

BEST. YEAR. EVER.

Week Three

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for your love and guidance. Help us to use this time to hear from you and to connect with others. Amen.

Talk It Over

This week we continued our series that is all about heading into this year proactively looking to live our best year ever. It's important to understand this isn't about quick fixes or denying the challenges. Rather, the invitation extended in this series is about living intentionally in the areas that matter the most to us and taking healthy control in the areas of life we can control. This week we specifically looked at how we can live our best year ever financially.

Money is a powerful thing. It can stir up great stress and pain or great relief and pleasure. Money can be tied to evil or to goodness.

- What is your earliest negative memory of money?
- What is your earliest positive memory of money?
- What sort of models did you have in your life surrounding how to relate and handle your money?

This week we looked at three common fears surrounding money: Pressure, shame, and failure.

- Of the three fears mentioned above and explored this week, is there one you are struggling with this season?
- In a previous season of life, would you have related more with a different fear surrounding money more, or would you list the same fear as your greatest? If your fears have changed, tell us about that season of life or the journey.

While many people have different ideas or theologies on how we should relate to and handle money, let's explore two well known and extreme positions taught about in Christian circles.

1. **Prosperity Gospel.** This gospel is often fueled by greed or the idea that God is concerned about each of us having more and more for our own pleasure and comfort.
2. **Poverty Gospel.** This gospel is often fueled by guilt and the idea that being poor is the only holy option for people who love God.

Read Matthew 6:21

At EastLake Church, we align with what is called a Generosity Gospel. This is the idea that the chief issue surrounding money is not how much money we have but rather how we view, manage, and prioritize the resources God's given us. This is likely why the Bible, and Jesus specifically, talk a great deal about how we should interact with our possessions and resource.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-2 (Voice)

(Content continued on the next page.)

This idea of the Generosity Gospel comes from what we see in the early church depicted in New Testament. When we read stories of the early church we see a pattern of radical generosity that in many ways looked unreasonable to the outsider.

- Tell us about a time you saw generosity in action.

Central to the Generosity Gospel is this core understanding that we recognize how generous God has been with us. Generosity at it's best comes from a grateful spirit; generosity, as discussed here, is a posture fueled by grace. Gracious generosity we experience from God will produce generosity through us. God's grace changes our attitudes, habits, actions, relationships, and even the way we relate to money.

- In what ways does a Generosity Gospel make sense to you and in what ways do you struggle with it?
- In what ways has God's grace made you more generous?

This Week's Bottom Line: The path to our Best Year Ever financially begins with recognizing that I am a manager and not the owner.

While God's grace looks to change us, sometimes we need new habits and practical tools to help us along the way. Generosity often requires financial freedom and that financial freedom requires proper skills. In order to help us live more wisely and generously when it comes to finances, we looked at three simple and practical steps we can take to grow.

1. Give back to God. | Read Proverbs 3:9-10 (NIV)

At EastLake we believe Jesus and a generous heart fueled by Jesus is the best foundation to build our lives on.

- Do you struggle with the idea of giving money back to God? Why or why not?
- Do you have any real-life examples of people who start by giving their money back to God? If so, how do you see this value play out in their life?

2. Spend with a plan. | Read Proverbs 23:23 (NIV)

It's not uncommon for us to live believing the lie that says financial freedom comes from having more money. And while having more money might help, other times the issue is really a matter of being more diligent in how we spend the money we do have.

- How easy or hard is it for you to honor a budget? Why do you think this is the case?
- What areas of life do you find yourself overspending?
- Do you have any real-life examples of people who spend according to a budget? If so, how do you see this value play out in their life?

3. Save for your future. | Read Proverbs 21:20 (NIV)

Saving involves saving for a time we might not have money coming in, saving enough so we can live more generously, saving for the sake of enjoying our goals and dreams, and saving for the normal (and not so normal) inconveniences that happen in life.

- Would you consider yourself a spender or a saver?
- How hard or easy is it for you to find a healthy flow of saving and spending?
- Do you have any real-life examples of people who are good at saving and living out their dreams and goals? If so, what could you learn from observing their life?

As we close things up, let's circle back around and remember God wants to help us grow in our capacity to be more generous and financially free. Each of us is invited into a journey of grace and growth.

- Looking at your own life, what is one next step you think you can take to help you find more financial freedom in your life this year?
- Is there an area of your finances you want to experience more of God's grace in this year?

Additional Resources: For additional support and teaching on this topic, consider looking into our Financial Peace seminar. Email info@eastlakechurch.com more information and indicating what EastLake location you attend.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for wanting to help us in the areas of our finances. Your desire to help us know your grace and to grow in generosity is a gift and so is your desire to help us grow in financial freedom. Help us to learn how to honor you, ourselves, and others in the area of our finances. Teach us and lead us. Amen.

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.