

WEEK 1: MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

When multimillionaire John D Rockefeller was asked: 'How much money do you need?' he famously answered 'Just a bit more'.

People all through our world are striving to get more money, believing that this will be their ticket to happiness.

This week we will explore the implications of a life focused on material wealth.

CONNECT

- If you were given \$1 million and 24 hours to spend it, what would you buy?
- Did you ever get pocket money growing up? How much? Did you have to do chores to get it?
- If money did grow on trees, how many trees would you plant?
- When it comes to value for money, when do you hate being ripped off? (I.e. bad movie at cinemas, packet of chips that is 70% air)
- What do you think about cash verses card? Are you looking forward to a cashless society or do you love having coins and notes?

INVOLVE

Play a game of *Cash Grab*.

Each person starts with 5 coins (you don't need to use coins, small squares of paper will do).

People pair up and play a game of Paper Scissors Rock. The loser gives 1 coin (or 1 piece of paper) to the winner. Both players then go and find someone else to battle.

When you have no coins left, you are out. The winner is the person with the most coins.

** Optional variation: use Thumb Wars instead of Paper Scissors Rock*



A GENEROUS LIFE

WEEK 1: MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

DISCUSS

Over the next 5 weeks we're going to be looking at money, and more specifically we'll be looking at how we can honour God by living a generous life.

As with most things in life, our opinions about money and possessions, and how valuable they are to us, have been heavily influenced by our parents.

- Think about the attitude that your parents model in regards to money and possessions. Would you call them wealthy? What were/are the financial priorities for your family? What is their attitude about money and possessions?
- What expectations / pressures do you feel from your parents regarding earning money? Is it important to them that you get a well-paying (secure) profession? Do they influence what you spend your money on now?
- What messages do you receive from wider society regarding wealth, money and possessions? Where do these messages come from? Can you think of any specific examples of this?
- Think about the game you played at the start. Did you find yourself getting competitive? How did it feel when you won / lost?
- So much of our society is built around the concept of continually having more money and possessions. What do you think people are really striving for when they are trying to earn more money and buy more stuff?
- A person's desire to have more money and own more things is generally driven by their desire to be content, to be happy. The only problem is that 'money can't buy happiness'. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Can you think of any examples to back up your answer?

Interestingly, money is one of the most popular topics in the Bible. 15% of everything Jesus ever taught was about money and possessions and while there are 500 verses regarding prayer in the Bible, there are over 2000 verses about money. In order to save time we think it might be best if we just look at a couple today ;)

Have someone read out: 1 Timothy 6:10

- What do you think is the difference between having money and loving money?
- What kind of 'griefs' do you think money-loving people pierce themselves with?





WEEK 1: MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Have someone read out Matthew 6:19-21

- What do you think it means to 'store up treasures in heaven'?
- Verse 21 says that your heart is where your treasure is. Where is your treasure?
- What does 'treasure' look like to you? What would be hard for you to part with?

INVOLVE

As a group, try summing up the passages you've just looked at into a simple statement that could be easily memorized.

Then, come up with a creative way that everyone will be able to remember it and use it to keep each other accountable to this over the next few weeks.

APPLY

What is one decision/change you will make this week in regards to money/possessions that could put into practice what you've talked about?



WEEK 2: YOU DON'T OWN ANYTHING

Chances are you own quite a lot of stuff.

Birthday presents; cool stuff bought with pocket money; items found on the side of the road; things you stole from or traded with your sibling.

What if we told you that you don't actually own any of it?

What if we told you that you don't own anything at all?

This week we'll be exploring the idea that everything in the earth belongs to God.

What you need:

- Pen and paper for each member in your group

CONNECT

- What's your most valuable material possession that you didn't have to pay for?
- Would you describe yourself as a risk taker, or do you like to 'play it safe'?
- What is your most prized possession? Why?
- What was your most prized possession when you were 5?

INVOLVE

Give your group 5 minutes to write a list of possessions that they own on a piece of paper.

(The list might include mobile phone, computer, money, bike, clothes, jewellery, books, etc).

Once they've finished, ask them to look at their list and share:

- Which item do you use the least?
- Which item is the most expensive?
- Which item is most important to you?



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WEEK 2: YOU DON'T OWN ANYTHING

DISCUSS

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 25:14-30

Ask someone in the group to summarise the story in their own words. Would anyone like to add to the summary?

