

John Laing; God's builder

Biblical material

Matthew 6:1, 3-4

When you give something to charity, do not make a fuss about it, so that people will admire you. Give in secret, so that even your closest friend does not know. God sees what you do in private, he will reward you.

Note: *Italic* = instructions for the teacher and book/song titles.

Introduction

Play a game of charades miming different jobs. Pupils can mime actions related to different jobs while the rest of the school guess what the job is. One pupil should mime 'a builder'.

Core material

On the 15th November 1940, 449 German bombers flew over the city of Coventry. Thousands of bombs were dropped: over five hundred people were killed and many more were injured. Much of the city was reduced to rubble - including the Cathedral. After the war, in 1954, a new Coventry Cathedral was designed and the Laing Company was chosen to build it. John Laing and his sons felt so privileged to be building a Cathedral that they decided to take no profit from the building work. Any money that was made was given to Cathedral funds.

John Laing was born in 1879, the son of a builder. He gradually expanded the small family firm so that it went from building houses and schools to reservoirs, aircraft hangars and finally to airstrips, major buildings and motorways.

When John first started to expand the Laing Company, he ran into trouble. He had accepted a job building sewers but the builders hit quicksand and sometimes men had to be pulled out quickly (often minus their boots). Some local people objected to the building, and the work also took

twice as long as expected. Tired and depressed and facing ruin, John Laing went for a walk. He knew that the company would end if it could not pay all the bills. John was already a Christian and now he talked to God about his troubles. He made a promise to God, and wrote it down. He said that in future he would talk to God about the jobs he should do. He would not take extra money if the company did well. Instead he would give a lot of money away and put money back into the company.

John Laing was as good as his word. The company survived and grew. But John Laing did not live like a wealthy man, even though his company made millions of pounds. Instead, he gave away much of his money and put more back into the company, just as he had said he would. He was one of the first to introduce pensions and paid holidays for his workers. (*You may need to explain these words.*)

Although John Laing gave away much money, he did it secretly and without fuss. He remembered Jesus' words about giving. *Read the biblical material.*

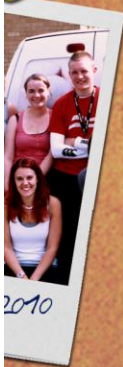
John Laing died in 1978 aged 99. His company made millions, but when he died, he personally had only £371 in the bank.

Prayer/Reflection

Ask pupils to think for a moment about what they would do with a lot of money. For John Laing this was a reality, not a dream. He made millions. Before he was rich, he decided exactly what he would do if he ever had a lot of money and he kept his promise not to waste it or spend it selfishly.

Music suggestions

God loves a cheerful giver and *The building song*
Alleluya, comp. D Gadsby and J Hogarth (A and C Black 1980)



PHILIPPIANS 4: 13
CEV
CHRIST GIVES ME
THE STRENGTH TO
FACE ANYTHING.

