

GOD'S FINANCIAL PLAN

SAMPLE

ISBN: 9780892651710

 **access**
downloadable curriculum

© 2009 Randall House Copying, distributing, or sharing this study beyond the use of the purchasing church or single campus site is a breach of ethics and illegal. It is also a breach of the license agreement to remove this statement from the study or from any customized or derivative study. To purchase this study or others like it, visit <http://AccessBibleStudies.com>



God's Financial Plan: Some Basics on Giving

God's Financial Plan is a four week study that focuses on some basic principles of giving found in both the Old and New Testament. In the 1990's (often called the decade of greed) real income in America doubled. Instead of bringing greater personal stability this was the decade in which the divorce rate doubled, teen suicide tripled, and unwed births quintupled. It was also a decade in which fortunes made during the .com boom evaporated faster than they had been made.

Our study will lead us to discover God's economy in contrast to man's. We will learn how worship, faith and generosity are inseparable from one another.

Session One: God's Economy – Christians must base their ideas about money on God's economy rather than man's. The Bible calls for some radically different ideas about wealth, possessions, and giving.

Session Two: Giving and Worship - Too many people see giving as little more than a good tax write off but Scripture presents a believer's giving as an act of worship.

Session Three: Faith and Generosity – There is a direct link between faith in God and the depth of our generosity toward others.

Session Four: God's Investment Plan - Everyone needs a plan for their own economic well-being. God is the best financial advisor we could ever have, but beware; His investment plan is a lot different from Wall Street.

Session ONE

God's Economy

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bibles
- Extra pens and pencils
- Copies of student handouts
- White board or poster board

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The Old Testament lays the foundations for understanding God's economy through some basic requirements of tithing and giving. Using those principles of giving as a foundation, the New Testament calls for radically different ideas about wealth, possessions, and giving.

A man made headlines in Florida a couple of years ago when he sued his church. It isn't that rare for churches to be sued from time to time but what made this case stand out was the complaint the man had. According to him the church was guilty of breach of contract. The pastor preached a series of sermons in which he promised God would repay ten-fold to those who give to the Lord. The plaintiff said he gave a hundred thousand dollars expecting to receive a million dollars in return. After waiting six months without realizing a ten-fold return, the man sued the church for the entire million plus damages for the mental anguish caused by his subsequent debt problems.

CONNECT

Relate the story of the man who sued his church for breach of contract and then ask: *How do you think the judge should have ruled in this case? Are there any scriptures the pastor might have used in preaching such a sermon series?* In reality, the judge threw out the case on the basis of non-interference of the state into the internal affairs of a church.

Call attention to the handout "A Flyover View of Giving in the Bible." Divide participants into two groups. Have each group read their Scriptures among themselves. Call on participants of each group to read their Scriptures aloud and answer the appropriate question. Ask Group One: *Does God make specific rules for giving with promises of results for that giving?* Ask Group Two: *Does God call on us to give freely without thought of rules or recognition?*

Based on the Scriptures we have read so far it is safe to say neither the pastor nor the plaintiff were in the right. Because there are so many misconceptions it is imperative for us as Christians to base our ideas about money and giving on God's economy rather than man's.

CONSIDER

Have participants turn to Acts 20. Ask them to read verses 17-38 silently and then raise their hands when they come to a verse that offers insight to one of God's principles on giving. Most will probably read the entire the passage before raising their hands. There are several important truths you should point out about this passage:

- *Paul's special connection to the church at Ephesus* – Paul spent the longest period of any of his missionary journeys in Ephesus. He ministered over two and a half years. When he wrote this passage he knew he would never return.
- *Paul's labor among the believers (vv. 17-27)* – Have the class refer back to these verses and then ask: *What words would you use to describe Paul's work among the Ephesians?* Lead participants to list things such as humility (v. 19), tears (v. 19), trials (v. 19), determination (vv. 20, 27), and teaching (vv. 21, 27).
- *Paul's warnings against false teachers (vv. 28-32)* – Read verses 28-31 and then lead the group to see how hard Paul worked to warn the Ephesians about the reality of false doctrine and false teachers.
- *Paul's ruling principle (vv. 33-35)* – Before reading these verses ask: *What led Paul to endure all that he did over those two and half years in Ephesus?* You will probably receive responses like: “love for Christ and others” and “his calling.” Be sure and give credit to all of these but then point out this passage end with this principle: Giving is more blessed than receiving.

The most basic principle of God's economy is simple and direct. True satisfaction in life is found when our focus is what we can give rather than what we can get. That is why the Apostle Paul suffered as he did in Ephesus. He truly believed his calling in life was to focus on what he could give and trust God with his own personal needs.

