



Dear LifeGroup Leader,

Money is a sensitive subject.

We often fear that if we were to be transparent about our money, others would judge us, or envy us, or pity us. Our culture has a sensitivity about money. We are careful about what we say. So we don't talk often about money. This creates an individualistic financial narrative - my money is my decision, and mine alone.

If we never talk about our money habits, we never open ourselves up to growth and healing. Our desire to "love God and our neighbor as ourselves" may never soak into our wallets if we never have conversations.

James doesn't share this sensitivity about money. He addresses this subject with candor, indicating that money matters. In fact, he'd argue that how we treat our money might be more indicative of our beliefs and values than our beliefs and values!

So this week will be a chance to open your group up to God's grace in finances. I hope that as you talk, the group is able to articulate their current beliefs about money, and also consider another way - a way that God may be drawing them to steward differently their resources.

-Connor



LIFEGROUPS

(in)Formation

Forming our Stewardship

In our complicated lives, it's hard to find solutions. We often turn to something "new" in hopes that this will give us the clarity to move forward. Yet instead we can get mired in a sea of equal and frustrating paths. For James, the way forward is in raw practicality forged from Biblical idealism, even with our resources. We are to steward our money and time in a way that does not simply perpetuate our own existence, that does not exploit others, is not selfish, and does not bully. Instead, we can use our resources to participate in God's Kingdom, bringing goodness and wholeness to those around us.

FOCAL POINT: Because our faith is practical, participation in God's Kingdom comes down to real decisions about our time and money.



Getting Started

Catch up together about how your week has been, possibly also revisit last week's meeting.

- ▶ What was your first paying job, and what was it like to make your own money?



Exploring Scripture

Read the following passage together.

James 5:1-6

- ▶ What words stick out to you?
- ▶ Where do you hear God's heart in this passage?



Reflection

Take time to reflect together about the passage.

- ▶ James has harsh words for those who hoard their wealth. What must have been so important that
- ▶ What narratives does our culture purvey concerning our use of money? What is different about money in the Kingdom of God?
- ▶ It's helpful to view this passage from 2 vantage points: (1) as the wealthy ourselves, and (2) as the field workers. What feelings come up for you when you consider yourself as the wealthy? What feelings come up for you when you consider yourself as the field worker?



Praxis

With the understanding that we gathered here are the body of Christ, let's allow the truth from today's scripture to impact us as a LifeGroup.

- ▶ This passage has strong language, yet it conveys a sensical truth: If we are meant to love God and our neighbor as ourselves, then many of our habits surrounding money have to be examined. Yet our minds are often changed not by new information alone, but by a new practice. Let's experiment with a few different practices and see what fits for our group. Let's see if we can choose a practice to do tonight or this week:
 - ▶ Group tithe. There's a story of a small group (8-10 people) in Oregon who tithed their money together in a pot each month. They were able to buy a van for a local charity to deliver food to families in need! As an experiment together, let's decide on a set amount of money per family, pool it together, and prayerfully consider how we might bless someone in need.
 - ▶ Tithe your time. Stewardship is just as much about our time as it is about money. Let's set aside time as a group to bless someone. As we share prayer requests tonight, consider how we might use our time or talents to assist, even if it's writing a letter of encouragement or helping with an errand.



Moving Outward

Challenge each other to live out God's truth this week.

- ▶ Prayerfully consider how your money and time are spent. What change would you want to make?

James 5:1-6

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.