

# Small Group: Money Matters Week 2

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## What you will need for this week:

- > Bibles
- > Photocopy/print the activity page for each member of your group

## Suggested Structure:

- > Opening game (see below)
- > Open with question about whether anyone had any insights or comments about the sermon. (if you need it there is a brief summary of sermon at the end of this document)
- > Discussion questions and prayer

## OPENING GAME

Divide your group into groups of four.

Their assignment is to share their 3 favorite movies, their 3 least liked movie, and their 3 favourite stories in the Bible.

**This ice breaker helps the group explore shared interests more broadly and sparks lots of discussion about why each person likes or dislikes their selected 3.**

## GROUP DISCUSSION

**Ask your group to look up the following (one person per verse):**

Heb 13:5

Psalm 37:7,16

Prov 23:4-5

Prov 30:8-9

Phil: 4:11-13

Romans 5:8

Matthew 10: 5a,7

Ephesians 5

Matthew 5:42

1 John 3:17

Psalm 145:8-11

These will be used during the discussion...

## Section 1: Materialism

- **What is your definition of materialism?**

**After some discussion, read the following to your group:**

In philosophy, materialism is the theory that physical matter is the only reality and that everything (thought and feelings included) can be explained in terms of matter and physical phenomenon. Materialism reduces every object and experience to finding all significance in physical matter. Therefore love, eternity, happiness, and everything is not as important as what you can see, touch, and ultimately, possess. Therefore materialism involves the cultivation of the attitude that physical well-being and worldly possessions constitute the greatest good and the highest value in life.

- **How much would you say this is a prevailing culture of Cape Town?**

[Think of careers, sports, sex, advertising]

- **What do you think are the implications of this worldview on sharing the gospel?**
- **With so much discontent around us and with the media telling us what we need in order to be happy, how easy do you find it to be content with what you have?**

**Ask whoever's looked up these verses to read them:**

**Heb 13:5**

"Keep your lives free of the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.'"

**Psalm 37:7 and 16**

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when man succeeds in their ways when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Better the little the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked.

**Proverbs 23:4-5**

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like eagles.

- **In seeking contentment, what are the kinds of things we should be asking God for?**

**After some discussion, ask whoever's looked up these verses to read them:**

**Prov 30:8-9**

8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me;  
give me neither poverty nor riches,  
but give me only my daily bread.

9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you  
and say, 'Who is the LORD?'  
Or I may become poor and steal,  
and so dishonor the name of my God.

### **Phil 4:11-13**

11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

## **Section 2: Generosity**

**When you think of the generosity of God what do you think of?**

**After some discussion, ask whoever's looked up these verses to read them:**

### **Romans 5:8**

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

### **Matthew 10: 5a,7**

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:

7 As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, [a] drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

### **Ephesians 5**

1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

### **Matthew 5:42**

42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

### **1 John 3:17**

17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be that person?

Gordon MacDonald argues that the God who gives to us so generously has provided a pattern for giving for us to adopt. At the heart of giving is a certain mindset: We are to give to the one in need, the one who is weak, the one who is oppressed, not because they beg us to do so, not because they promise to praise or flood us with appreciation, and not because we expect immediate results. But we give because we love!

We give because God gave. We give as God gave. And we give as generously as God gave. And that requires great maturity and obedience on our part. And this shows our generous God to world.

#### **Psalm 145:8-11**

8 The Lord is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and rich in love.

9 The Lord is good to all;  
he has compassion on all he has made.

10 All your works praise you, LORD;  
your faithful people extol you.

11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom  
and speak of your might,

### **Activity**

Spend some time in pairs (if you have married couples, then they should pair together) going through the below activity. Discuss each item and decide if you think it's an obligation, a necessity, nice to have or a treat. People may have different views on them and there's not necessarily a right or wrong answer.

Below the activity are some prayer points for after the activity.

Possible budget items	Obligation	Necessity	Nice to have	Treat / spoil
Bank charges				
Housing bond / rent,				
Car payments				
Car maintenance				
Petrol and parking				
House maintenance				
Clearing of non essential debt (i.e. excl. house and car)				
Clothes				
Domestic worker				
Gardener				
Electricity				
Rates and water				
Medical aid and other medical expenses				
Entertainment (eating out, theatre, movies)				
Books, newspapers, magazines				
CD's and DVD's				
Groceries / household products				
Toiletries				
Gym / pilates				
Haircuts				
Holidays / travel (local)				
Holidays / travel (overseas)				
Insurance (household and car)				
Insurance (life)				
Insurance (disability)				
Pension fund / provident fund / retirement annuity				
Savings				
Pets				
Gifts (birthday, Christmas, etc.)				
Pocket money / allowance (parents and/or kids)				
Telkom phone				
Mobile phones				
Internet				
Sport and recreation				
Further education fees				
Textbooks				
Supporting of family members (e.g. mother-in-law)				
Income tax (SITE and PAYE)				
Tithe				
Giving (over and above tithe)				

TV licence				
DSTV (M-net)				
Date-night				
Furniture (non essential)				
Dishwasher				
School fees				

Later (as individuals or as married couples, consider the following):

What am I doing well in terms of my finances

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What area of my finances need work?