- Who do you think the master represents?
- Who do you think the servants represent?
- Who does the money belong to at the start of the story? Who does it belong to at the end? What does this suggest about the money and possessions we own?
- This parable appears among chapters that are all about the end of time. Summarise what you think Jesus was trying to say with this story.
- What if you earned money through a job? Does it still belong to God? Consider God's words in Deuteronomy 8:17-18.
- The word 'stewardship' is sometimes used in the church. A steward is someone who takes care of someone else's possessions. When the master assesses the servant's stewardship what do you think he is looking for? What do you think God will be looking for in us when we stand before him on judgement day?
- What do you think the world would look like if every person treated their possessions and money as though it belonged to God?

APPLY

Look back at the list of possessions that were made earlier.

Consider whether you have things that you could share or give away to bless others.

Encourage your group to share/give away 3 items (or at least 1) during the week and then report back on what happened.





WEEK 2: YOU DON'T OWN ANYTHING

LEADER'S NOTES

- If your group is struggling with the idea that everything we own belongs to God, here are some more Bible verses that explain God's ownership of our land and possessions.
 - * Leviticus 25:23
 - * Psalm 24:1
 - * Psalm 50:10-12
 - * Proverbs 8:18-21
 - * 1 Chronicles 29:11-12
 - * 1 Chronicles 29:14-16
 - * James 1:17
- While the parable refers directly to money, it is important to note that the term "talents" can refer to a number of other things, including time, possessions, skills, etc. The idea is that everything we have and are is from God, and we should use these "talents" for His purposes



WEEK 3: GIVE TO THE POOR

If we're stewards of God's stuff we need to know how he wants that stuff to be used!

This week we'll look at what God want us to do with the money and possessions he has placed in our hands.

You will need:

- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Images printed from the internet
- Glue
- Textas
- Paper/cardboard/canvasses



CONNECT

Ask everyone how they went with last week's challenge. Did they give something away? How did it feel? How did the recipient respond?

AND/OR

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- If you had to sacrifice either one of your five senses or technology (your phone, ipad, computer) which would it be? Why?
- What one character trait would you like to develop in your lifetime?
- What is the greatest gift you have ever received? What made it special to you?

DISCUSS

- If you were given \$20000 to spend on others in the next week, what would you spend it on? Why?
- If God has complete control over your spending what is one change you think he would make?

Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

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WEEK 3: GIVE TO THE POOR

This passage is a letter from Paul. Paul is using the generosity of the Macedonian church as a shining example for others to follow.

- What stands out to you about the generosity of the Macedonian church?
- How do you think they became so generous?
- Do you think there is anyone who is undeserving of generosity? Why/why not?
- Who do you think are the people most deserving of generosity?
- 1 Corinthians 8:7 urges us to excel in the grace of giving. To excel means we go further than the bare minimum. When was the last time you gave above and beyond what was expected?
- What people or situation inspires you to give? (*Leaders: There is so much need in our world that we cannot give to everyone! Sometimes God gives us an extra dose of compassion for particular needs.*)

Paul describes equality (verse 13) as everyone having what they need, no one with too much or too little. The United Nations World Food Programme states that *"There is enough food in the world today for everyone to have the nourishment necessary for a healthy and productive life"* (see the leader's notes for more information).

So, we know that the world produces enough food for everyone yet our world is devastated by unnecessary inequality.

- What keeps our world in a state of inequality today? Is it necessary for the poor to remain poor?
- What impact do you think it would have on the way you live in order for equality to be achieved?

Read 1 Timothy 6:17–19.

- What do you think Paul is saying to wealthy people here?
- If you live in Australia, you are wealthy compared to most people in the world. How would you apply this verse to your life?
- Acts 2:45 says that the early church were "selling their possessions and goods, giving to anyone as they had need". Would this work in your church/ community? Why/why not?

Often our lives are unaware of the poverty around us. While TV ads show us the images of refugees, the malnourished and the homeless, our minds stay 'mentally unaware' or unmoved.



WEEK 3: GIVE TO THE POOR

Watch: *Depraved Indifference* by Eric Ludy. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWHJ6-YhSYQ>) (YouTube the search terms: 'Depraved Indifference Eric Ludy.)

INVOLVE

Give your group time to create a collage, picture/word board or poster that represents the things you believe God would want funds directed to.

Play some reflective music in the background.

Ask you group to consider: Where is injustice occurring that money could bring change? Who are the poor and needy of your community, country, world?

When everyone has finished, ask them to explain their collages to the group.

