), it was all she had to live on. The gifts of the rich donors were a trifle compared to all they possessed; but the widow's gift represented "all the livelihood that she had." Their sacrifice was trivial; hers was total. That's why Jesus honored her gift above theirs.

We need to keep this principle in mind when making decisions on how to use our money and possessions. Jesus told the rich young ruler to "sell what you have and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21), not because that is a universal requirement, but because He knew this young man's real loyalty was to his riches, not God. Jesus' command was a test to help him see where his true affections lay. Like his rich brethren in the temple, he was happy to give to God out of his abundance, but when the call came to give his entire livelihood, he couldn't do it. The poor widow out-performed him.

The lesson here involves more than just money. Whether we're talking about our abilities, our talents, our skills, or our opportunities, the Lord judges us not by comparison with what others have, but by what He has given us—what is available to us to use in His service. Until we can see *everything* we possess as belonging to Him, and are willing to use it *all* in His service, we are no better than rich guys tossing their chump change in the treasury. And a widow's two mites puts us to shame.

— David King