

## Small Group Study Guide – **Leader Guide**

For the weekend of 9.5.2010

Ephesians 4:17-24, 28 & Malachi 3.6-18 – That Money's Not Yours

### **Introduction**

This weekend at the Summit we are working through the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment, "You shall not steal." Paul reinforces this command for the church and explains that it is part of the new life that we have in the Holy Spirit. Greed is associated with deceitful desires, ignorance, and corruption, whereas generosity is associated with productivity, renewal, and being like God. The Prophet Malachi uses the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment to expose some hidden arrogance on Israel's part. Though Israel was going through a tough time economically, Malachi calls the people to be faithful to the one who has the power to pull them out. When we are in a right relationship with God, we realize that the money we have all belongs to him, and that fundamentally changes our relationship to money.

Note: The small group study guide is designed to work in partnership with the weekend message. So each week you should work through this guide, take notes during the sermon, and come prepared to discuss both of these in your group.

### **Break the ice (pick one)**

1. Tell the story about a toy or game that you saved up for when you were younger. How did you feel when you got to bring that toy home?

-Or -

2. Think back to the first time that you saw someone steal. Who were they stealing from and what was your reaction? Did you ever steal anything when you were younger?

Based on the sermon from this weekend, how is generosity a sign of a healthy soul?

### **Dig Into the text**

Read Ephesians 4:17-24, 28 and look over any notes you have from the sermon. What challenged you from the sermon? Where you most convicted about greed in your own life?

Verses 18-19 talk about the hardness and callousness that come with the old way of life. How have you experienced this callousness? How has the Spirit melted away this callousness?

In verse 28, Paul lists generosity as a main motivation for Christians to go to work and be productive members of society. Why is generosity a clear sign of Christ's influence on a person's life?

A person who understands the mind of Christ pushes to be radically focused on the needs of others. They don't mind using their "hard-earned money" to bless others. Someone who knows Christ knows that there is an eternal kingdom and are certain that living for that kingdom is a better investment than "storing up treasures on earth." As Randy Alcorn reminds us in *The Treasure Principle*- you can't take it with you.

Read Malachi 3:6-18. Why is generosity a necessary element of a healthy relationship with God?

God doesn't need your money and he will continue to provide for his church whether we all stop giving or not. But it's important for you to recognize that everything you have comes from God. At any point, God could take away your earning power, your abilities, the niche of the market that you've carved out, etc. Your generosity is a clear sign that you recognize that everything you have comes from him and shows that you use your money to please him rather than yourself.

Why does God say that he will spare the ones who feared him? How do we know that we are God's treasured possession?

What we've been learning in this sermon series is that none of us are free and clear from breaking the commandments. We all deserve the wrath of God for how we've offended his perfect set of standards. Malachi 3 points out the arrogance of the people of Israel for not tithing and then becoming bitter at God that other arrogant people have been blessed materially. Nevertheless, we know that we are God's treasured possession because he gave up his only Son to restore our relationship with him. We are cleansed of our sin because of the greatest act of generosity that the world has ever known.

Read Luke 2:1-4. Why does God call us to be generous even when we are experiencing economic hardship?

By now in the sermon and in these passages, we've seen that generosity brings healing to our own soul by freeing us from greed and arrogance. Generosity is good for us spiritually, good for society when we bless each other and the poor materially, and a good witness about God's generosity to us and about our certainty in the life to come. Finally, it's very practical to remain faithful to God in any circumstance, because he's ultimately the one in charge of your circumstances and can help you through them like no one else can. We don't have a guarantee that God is going to fix all of our problems the moment we turn to him and write a big generous check, but he's ultimately in control and even if he doesn't prosper you in this life, he will for the rest of eternity. The person who understands this finds it easy to be generous.

**Apply it to your life**

Identify the reasons in your life that cause you to hesitate at the thought of giving to the poor? Are these reasons legitimate? How can you overcome the illegitimate excuses that inhibit your generosity?

What does your budget indicate that you value the most? How does this match up with the legacy that you would like to be remembered for?

**Prayer Guide**

Hebrews 12:22-29 – The Eternal Kingdom

Take time in your personal study and then as a group to pray through this vision of our future as disciples of Christ. In praying through this passage pray the following:

- Thank Jesus for restoring your relationship with God and allowing you to return to him.
- Ask God for gratefulness for the material blessings he has given us.
- Thank God for establishing an eternal kingdom and inviting us into it.
- Pray that God would make us men and women who can put this eternal kingdom on display in our lives.
- Take a few moments to give God the reverence that he deserves.