

THE WIDOW'S MITE

One day Jesus was in the temple, talking to the disciples and others who were gathered round in rapt attention, hoping to learn from his wisdom.

In those days, as now, Jewish people were expected to give to the temple and to the poor as part of their service to God. Jesus told his followers to observe how people were putting money into the offering box.

As they looked they noticed the different amounts which were being put in the box, and the manner in which it was given. They observed how some people gave their money in a flamboyant manner, so that those around would register their generosity, whilst others appeared more reluctant, and resentful at having to part with their cash.



As they watched an old widow woman, dressed in black ragged clothing hobbled into the temple. She looked completely out of place amongst the rich merchants. Indifferent to their snobbish gazes, she emptied out her money bag, and put the entire contents into the offering box – just two of the smallest coins of all (which in those days were called ‘mites’).

Jesus’s disciples were not impressed, but when they commented on the insignificance of her contribution, Jesus told them that she had given **far** more generously than **all** the other people that morning.

Source: The Bible: Luke 21: 1-4

Discussion:

How did Jesus calculate that the widow had given more generously than the others? (share/ratio/proportion/percentage)

Do you think that it is right to value a contribution in terms of proportion/percentage rather than actual worth?

What does this mean? Which groups of people/countries should be giving most to support people in need?

RE

What do the major religions tell us about this? (See notes on the advice about the different religions and their guidance about charitable giving.)

Maths:

PERCENTAGES

Most religions suggest that we should give about 10% of our salary.

Calculate 10% of the following salaries:

£15,000, £19,000, £26,000, £35,000.

Which is more: 10% of 50 or 5% of 30?

What is 25% of £200.00

GIVING TO CHARITY

GUIDANCE FROM THE MAJOR RELIGIONS

CHRISTIAN

TITHE – from the old English Meaning a tenth. A tenth of annual income formerly taken as a tax for the support of the church. Voluntary.

MUSLIM

ZAKAT – meaning increase, or purification, was made compulsory from the second year of the Hidra, the Muslim lunar calendar. Muslims give Zakat at 2.5% a year on all income, and after Ramadan give an amount about equal to the price of a meal. Zakat is enshrined in Muslim law.

JEWISH

TZEDAKAH – meaning ‘doing the right thing’ or ‘charitable giving’. When the Rabbis came to quantify how much Tzedakah to give, they advocated Ma’aser, meaning a tenth part. Voluntary, yet embedded in Jewish culture and scripture.

HINDU

The Vedic tradition guides Hindus to give according to their ability and position – which for a family man would be up to 50%. Voluntary.

BUDDHIST

‘Right Livelihood’ and ‘Right Action’ on the Buddha’s eightfold path guide Buddhists in the relationship with money.

SIKH

The Sikh code of Conduct advocates that 10% of income should be given to charity. Voluntary.