

God First Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. When you were young, what was something you really wanted to buy?
2. What was your first job?

Read the following passage: Luke 16:8-13.

At the conclusion of a fascinating parable addressing money, Luke gathers together several of Jesus' most important teachings on the subject. In the span of six verses we find major themes related to money including:

- Thinking strategically about money
- Taking the long view with money
- Money and our character
- Riches more valuable than money
- And money and our ultimate allegiance.

Just as in the first century, money is a critical subject. Few things have the ability to function like a god in our lives in the way that money can. When we think about money (or any other area of life), we need to regularly remind ourselves that God is to be first.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Why do you think money often has such an outsized influence in our individual lives and in our broader culture?
2. Which of the following words frequently characterize how you feel about money? Explain.
 - Fear
 - Excitement
 - Anxiety
 - Frustration
 - Opportunity
 - Contentment
 - Envy
 - Hope
 - Confusion
 - Strategy
 - Injustice
 - Responsibility
 - Worry

- Confidence

3. When God established rhythms, traditions, and instructions for life in ancient Israel, he deliberately created structures that prioritized those things that he wanted to be first in the hearts of his people.

- The first month of the year was determined to be the month in which the Israelites were delivered from Egypt;
- The Tabernacle (a sacred tent that served as the focal point for worship) was to be set up on the first day of the first month of the year;
- The firstborn, whether human or animal, belonged to God;
- The first of the harvest was to be given to God.

Do you have any rhythms or practices in your life that reinforce God's priority? Explain. What are some ways that you might practically remind yourself that God is first?

4. Is God's priority reflected in how you utilize your financial resources? Explain. Do you give a set percentage of your income to your local church?

5. Read Haggai 1:1-15. We are not living in ancient Israel and we are not governed by the Law of Moses. But the accounts we read in the Old Testament are powerful sources of wisdom for us and often exemplify principles that are relevant to our current context. What resulted when the Israelites focused on their own concerns to the neglect of the "Lord's house"? In what ways do we all win when the kingdom of God is growing in influence? Why is it important for communities to have thriving local churches?

6. Read Proverbs 3:9-10. How would you define the concept of honor? Are there ways in which you still see honor operating in your family or the broader culture? Explain. In what ways do you think the concept of honor has slipped out of focus? How can we honor God with our finances?

7. Are there any changes you need to make with your finances to more effectively honor God and prioritize what should be first? How can you begin this week?

Pray