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Who is someone I could ask to keep me accountable in my finances?

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## PRAYER

Spend some time thanking God for his generosity.

Pray for wisdom for how we invest generously in what God is doing in and through Common Ground in the city of Cape Town.

Pray for wisdom around debt and investments and saving wisely.

If anyone is going through financial difficulty and have been vulnerable during your discussions, let the group pray for them.

## SUMMARY: WHAT TO DO WITH THE MONEY ENTRUSTED TO US

Did you know that all you have really belongs to God? We are – at best – stewards not owners of all we have. All the money we possess – even if we earned it through our own hard work and talent – comes from and still belongs to God (see Deuteronomy 8:18), and we are answer-able to him for how we use it.

In the final analysis, we are not owners of our own wealth. Rather God entrusts *his* wealth to us as stewards (or managers) of it. And we will give an account to him with regard to how we use his finances.

If we misappropriate funds, say for example spending money on ourselves that was meant to be given away, then we are guilty of stealing or mismanaging God's money. That's serious. In Luke 16:1-2, Jesus illustrates this teaching about stewardship and accountability in the form of a story: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management.'"

### WHAT TO DO WITH THE MONEY ENTRUSTED TO US ...

#### 1) Draw a 'daily bread' circle.

Notice how expenditure rises to fill income! The more you have the more you buy. We assume it's our right.

God wants us to be content with what we have! He wants us to know when enough is enough. (God's plan is not to increase your standard of living as much as it is to increase your standard of giving.)

One of the secrets to the art of wealth is to draw a 'daily bread' circle, in which one in list form describes the standard of living that will be 'enough' for the rest of one's life, or at least for the next 5-10 years. Then if you earn more money than is needed to sustain this lifestyle, you simply refuse to spend that money on yourself and raise your standard of living. Warren Buffet is an inspiring example of this. Though becoming one of the world's wealthiest men he didn't buy a bigger home. Or think of Time Mag's 2009 'man of the year' who, though being the head of the Federal Reserve in the USA, chose to drive a Ford Focus (no offence to those who drive Ford Focuses!).

#### 2) Live within your means.

We live in a culture where we routinely value things that are not truly valuable, try impress people

we don't know, want things we don't really need with money we don't even owe!

We have needs, and we have wants. It's difficult to live without needs being met. But we can live, even happily so with God's help, without our wants being met. Most of the money we spend on wants can be reduced or eliminated, so that we are able to live within our means. A good starting challenge is to reduce all spending on wants by at least 10 percent. But to do so will be to cut against the grain of our culture. We live in a consumer culture that encourages us to live beyond our means. Credit cards and buy-now-pay-later schemes make this possible. Listen to how Proverbs calls us to burst this self-deluded bubble, and start living within our means...

One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing. (Prov 13:7)

### **3) Get out of debt.**

'The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.' (Prov 22:7)

If you're in debt, here are some pointers...

*1) If you have been unwise, or even reckless, in incurring excessive debt, repent.* Make a firm commitment to address your indebtedness. Realize too that marriages come under great stress in severe debt situations. It is vital for married couples to avoid assigning blame and maintain unity of purpose.

*2) Sell off non-essential assets.* For example, is a second car essential? In cases of severe debt it may be necessary to sell your house and down scale.

*3) Invite input from a trusted, mature believer* who has a good understanding and applies biblical principles in his/her financial stewardship. Open up your finances and share your repayment plan. Remain accountable on a long term basis as you are disciplined in your debt reduction program. If you need some guidance in your financial planning but don't know who to go to, contact your elders and ask them to point you to people in the church who can help you.

*4) Approach your creditors and inform them of your commitment to repay your debt.* Request a sustainable monthly repayment amount and even an interest reduction.

Jean Chatsky speaks of the Debt Dash Plan: 'List your debts, starting with the smallest. Take all the extra money you can find in your budget and apply it to that debt, and make only the minimum payments on your other debts. When you pay off the first debt, move on to the one with the next lowest balance, and so on. This strategy works because people get an emotional boost from eliminating one of their debts quickly, which motivates them to stick to their debt repayment plan.' I would add that we should pay off those debts with the highest interest rates first. This usually consists of short-term loans, store cards and credit cards.

The most common debt people face is their home loans. Here's some radical advice: whenever you get a pay rise, be sure to increase your monthly repayments by that same amount. If you get a pay rise of 10% per year, and follow this plan, then you will save yourself in effect nine years of repayments!

