



NG Study Guide: Mark 12:1-17 “Giving To God” [7.18.21]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: True worship requires sacrifice. We are called to give to God our whole person, our time, talents, and treasure. Our attitudes and actions regarding the idea of giving to God reflect our love, devotion, gratitude and worship.

At the end of the Book of Samuel, King David sought to purchase a plot of land from Araunah to erect an altar to worship God. Araunah generously offered to *give* the king the land, resources to build the altar and for an offering. David replied, “How can I worship the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing” [2Sam. 24:21-24].

Let’s learn about giving to God as we consider the Parable of The Vineyard, and Jesus’ response to the question about taxes.

1. Give God fruit [1-12]: The parable of vineyard owner.

Then He began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. ² Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. ³ And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. ⁵ And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. ⁶ Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ⁷ But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ ⁸ So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.

The refusal to give God what is rightfully His [1-8]

Then He began to speak to them in parables [1]. A parable is an earthly story that is brought alongside to explain spiritual truth. Generally, parables are given to explain one primary idea. Here, the point is Israel’s general failure to receive Jesus as Messiah and the resulting judgment. In the Galilee, at the time of Christ, large estates were often owned by absentee landlords. Farmers worked the land, and gave a portion of the crop to the owner. God the Father is the vineyard owner and the vineyard is Israel [1, Is. 5]. The *planting, hedge, wine vat and tower [1]* are evidence the owner has done his part. In Isaiah 5:4, God declares “What more could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild (sour) grapes?”

What is fruit? Christ-like character and worship that results from a life yielded to God [Gal. 5:22-23, Heb.13:15].

What God is doing to produce fruit [Jn. 15:1-3]: Jesus is the True Vine and His followers are the branches.

1. Lifts up: “Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” [Ja. 4:10].

2. Prunes: God will remove elements of your life that hinder spiritual life to increase fruitfulness and growth. As you contemplate the imagery it is easy to appreciate that pruning can be painful, however it is comforting to know the Gardener is never closer than when He prunes.

3. Cleans: the word of God washes and cleans. The word aligns our attitudes and actions towards God.

The owner sent multiple servants to collect the fruit that was due, but they were all disrespected and mistreated [2-5]. The servants were a picture of the Old Testament prophets sent by God to call God’s people to yield to Him [Heb. 11:36-37]. God’s patience is seen by sending multiple servants, but His patience is not unlimited.

Finally, the owner sends his only beloved son expecting that finally they will respect God’s messenger [6]. The vineyard workers recognize that the son is the heir, and seek to kill him so that they can keep possession of the vineyard [7]. So they killed the son [8]. The son is a picture of Jesus, God’s beloved only Son [Mt. 3:17, Mk. 9:7], who will soon be condemned to death by the religious leaders. Jesus is the final messenger. You must either accept or reject. People reject Jesus because they refuse to give God what rightfully belongs to Him.

The result of refusing to yield [9-12]

⁹ “Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. ¹¹ This was the LORD’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’”¹² And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

The owner of the vineyard will come and destroy the vinedressers [9] referring to judgment upon Israel and those who reject Jesus. Giving the vineyard to others [9] is a picture of God’s blessings upon the Gentiles (non-Jews) in the Church.

Jesus quoted Ps. 118:22-23, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

¹¹ This was the LORD’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” [10-11]. Jesus is the stone rejected by the Jews, but approved by God. He is the chief cornerstone, the most important stone that supports the entire structure [Is. 28:16]. The religious leaders realized that Jesus spoke this parable against them, but rather than repent they wanted to arrest Jesus but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away [12]. The religious leaders were to represent God to His people and represent the people to God. They were never supposed to be the foundation. The vineyard and its fruit belong to God!

