



STILL GOD'S

Still God's Series

Small Group Material

Leader Guide

Part 1- "What Does Money Do?"

February 4th, 2018

Bottom Line: *Radical generosity must be rooted in deep contentment.*

Study Verses: *Deuteronomy 8:16-18, Matthew 13:22, Matthew 6:19-24, 1 Timothy 6:6-10*

Define The Win: *Participants would reflect on the relationship they've had with money over the years and how this approach has influenced their heart, faith and relationship with God. They would recognize that in order to develop generous hearts they need to learn to live contently. Group members would begin to understand how financial stewardship serves as a spiritual discipline.*

Key Points

- *God's intention is to be our provision.*
- *We receive His provision in accordance with His vision.*
- *Money can be either good or bad depending on our dependence on it.*
- *Wealth can be a blessing or a curse. It can serve as a distraction or utilized to build and contribute.*
- *Financial stewardship is a spiritual discipline.*
- *Your treasure will determine your allegiance.*
- *We have the power to tell our hearts where to go. We incline our hearts in the direction of the Kingdom by giving something.*

- *Money provides the illusion of power and freedom independent from God.*
- *We have a relationship with money that influences and affects our relationship with God.*
- *Generosity is a way of seeing.*

ENCOUNTER

"I feel pulled in opposite directions over the money issue. Sometimes I want to sell all that I own, join a Christian commune, and live out my days in intentional poverty. At other times, I want to rid myself of guilt and enjoy the fruit of our nation's prosperity. Mostly, I wish I did not have to think about money at all." - Philip Yancey

- **Read the quote from Philip Yancey. Over the years, what has been your relationship with money (guilt, fear, shame, discontentment, a tool for generosity, etc.)?**
- **Would you say you have convictions when it comes to your view on finances? If so, what are they and how did you develop them? If not, how does the lack of convictions influence the way you approach your finances?**
- **If you don't pay attention to your finances, it will cost you your heart. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?**

FORMATION

- **Read Deuteronomy 6:16-18. What did God want the Israelites (and us) to understand about the source of their provision?**
- **Read Matthew 13:22. What makes wealth deceptive? In what ways do riches have the power to choke out God's Word and the work He is doing in our hearts?**
- **Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. What connection does learning to live contently have on our desire to display generous hearts?**

EXPRESSION

"The idealization of poverty is one of the most dangerous illusions of Christians. Stewardship, which requires possessions and includes giving, is the true spiritual discipline in relation to wealth." -Dallas Willard

- **Read the quote from Dallas Willard. What are some steps you can take to being a good steward with the resources you've been entrusted with?**

- **Read Matthew 6:19-24. What would you say is the desire of your heart when it comes to money? What does this say about where your treasure is going?**
- **Money can cause us to commit idolatry (seeing \$ as a source) or covetousness (see \$ as a scorecard for comparison). Of the two, which one do you struggle with the most and why?**
- **If our approach to money serves as a revealer of the heart, how would you describe the current state of your heart?**

LEADER INSIGHT: *What does it mean that our hearts follow our treasure? Think about the things that keep you up at night. What topic tends to dominate your thoughts when you are tossing and turning in bed? Are you worried and distraught over past due bills, making ends meet, saving for the kids' college fund and putting food on the table? Do you find yourself wrestling with envy over what others have or dreaming of the perfect car, vacation or beach home?*

When these thoughts get traction in our minds, our hearts are quick to follow. We start down the dangerous road of thinking, "If only I had this or that, then I'd be free to live the life I've always wanted," or "If only this bill were paid..." "If only I made this amount of money, then I'd no longer worry."

Destination thinking is not reserved, however, for those who financially struggle. If you find yourself in a more financial secure situation, your thoughts may sound more like "If only life could be simple," "If only I could just sell everything, live on a boat and travel the world," or "If only I didn't have the responsibility that comes with wealth."

Ironically, the same things that some of us desire and think of as a means to freedom also stand in the way of freedom for those who have them. Whether you consider yourself to be financially secure, financially struggling or you fall somewhere in-between, you are consumed with the desire for more freedom, which none of these scenarios seem to deliver. Doing the same thing over and over again while expecting different results is a sign of insanity, yet when it comes to our financial lifestyles, it's how most of us live. For this reason, we become consumed with more want, more worry or both.

Money causes as much stress as anything else in our culture. It serves as the primary motivator for many of us. We make money our idol and view it as our sense of security, or we covet our stuff and use it as our scorecard that reminds us where we stack up against others. No matter if you are a spender or a saver, a have or a have-not, we all tend to believe money is the source that provides control and security. Our finances offer the illusion of power and freedom apart from God. But, at best, it's just an illusion.

Being irresponsible with your money isn't necessarily about one's actions, but rather not taking the time and intention necessary to reflect on what it is you believe about your money. What drives your motives? What convictions do you have about your finances? And most importantly as believers, do you believe God has a purpose for your money?

We all yearn for freedom in our finances, but it seems like we are looking in all the wrong places for answers. Freedom in our finances isn't found in a perfectly balanced account or having some money stashed away for a rainy day. Freedom will not be gained by ridding ourselves of all that we have either.

Freedom resides in living contently. Radical generosity is rooted in deep contentment. Financial freedom allows us to use what we have been given to serve the purposes God has established. Our freedom is for stewardship. Stewardship is being trusted with what we do not own. The Bible makes the connection that our financial issues are indicators of a spiritual problem.

The more you explore these ideas, the more you will discover the link between our heart and our stuff. We don't know where our heart is because we have no clue where our treasure goes. This is why we must examine our approach to money and finances. We all have a relationship with money that influences and affects our faith, our heart and our relationship with God. Our treasure will determine our allegiance.

It's easier to ignore the problem and to spend away or not think about it at all. But, this leaves one in a vulnerable state. If we don't pay attention, it will cost us our heart. But, here is the good news: We have the power to tell our hearts where to go. We incline our hearts in the direction of the Kingdom by pursuing generous hearts. Generosity is a way of seeing.

If this is the case, then freedom in our finances begins by understanding what God has in mind for us financially. Seeing our money the way God sees our money will enable us to see everything that we have as a gift because it all belongs to Him anyway – it's God's. Financial stewardship is a spiritual discipline rooted in trust and dependence. His intention is to be our provision. What we have is what we have been trusted with. Generosity allows us to freely give because God has freely given.