

RIVERS CROSSING COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide – Life In Technicolor Week #8

Put God First / November 7, 2021 / Pastor Paul Taylor



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker – “You’ve Got a Day Off, Now What?” | Imagine a scenario in which you’ve been released from all your typical responsibilities and commitments and have been awarded a day off. How would you spend your time during this day? How would you hope to feel at the conclusion of this day?
2. Growing up, what did you learn or see demonstrated regarding finances from your family of origin? Is there a particular story or memory about money that helps explain what you learned?

How purposeful are you right now with your finances? For example, do you have and follow a budget? Do you have regular financial conversations with a spouse, friend, or financial advisor?

DIVING DEEPER

3. When it comes to handling finances, we’re dealing with a matter of the heart. Jesus recognized this, and he often spoke and taught on money. Read one such teaching and discuss the corresponding questions.

Matthew 6:19-21,24-34 (NIV) – ¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. ²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

- a) What is it about money that gives it such potential to control our lives and shape the affections of our heart? How does this passage speak to this?

b) According to Jesus, what understanding about God and how he sees us can help us escape the enslavement that money can have on our hearts?

4. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was provided laws for what's called The Sabbatical Year. During The Sabbatical Year, which occurred every seven years, all debts between fellow Israelites were to be graciously forgiven. Read Deuteronomy 15:1-15 together and discuss the corresponding questions.

Deuteronomy 15:1-15 (NIV) – ¹“At the end of every seventh year you must cancel the debts of everyone who owes you money. ²This is how it must be done. Everyone must cancel the loans they have made to their fellow Israelites. They must not demand payment from their neighbors or relatives, for the Lord’s time of release has arrived. ³This release from debt, however, applies only to your fellow Israelites—not to the foreigners living among you. ⁴“There should be no poor among you, for the Lord your God will greatly bless you in the land he is giving you as a special possession. ⁵You will receive this blessing if you are careful to obey all the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today. ⁶The Lord your God will bless you as he has promised. You will lend money to many nations but will never need to borrow. You will rule many nations, but they will not rule over you.

⁷“But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them. ⁸Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need. ⁹Do not be mean-spirited and refuse someone a loan because the year for canceling debts is close at hand. If you refuse to make the loan and the needy person cries out to the Lord, you will be considered guilty of sin. ¹⁰Give generously to the poor, not grudgingly, for the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do. ¹¹There will always be some in the land who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share freely with the poor and with other Israelites in need. ¹²“If a fellow Hebrew sells himself or herself to be your servant and serves you for six years, in the seventh year you must set that servant free. ¹³“When you release a male servant, do not send him away empty-handed. ¹⁴Give him a generous farewell gift from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress. Share with him some of the bounty with which the Lord your God has blessed you. ¹⁵Remember that you were once slaves in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you! That is why I am giving you this command.

From this passage, we can identify four attitudes of the heart connected to our finances that God wants his people to address: 1) deal with a *selfish* heart (verse 7), 2) deal with a *begrudging and reluctant* heart (verse 10), 3) develop a *generous* heart (verse 14), and 4) develop a *grateful* heart (verse 15).

a) Which of these four attitudes can you relate with the most when it comes to your finances? Which of these four attitudes challenges you the most when it comes to your finances?

b) While the specific laws of The Sabbatical Year no longer have bearing on Christians, the New Testament charges Christians to display similar, if not even greater, levels of generosity. How can understanding what Jesus Christ has done increase our willingness to obey God with our finances?

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NIV) – ⁶...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.

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV) – ¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷If 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 in that person? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

5. Pastor Paul taught that like Joseph, we're to put God first in our finances. We do this by bringing a tenth of our income (i.e., the tithe) to God first, as opposed to giving to God as a secondary offering or even a final leftover. How does this picture of tithing compare with your personal budget, spending patterns, and previous understanding of the tithe?

Leviticus 27:30 (NIV) – A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.

Proverbs 3:9-10 (GW) – ⁹Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first and best part of all your income. ¹⁰Then your barns will be full, and your vats will overflow with fresh wine.

Malachi 3:7-10 (NIV) – ⁷Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' ⁸"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

TAKING IT HOME

6. For those who have taken up God's calling to put him first in your finances, share about what this process has looked like. How have you seen God move through that decision and ongoing obedience? How have you experienced God work through your financial stewardship to bless others?

7. **Next Steps and Prayer Exercise** | Becoming a fully engaged follower of Christ involves trusting and obeying God with our finances. In Malachi 3:10, God directly calls us to put Him to the test when it comes to our financial stewardship.

For many of us, the first step in taking up that calling is to take accountability for our current financial habits and then to ask God for assistance in surrendering those habits to Him. Perhaps you need to create a budget, work on living within your means, or say no to certain purchase.

As you close your group, spend time in prayer reflecting on struggles and roadblocks that prevent you from putting God first in your finances. If you are putting God first, thank God for His many blessings and faithfulness to His promises. **Ask the Holy Spirit for a next step(s) for how you can honor God with your tithe in the core areas of your life – treasure, time, and talent.** Pray too that as a church body, Rivers Crossing would lean into generosity and putting God first in our finances.

For a great resource on creating a budget, check out this article from Dave Ramsey:

<https://www.ramseysolutions.com/budgeting/the-truth-about-budgeting>

Learn more and participate in the Rivers Crossing 90-Day Tithing Challenge:

<https://riverscrossing.com/tithing-challenge/>

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING – THINGS TO KNOW

1. 2022 Discipleship School | Discipleship School is a one-year program that helps Christians from all backgrounds become fully engaged followers of Christ. The school helps students learn to hear God's voice clearly, experience a full and free life, develop intimacy with God, develop Christlike living, and understand their spiritual gifting. For more information, or to apply for the Discipleship School, click on the link below. <https://riverscrossing.com/discipleship-school/>
2. Baptisms – Sunday November 21st | We believe baptism is an integral part of your spiritual journey and necessary as you seek to become a fully engaged follower of Christ. If you've recently decided to follow Jesus or you've been a Christ follower for a while but never gotten baptized, now is the perfect time to take this next step! Learn more and sign up by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/baptism/>.
3. Plan A Visit | Have an individual or family you want to invite to Rivers Crossing? If so, we'd love for them to utilize our Plan A Visit tool. Share this link with them: <https://connect-card.com/zTE3I3TXmFG0TgizStLj>.