WAKING UP FROM THE AMERICAN DREAM

Ask the group: *We often hear about the “American Dream.” What is the American Dream?* Allow a few minutes for discussion. Be sure to assure the group that qualities such as hard work, determination, and self-reliance are good aspirations. Ask: *Can such good aspirations get out of balance and lead to lifestyles or attitudes counter to our calling as Christians?*

Call attention to the handout “An American Nightmare.” Read the opening paragraph and then ask: *Was money the problem or how people handled their money?* The problem was not the fact there was more money but rather our culture's imbalanced view of money. Using information from the sidebar, share with the group what this period also produced.

The 1990s brought:

- More: depression, broken relationships, crime, abused children
- Less: vocational stability, happiness, sense of community, trust, sleep

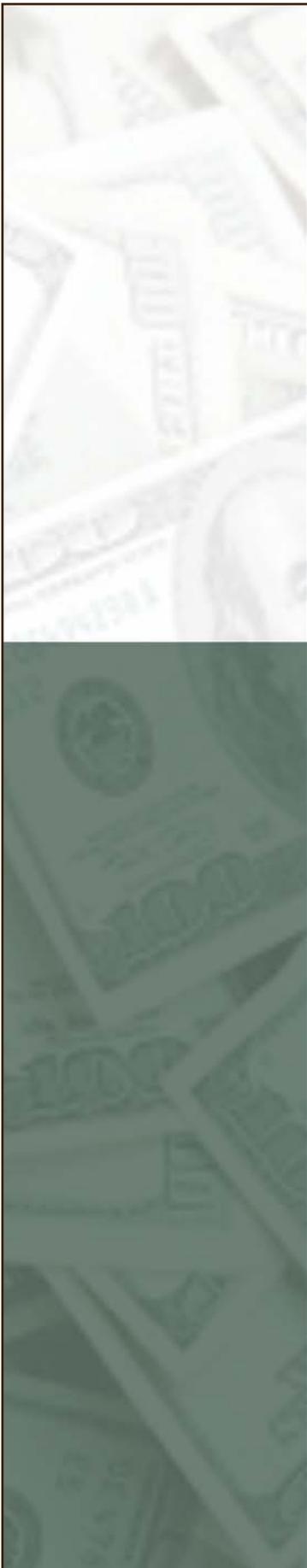
The Bible has much to say about what happens when we get out of balance in our view of money. Call attention again to the handout “The American Nightmare.” Invite the group to write out the Scripture references for further study in their own devotional time.

- **We deposit our life in the wrong places (Matthew 6:19-23)** – Ask: *What would a good one sentence summation of this passage be?* Lead the group to see that we must be careful where we deposit what we treasure because that is where our attention (hearts) will be also.
- **We treasure our possessions too much (Luke 12:13-21)** – There is nothing wrong with having things and we should enjoy them. Ask: *In this story Jesus told would you say the man owned his possession or they owned him?*

The 1990s brought:

More: depression, broken relationships, crime, abused children

Less: vocational stability, happiness, sense of community, trust, sleep



- **We earn dividends we would rather not have (Proverbs 15:16-17; 17:1; 21:13)** – Call on various participants to read the scriptures and then ask: *What are some of the unwelcomed dividends that often accompany our focus on things?* Answers should be qualities such as strife, distrust, and callousness.
- **We are never as satisfied as we thought we would be (Ecclesiastes 2:4-11; 5:10-11)** Solomon had more “stuff” than a person could imagine but found no end to it. Have the group read Ecclesiastes 5:10-11 again and ask: *Why is focusing on “stuff” never ultimately satisfying?* Solomon discovered that there never is enough.

COMMIT

Until we embrace Paul’s overriding principle of life we will never embrace God’s economy! Ask: *What was that principle?* That principle is summed up in these words: Giving is more blessed than receiving. Lead the group to follow as you read aloud 1 Timothy 6:8-19. Call attention to verses 17-19 in particular. Ask: *How would you sum up those verses?* God is certain; everything else is not. Encourage them to write out a paraphrase for this passage on their own and refer to it whenever they are about to make a financial decision. Call on someone to close in prayer.

SAMPLE

Student Handout 1

“A Flyover View of Giving in the Bible”

Group One: “Does God make specific rules for giving with promises of results for that giving?”

Proverbs 3:9-10

Malachi 3:8-12

Luke 6:38

Group Two: “Does God call on us to give freely without thought of rules or recognition?”

Matthew 6:1-4

2 Corinthians 9:5-7

SAMPLE

Student Handout 2

“An American Nightmare”

In the 1990’s (often called the decade of greed) real income in American doubled. Instead of bringing greater personal stability this was a decade in which the divorce rate doubled, teen suicide tripled, and unwed births quintupled. It was also a decade in which fortunes made during the .com boom evaporated faster than they had been made.

The effects of getting out of balance in our view of money and possessions:

We deposit our lives in the wrong places _____

We treasure our possessions too much _____

We earn dividends we would rather not have _____

We are never as satisfied as we thought we would be _____

Paraphrase 1 Timothy 6:8-19