

Leader's Growth Group Homework Guide

For the week of March 11, 2018

(This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing & leading your group in discussion)

This week is your last meeting of the Winter Quarter. We hope you've found your time over these past nine weeks to be spiritually and relationally encouraging. We'll take a two-week break, then the Spring Quarter begins the week of April 1 and runs through June 2. Please be sure to confirm your plans for the Spring Quarter with your group leader.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

⇒ **URGENT – IF YOU HAVE NOT FINALIZED YOUR ROSTER FOR SPRING QUARTER CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY.** Call or email your Growth Group Central Admin or Growth Group Station-in-Life Pastor: mygrowthgroup.org/growth-group-staff/

NOTE: Due to the date of Easter, Spring Quarter Sign-ups have been moved to the same week we end the Winter Quarter. So, we need info sooner than normal to plan accordingly. Thanks.

⇒ NEW ONLINE FEEDBACK FORMS FOR NEW GROUPS

During Winter quarter we typically ask only the new groups to do Feedback Forms on their last night of the quarter. Watch for an email from Growth Group Central on completing the forms. If you would prefer to use hard copies use the link below to print them for your group.

Printable Feedback Forms: mygrowthgroup.org/fileadmin/content/docs/feedback/S10_Feedback_Form.pdf

Video Discussion Option: Here's a fun way to kick off your discussion this week. Watch this YouTube clip that illustrates how some people might think about tithing or giving.
<https://youtu.be/upmyrinWq64>

- What are your initial thoughts about the video?
- How do you think a nonbeliever would respond to this video? How would you explain it to them and the point trying to be made?
- What excuses do you think the guy may have come up with to feel okay with ignoring God in his use of money?
- What excuses do we typically use to rationalize ignoring of the first fruit principle?

Communion Option: See the "Taking It Home" section for instructions on the option to end your meeting in Communion.

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. Let's say you won the lottery (\$20 million after taxes) and you were one of the rare people who decided to give away a large share of it (let's start with 25 percent) to non-profit organizations or missionaries. To whom would you give it?

This question is designed to get people thinking about where they would like to give their money.

Additional Question: What are the determining factors in your decision about what organizations or people you would give to?

2. Which of the following messages about money and financial security did you hear in your family growing up?

This is a great question to have everyone answer.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money can't buy you happiness | <input type="checkbox"/> The best part of having money is helping others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial security is the most important goal in life | <input type="checkbox"/> Debt is always bad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money is the root of all evil | <input type="checkbox"/> Debt is okay for things you really want |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wealth is a sign of God's favor and approval | <input type="checkbox"/> Never buy anything unless it's on sale |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budgeting is a skill to master | <input type="checkbox"/> Saving for the future is very important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> We never talked about money | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Note: This question will give you insight into what lessons people had about money when they were growing up. Money is one of those subjects where what we believe about it, and how we handle it, is often impacted more by our family of origin than by the Bible. We spent so many years watching how our parents used money and how they talked about it, that our beliefs about money are deeply ingrained. Unless we bring those beliefs to the surface and compare them to biblical values about money, we'll keep treating money the same way our parents did.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The natural response to God being the source of every blessing in our lives is generosity. What insights about generosity, and what it looks like when we live it out, do the following passages give us?

Luke 21:1-4 – As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³ "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Our generosity is not measured by how much we give, but how much we have left after we give.

Additional Question: Based on this story, how would you define generosity?

In a sermon Larry did in October 2011, he listed the four guiding principles of generosity:

- Proportional – the more we've been given the more we should be giving.
- Sacrificial – the amount should make us sweat.

- *A step of faith.*
- *An act of thanksgiving – in response to all God has done for us.*

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 – And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. ⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

The Macedonians poverty combined with joy caused them to be generous. They considered it a privilege to be able to support Paul. As a result of their generosity they experienced grace because before they gave their money they had dedicated themselves to the Lord.

Additional Questions:

How would you describe the Macedonians attitudes about giving?