### **4) Be generous toward God's work.**

'Honour the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.' (Prov 3:9-10)

*Christ-followers should make giving money to God's work through their local churches the priority use of their money.* This is the most practical way that we 'honour the LORD with our wealth'. The word 'honour' here means to acknowledge God's worthiness, greatness and weightiness. It is not just the words we speak to God in a time of musical worship, but what we do with our money that is true worship.



What are the 'firstfruits' mentioned here? It refers to the ancient Israelite practice of giving the very first portion of one's income (which came in the form of crops) to God, by giving to the temple. This was given as a way of responding to God's saving grace, and of acknowledging that all they had comes from God anyway (see Deuteronomy 26:8-10).

In the Old Testament this giving sustained the functioning of the temple along with those called by God to serve in it. But the giving described in the New Testament is far more important. It is no longer a material temple of solid stones, but now a spiritual temple of living stones that benefits. It is no longer maintenance-minded priests whose work it was to monopolize ministry opportunities who are employed. Now it mission-minded leaders whose work it is to multiply ministry opportunities for the whole church. It is no longer about sustaining a static temple system, now it is about multiplying outward-focused gospel-communities into the nations. How much more critical is giving now than then!

How much did the Israelites give? Most pastors have taught that they give 10%, but a more thorough study of the law of Moses shows that they gave two tithes as well as a third tithe every three years, which means that they gave more than 20%. How much are we meant to give to God's work through the church? The New Testament does not say exactly how much. What it does say is that we should give *proportionately* to our capacity to give. For this reason Jesus was far more impressed with the few cents a poor widow gave than the huge amount of money a millionaire gave, who he believed could have given much more (see Luke 21:1-4). And the New Testament says that we should give *generously and sacrificially*. The general practice most mature Christ-followers have embraced over the centuries is to give 10%. But this 10% should be treated more as a floor than as a ceiling. And Christ-followers need to be open to giving far more at certain times, especially to unusual kingdom ventures like supporting churches facing desperate times, funding church planting, and strategic building projects.

#### **5) Be generous, especially to the needy.**

'One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.' (Prov 11:24-25)

Depending on our capacity, we should strive to be generous people. In fact the closer we get to God, the more we should reflect his generosity to others. Though we should try to save money generally, there needs to be times when we celebrate life and relationships through being generous. This would include being generous to our family and friends, as well as to waiters whom we tip, and sometimes even perfect strangers. A common opportunity for generosity is to pay the bills when eating out.

But we also need to be generous to those who are truly in need, starting first with the needy in our own church, then the needy in our city (as Galatians 6:10 counsels us)...

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God. (Prov 14:31)

Those who are kind to the poor lend to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done. (Prov 19:17)

#### **6) Save, save, save.**

This last point is not seriously emphasized in the Bible, though it is clearly an expression of wise living as Proverbs 30:25 shows... 'Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in

the summer.'

Little by little the ant practices delay gratification and accrues surplus! That is a picture of saving, or storing up for the future. Many financial advisors recommend we have three different saving accounts or vehicles:

***a) Save into an emergency fund.***

Christ himself warned that we live in a world of rust, moth and thief. Therefore, we should expect unexpected costs. For example, our car breaks down, or the whole family gets sick and medical bills suddenly pile sky high, or we're retrenched. What we tend to do when these emergencies come up is 1) to dig into their long-term savings, or more commonly 2) to go into debt on our credit cards. Both options are unwise! Rather we should apportion the same amount every month into an emergency fund. When do we stop putting money into the emergency fund? Mark Driscoll advises, only when we have enough to live on for six months (assuming all income stopped.)

***b) Save short-term (i.e. less than 5 years).***

We should anticipate foreseeable bumper expenses in the coming years such as school fees, going on a mission trip, the purchase of a car, a big holiday, a wedding, a deposit into a house etc. A good place to keep this kind of money is in a call account, which earns fairly good interest but takes a while to get out (with this serving as a deterrent). This short-term saving must not be put in fluctuating stocks or unit trusts, which are a very unreliable form of short-term saving.

***c) Save long-term.***

One day we will be too old to earn an income. If we don't plan for that season of our lives then we doom other people to carry us as a financial burden, or worse yet (if no one is able or willing to care for us) we are reduced to rags. The sooner we start saving for that season the better. In contrast to short-term saving, this kind of saving can be done by investing money in stocks, unit trusts or a retirement annuity. The key to this kind of saving is to start as early as possible in life. For many of us, another long-term cost we can save for is our children's varsity education.

The sooner we start the better. A common mistake that people make with their money is to put-off saving and investing. When it comes to saving and investing your money, time can be your best friend. The purpose of saving and investing your money is to take advantage of compound earnings. The longer that you save and the earlier that you start investing the faster you can reach your financial goals. Waiting just makes it much harder to meet the same goal. So find a way to start saving and investing today.

'He who gathers money little by little makes it grow.' (Prov 13:11)