What you can do to bear fruit:

Prepare the soil [Mk. 4:1-20]: In the Parable of The Soils [Mark 4] Jesus described four types of soil that represent the condition of heart of those who encounter Jesus and His gospel. *Hard* soil never lets the gospel penetrate and thus produces no fruit. *Stony* soil represents the fear of persecution that prohibits meaningful fruit. *Thorny* soil reflects a heart that is dominated by the cares of the world, and thus is fruitless. Finally, Jesus described *good* soil as the person who receives the word of God and responds by applying God’s truth in their life. Good soil produces fruit 30, 60 and 100-fold – a truly exponential harvest of fruit: Christ-like character and worship that results from a life yielded to God. By deciding to apply God’s truth to your life, and learn the word, you will be transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Draw close to Jesus [Jn. 15:1-11]: In Jesus’ discourse explaining that He is the true vine and we are the branches, his followers are told ten times to abide. The Greek term *meno* speaks of connection, closeness, and intimacy. The key to bearing fruit for God is connection to Christ. Jesus declared that apart from Him that we can do nothing, but if we draw close to Him we will supernaturally be fruitful. Give to God what rightfully belongs to Him – fruit of a transformed life [Matt. 3:8].

2. Give God resources [13-17]: The question regarding taxes.

Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. ¹⁴ *When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"* ¹⁵ *Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?"* But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." ¹⁶ *So they brought it. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"* They said to Him, "Caesar's." ¹⁷ *And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.* The religious leaders (Chief priests, scribes, and elders Mk. 11:27) sent *some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words* or attempt to trap Jesus. The Pharisees sought to separate from sinful people and behavior, and the Herodians were theologically liberal and generally did not oppose but cooperated with Rome. These two groups were rivals who came together to oppose Jesus. They hope to show Jesus as treasonous against Rome and Caesar or to alienate Jews who hated having to pay taxes (tribute) to the Romans. There were some Jews (Zealots) who refused to pay tribute to Rome because they believed it was an admission of Roman right to rule. They approach Jesus with flattering words but their hearts are wicked [14]. They ask the question, *Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?* [14].

Jesus knew their hypocrisy and replied, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." [15]. A denarius was a Roman coin that was the typical wage for one day's work. They brought the coin to Jesus and He asked, "Whose image and inscription is this?" [16]. The image was the Roman Emperor Tiberius, and the inscription in Latin read, "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus."

Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him [17]. Render to Caesar reveals that we have obligations to the government that we need to honor. To render means to pay back a debt. God establishes governments for His purposes, and Jesus' followers are to submit to governing authority unless there is a clear conflict with God's authority [Rom. 13:1-7, Ac. 5:28-29].

Render to God the things that belong to God, reminds us that we are dual citizens of heaven and earth. Since we bear the image of God, we are to give ourselves as a living sacrifice to God [Gen. 1:26, Rom. 12:1-2]. The essence of Paul's argument in Romans is that in light of all that God has done for you as a follower of Jesus it is only reasonable that you yield to God and grow in Christlike character and worship of God (fruit). We give (render) to God not to pay a debt, but in gratitude that Jesus paid a debt that we are unable to repay.

What you can give to God:

Time: Time spent in Bible learning, prayer, solitude, worship with the assembled, + Neighborhood Group (small group).

Talent: Serve God in a local church + your community by using the abilities He has given you.

Treasure: Invest financial resources to advancing the gospel and God's kingdom locally + globally. True worship requires sacrifice. We are called to give to God our whole person, our time, talents, and treasure. Our attitudes and actions regarding the idea of giving to God reflect our love, devotion, gratitude and worship.

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. When you contemplate giving to God, what are some of the wrong attitudes that people might have?

Q2. When you contemplate giving to God, what are some of the right attitudes and actions that people might have?

Q3. How have your attitude and actions about giving to God changed over the last year(s)?

Q4. As you consider giving to God, what is an area in your life where you hope to grow in the coming year?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful article on how to become a more cheerful giver:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/cheerful-giver.html>

2. Recommended resource: Randy Alcorn’s booklet “The Treasure Principle”

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

To the extent that you are able, provide school supplies for a student in your community whose family may not be able to afford to do so.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?

2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don’t force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible. A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn’t enough time to answer them all.

3. The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don’t hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.