How do you think they developed that attitude?

What surprises you about the Macedonians generosity?

What do you think it means that they gave “beyond their ability”?

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 – ⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

The attitude we should have when giving is unpacked in this passage.

Additional Questions:

How would you describe in your own words, the attitude we should have when we give according to this passage?

What is the goal of giving according to this passage?

How does your attitude about giving line up with what’s talked about in this passage?

Leviticus 23:22 talks about how God wants the Israelites to build generosity into their daily lives. Since most of us aren’t farmers, can you think of any simple and inexpensive ways to apply this principle?

Leviticus 23:22 – ²²“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God.”

Hopefully your group will do some good brainstorming on how to be generous in simple and inexpensive ways.

Understanding and being genuinely thankful for what Jesus has done for us is often a first step in developing a generous mindset. What has Jesus done for you that you’re thankful for? *If your group is struggling to come up with things, here are a few passages that talk about what Jesus has done for us:*

1 Timothy 1:16-17 – ¹⁶But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 2:3-6 – ³This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.

1 Peter 1:3-5 – ³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Colossians 2:13-15 – ¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

2. Ananias and Sapphira were two members of the first church in Jerusalem who met an untimely death. Their story is often used as an example of why we shouldn’t lie, but it can also be viewed as a story about money and giving. In their story in Acts 4:32-5:11, what can we learn about God’s view of money and how we handle it?

Acts 4:32-5:11 – ³²All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.

5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ²With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.

³ Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.”

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

“Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

⁹ Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

The context of this story is the new church’s need for resources to take care of all the new believers. Many of them were Jews from outside of Israel who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. They all remained in Jerusalem after Passover because of what was going on and they needed places to stay and food to eat. As a result, the local believers started selling things to provide money for the new church. Obviously Ananias and Sapphira saw what was going on and wanted to get some of the positive accolades without having to give the full amount that they sold their field for.

Some things to notice about money from this passage:

- *Owning land is not wrong nor is selling the land a mandate for all believers.*
- *It was up to Ananias and Sapphira to determine how much of their profit they gave to the church.*
- *The problem wasn’t that they didn’t give all the profit to the church, the problem is they deceptively implied that they had given it all.*
- *The driving motivation in their giving was to impress people – to give people a false assumption about their generosity.*

Additional Questions:

Why do you think God was so harsh on Ananias and Sapphira (no one else in the New Testament is struck dead for lying, let alone any sin)?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you were tempted to give in order to impress people?

Additional Passage: *In Matthew 6:1-4 we can read what Jesus has to say about giving to impress people.*

Matthew 6:1-4 – *“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

If you were to describe your attitude toward money in one word, what word would you choose?

Some people might just throw out words like “scarce” or “lacking” but be patient for other descriptions or ask people to think of a second word. This one word can be very insightful into how people think about money and relate to it.

Additional Question: *What is the biggest contributing factor for the word you chose?*

3. Because of the recent fire in North County San Diego and the widespread evacuation notices that resulted from it, many of us were given the opportunity to re-evaluate our earthly possessions and the role they play in our lives. Too often we fall into the trap of thinking life is all about what we have. How could the following passages help us keep our earthly possessions in proper perspective?

1 Timothy 6:6-10 – ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

The pursuit of money can be detrimental to your spiritual health.

Additional Questions: *How would you summarize the attitude we’re suppose to have towards money from this passage?*

How would you advise someone who wanted to make a lot of money so they could help support non-profit organizations and missionaries?

1 Timothy 6:17-19 – ¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so

uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. *Those who are rich (which is all of us in comparison to the rest of the world) need to treat money in a way that honors God.*

Additional Questions:

How would you respond to someone who said being rich is a sin?

What do we learn about how all Christians should live from this passage?

What is most challenging for you about balancing the storing up of treasures in heaven with the pursuit and enjoyment of material possessions?