Pray together for the needs represented on the boards.

Leaders: You may need to be intentional about what magazines and newspapers you bring in as some will have more relevant content than others.

APPLY

Challenge group members to:

- Position the collage/poster somewhere where they will regularly see it throughout the week.
- Take some time each day to reflect on the images and words.
- Pray for the needs represented and ask God to reveal his plan for you to engage in generous giving towards world change.

LEADER'S NOTES

- It might be nice to send your group a text mid-week to see how they are going and to encourage them to keep living generous lives.
- The UN World Food Programme statistics show that today, one in eight people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life, making hunger and malnutrition the number one risk to health worldwide - greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. For more information about the United Nations World Food Programme, and more facts about world hunger, check out their website at <http://www.wfp.org/>



WEEK 4: A GIVER'S HEART

At the end of the day it's not about how much you give – it's about your heart.

What kind of heart is God looking for?

This week we'll explore what a giver's heart looks like – and how we can get one!

CONNECT

- Score your week out of 5 and explain why you gave it that score.
- What is your favourite song of all time?
- What is the most generous act you have ever experienced (either towards yourself or someone else)?

DISCUSS

- Can anyone share about a time when they gave generously? What did you give? What motivated you to do it?
- What difference does it make to give from love rather than guilt or obligation?

Ask a volunteer to read Mark 12:41-44

- What stands out to you from this story?
- How would you feel if you were rich and were told that your offering of thousands of dollars was not as valued as the few cents offered by someone else? Do you think this was unfair? Why/why not?
- Why do you think Jesus valued the widow's offering so highly?
- Based on this story, what is it about our giving that matters most to God? (i.e. our motivation; our trust in him)

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 19:16-26

- By choosing his wealth over following Jesus, what did the rich man gain? What did he lose?
- Do you think Jesus is saying that every Christian should have no money or possessions? Why? Why not?



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WEEK 4: A GIVER'S HEART

- Verse 21 could be paraphrased: 'Give away anything that owns you'. Do you have any possessions that 'own' you?
- Are you aware of a time when your wealth or possessions kept you from experiencing God's blessings?
- How much is too much? When does our wealth become a sin? What if you're trying to get rich so you can give more away? Is it about the amount or is Jesus more concerned with our heart?
- What is the main difference between the poor widow and the rich young ruler? (I.e. one had his trust in money; the other had her trust in God).

INVOLVE

Have each person share one thing that stands in the way of them having a more generous heart. (E.g. fear, selfishness, people's expectations)

Take turns at praying for each other - that the Holy Spirit would soften and transform hearts.

APPLY

Give everyone a copy of the handout.

As a group, agree on an idea that you will all do together next week at your normal life group time.

Work out what you will each need to do this week in preparation.



GIVING ACTIVITY IDEAS

Cash convertors fundraiser

- Everybody bring at least one item that they no longer need (e.g. clothes, DVDs).
- Everybody challenged to also bring something that is valuable to them.

Take the items to your local cash convertors and give the money made to a charity.
(Or – post the items on gumtree or ebay)

** If you are under 18, make sure you get permission off your parents first before giving away your belongings.*

Clothes Drive

Identify all of your clothes that you have grown out of. Wash them, iron them and bring them all in – ready to give away to someone in need. During life group this week take the clothes to the local charity shop.

Toy Drive

Collect any kids' toys & books (in good condition) from home that you have grown out of. As a group, deliver these to a local childcare centre/s who could use them with their kids. It might be nice to include an encouragement note for the staff as well!

Self-denial

Identify the thing you spend the most money on each week (e.g. your phone, KFC, clothes). Fast from it this week and bring the savings to life group – ready to pool together and give to someone in need.

Random Acts of Giving

Everybody to bring \$20 of their own money along to LIFE group.

- As a group, go to strangers (safely) and bless them with \$20.
- Write an encouragement note, attach \$20 and leave it at a bus stop or train station. Pray, as you leave it, that someone who needs it will find it.
- Buy some groceries from the supermarket and deliver them to someone in your church/community who needs them.

Suspended Coffees

- * This initiative has taken off around the world. The idea is that you can visit certain cafés, and pay for a coffee (sometimes a meal) that can be "suspended". That way, when someone comes in who is unable to afford a coffee or meal, the café can give them one that has already been paid for.
- * Head to <http://www.suspendedcoffee.com.au/> to find a list of cafés throughout Australia who offer suspended coffees.



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