

## Week 11 Day 3 – New Testament Heroes: The Widow

In Gary Chapman's excellent book *The Five Love Languages*, he categorizes what he believes are the five primary expressions of love: acts of service, encouraging words, quality time, physical touch, and gift giving. Generally, you have one or two of these love languages that take precedence in how you love and how you feel loved. This is extraordinarily helpful when cultivating relationships with your friends and family. My primary love language is gift giving.

This goes back to my youth, though I didn't realize it at the time. I can recall one December in particular when I was in middle school. The most wonderful time of the year was upon us. I remember spending hours at the mall shopping for my friends. I was searching for the perfect gift for each one of them. Using my own hard-earned money, I selected a stuffed animal for Jenny that I thought she would love. An awesome action figure for Johnny. The perfect game for Billy, and so on. I must have spent close to \$75, which in the mid-'80s was a lot of money for a 12-year-old.

The day of the great gift exchange came and, unfortunately, it did not go well for me. Let's just say, my friends and I didn't share the same love language. I got the royal shaft (if I got anything at all), and I was devastated. Now in fairness to my friends, it wasn't as if they didn't love me, nor was it necessarily how they expressed their friendship. What was so hard for me were my expectations. I gave my all and got very little in return.

Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever given your all to something and then have nothing to show for it? More specifically, have you given your fitness your all and then didn't get anything back? The scale didn't move. No new PR (personal record) in a race. You're not lifting heavier weights, seeing your cholesterol or blood pressure go down, or recovery time improve? It's really hard, right? It's discouraging. Makes you want to give up. Not getting results . . . then why bother?

In a situation like this, you can adopt one of two attitudes. I've coached people through them both. Each choice leads to different outcomes. The first attitude can be found in the story of the rich young ruler depicted in all four of the Gospels.

The wealthy young ruler went to Jesus and asked what he should do to earn eternal life for himself. When Jesus told the man to sell everything and follow Him, the ruler felt great sorrow because he was rich. In other words, the cost was too high. The young man was comfortable where he was. The required sacrifice was too great, or the reward was too small, or both. The man's heart was only focused on himself and on the present.

When people have a selfish, nearsighted attitude toward their fitness, it eventually breaks them. They quit because they don't see results. Or, if they do start seeing results, that becomes their focus rather than God. Quitting or having a misaligned focus is at best a missed opportunity to bring God glory. At worst, it's a slippery slope to idolatry.

On the flipside, we can have the attitude of the poor widow mentioned in Scripture:

*"As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small*

*copper coins. 'Truly I tell you,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.'*

*—Luke 21:1-4 (NIV)*

Even though it didn't amount to much, the widow gave all she had. No matter how it affected her and with indifference to how much it actually contributed to the offering, she gave.

That's how you can reorient your fitness in a God-glorifying away. Adopt that same mindset of giving your all, without regard to how it affects you and indifferent to the results you achieve. Then, your fitness not only becomes easier, it becomes more enjoyable.

I've seen many people struggle with various legitimate health issues, sometimes battling multiple complications at the same time. They don't usually see the results they're wanting. Yet they still find joy in their fitness because their hearts are aligned with His heart, not with their results.

This joy and dedication pleases our Lord because out of the poverty of their health, they are giving Him all they have.

Remember my Great Christmas Debacle of '86? How much more would I have enjoyed the fun of giving if I had no expectations for the outcome? I could have simply absorbed the smiles of my friends as they opened their presents. I could have laughed with them as they played with their games. My heart would have been aligned with the Giver of every good gift. I could have found joy strictly in the process of giving because I would have not been focused on myself.

That's why when it comes to our fitness, we first concern ourselves with the heart. Joyfully giving out of our poverty, we present our fitness as an offering. We should expect nothing but trust God with everything.

When we pursue our fitness with a clean heart, no matter how poor our results, we will be rich in Him. That's the best result of all.

### Prayer

*Father, thank You for accepting my fitness as an offering of love to You. Will You forgive me when I'm motivated for and by the wrong things? Help me to give You my all no matter what. Amen.*

### Meditation

Give me a clean heart, keeping you the focus of my fitness.

### Daily Spiritual Exercise

Pick a meal to fast from for the day. The hunger you feel is a reminder to be praying for a fully surrendered life. As you pray throughout the day, be sure to ask God what He'd like you to learn from this exercise. We don't just pray. We pray and we listen.