TAKING IT HOME

1. Larry talked about the steps to financial obedience being from nothing to something, from something to systematic, from systematic to tithing, from tithing to sacrifice. Looking at these steps, are there any changes you would like to make in your financial obedience?

2. Looking back on this week's sermon and study, what's most important for you to remember?

ENDING THE QUARTER BY TAKING COMMUNION OPTION: *We typically end each quarter by taking Communion but due short break between the Winter and Spring quarters you may want to wait until the end of Spring quarter. Here are some suggestions if you'd still like to take communion this quarter:*

- 1. Explain that we want to end the quarter by celebrating Christ, his death and resurrection by taking Communion.*
- 2. You can comment, ask for responses or read the verses below, noting what comes to mind to be thankful for because of Christ. (Colossians 1:21-23) After reading the verses, give people a moment to reflect on the verses.*
- 3. Explain how you're going to do Communion and read Luke 22:14-27. Pass the bread, thank the Lord for it, and eat together. Pass the cup, thank the Lord for it, and drink together.*

The bread and juice can also be set on a table in the middle of the room and people can take Communion after you read the Scripture and pray, or while the group sings or listens to a worship song.

Video/Music Option: *While people take Communion, you could also play the following video, [No Longer Slaves](#), sung by Jonathan David Helser and Melissa Helser of Bethel. Use this time for reflection and worship.*

- 4. Prayer: Move into prayer time, thanking Jesus for his examples of love and how he has worked in the people's lives based on what was shared and read throughout the evening.*
- 5. (Optional) Close in a praise song.*

Finalizing Spring Quarter Plans: *Reminder to confirm who is returning to your group and let them know the specific date, time and any potluck plans for your first meeting back for the Spring Quarter.*

Spring Quarter Meeting Dates: *April 1 - June 2*

Spring Sign-up Weekend Dates: *March 17 & 18 and 24 & 25*

Praise/Prayer Requests:

⇒

⇒

⇒

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU FOLLOW THE FIRST-FRUIT PRINCIPLE:

- **GIVING OFF THE TOP - Ways to Give at North Coast Church**
 - ✓ **Text to Tithe / Give**
Text "give" to (760) 891-5577 to get a link to give via your phone.
 - ✓ **Mobile App**
Download the North Coast Church App - [iphone](#) / [Android](#)
 - ✓ **Online & Automatic Withdrawal**
Go to northcoastchurch.com/give. No registration or account needed. One-time or repeat giving.
- **FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY**
Need resources to better manage your money? Watch for classes coming this summer and fall. This 9-week DVD-series will be facilitated by financial coaches as you learn techniques for squashing debt and living within your budget.
- **OTHER ONLINE FINANCIAL RESOURCES**
Dave Ramsey – daveramsey.com/category/tools/

THE FIRST-FRUIT PRINCIPLE

THE PASSAGE

Hebrews 7:1-10/ Genesis 14

THE FIRST-FRUIT PRINCIPLE

THE PRINCIPLE:

*The first & best **BELONGS TO GOD***

Genesis 14:8-20/ Exodus 13:1-13/ Joshua 6:18-19 & 7:1-12/ Numbers 18:26

THE REASON:

*God is the source of every **BLESSING IN MY LIFE***

James 1:16-17/ Matthew 5:45

WHO DOES THIS APPLY TO?

*Everyone who claims to **WORSHIP GOD***

Proverbs 3:9-10/ Philippians 4:15-19

TWO HARD QUESTIONS

1. Is God getting my **FIRSTFRUITS** or my **LEFTOVERS**?
2 Samuel 24:21-25/ Malachi 1:6-9
2. Who put the **HOLE IN MY POCKET**?
Haggai 1:2-11, 2:15-19 & Malachi 3:8-12

THREE IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS

1. A tip is not a **TITHE**.
2. The tithe **BELONGS** to God - It's not **GIVEN** to God.
3. If I won't start **NOW** - I won't start when I **WIN THE LOTTERY**.
1 Corinthians 16:1-2