



THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR MONEY STORY

WORKBOOK

Written by Lisle Gwynn Garrity
in consultation with
Vandersall Collective



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WORKBOOK

INTRODUCTION

We all have a money story, whether we recognize it or not. Perhaps we are living from a story of fear or shame or guilt. Or a story that our actions won't have an impact. Or a story that we don't have enough. Where might God be speaking a new narrative into the limited ones we have told ourselves?

Often, to speak of money is to invite tension into the room. We so quickly want to avoid it. But we can reframe this. Money and possessions are one of the most common topics in scripture, and Jesus talked about money more than faith and prayer. Our money story, therefore, is a spiritual story.

Use this workbook to discern and record your money story. Throughout this exercise, notice what emotions emerge for you along the way. Take your time. Give yourself grace. Trust that your money story is valuable and redeemable. In completing this writing exercise, we hope you gain clarity, seek healing, and release what has been suppressed or hidden away. Our narratives and beliefs shape our actions. Ultimately, we hope this exercise inspires you to give more faithfully of yourself and your resources to bring forth God's money story of liberation and healing for all.



HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This is a four-part workbook for participants to complete individually and then together in small groups. You might use this guide for a Sunday School class series, or a longer retreat with your church staff/governance board or stewardship committee. We recommend splitting up the different parts into multiple sessions or completing Parts One and Two as homework prior to the group sessions in Parts Three and Four.

PART ONE *WRITING THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR MONEY STORY* | 30-45 min

To be completed individually (as homework or within a longer group session)

PART TWO *PROMPTS FOR INDEPENDENT REFLECTION* | 15-25 min

To be completed individually (as homework or within a longer group session)

PART THREE *PROMPTS FOR SMALL GROUP SHARING* | 45-60 min

To be completed in small groups of 2-3 people

PART FOUR *LARGER GROUP SHARING (OPTIONAL)* | 30-45 min

To be completed together as a larger group, with each small group sharing with the whole group



PART ONE

30-45 min



WRITING THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR MONEY STORY

As you reflect on the series of questions for each prompt, offer any words, phrases, or memories that come to mind for you. Respond with full sentences, bullet points, doodles, or whatever feels most comfortable for you to capture your memories and ideas.

For each category, first reflect on the past. Consider your childhood, family of origin, adolescence, or any time in your early life that was formative in shaping you into who you are today. Then, move to the present. How has the past informed your perceptions and practices now? What have you changed or left behind? What scars do you hold? What gifts do you carry with you into your life now?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Giving and loving God,

I am made of stories—

stories of heartbreak and triumph,
stories of love and tragedy,
stories of families who belong and families who break,
stories of loose ends and new beginnings.

I have absorbed stories that live in me like an internal compass,
and many that I do not wish to carry at all.

But your story remains steadfast: I am loved. I am enough. There is enough for all.

Enough. Enough. Enough.

May this become my constant refrain.

May I believe this is who I am.

May I live trusting your holy design.

Enough. Enough. Enough.

Amen.

SETTING

Look to the past: Growing up, how would you describe your socioeconomic status or position?¹ What was the economic environment of your neighborhood, your school, your local community (city, town, region)? How did this economic setting shape your perceptions and beliefs about money?

Reflect on the present: What words would you use to describe your socioeconomic status or position now? How would you describe the economic environment of your current neighborhood and local community (city, town, region)? How does your current economic setting inform your money story now?

¹ This question recognizes the difficult reality that we operate in hierarchies of power and wealth. The labels we use to categorize economic “status” are labels given to us externally, labels that do not determine our worth or belovedness. While it can be helpful to discern how these worldly labels have impacted us, these are not the labels God gives us. As you reflect, you may write down labels you have avoided or carried like wounds. Where you write those labels, in the margins also write the names God gives you instead (ex. “beloved,” “loved,” “enough,” “redeemed”).

PART TWO 15-25 min



*PROMPTS FOR
INDEPENDENT REFLECTION*

1. Go through your notes and circle the parts of your money story that feel positive, healthy, and worth holding onto. How do these areas of your money story inspire your giving practices? How might they support others in their own stewardship practices? How do these areas help you practice financial wellness in your job, your family, your church?

2. Go through your notes and draw a star by the parts of your money story that hold tension or heaviness. How might you work to redeem and rewrite these areas of your money story? Name any faith practices or actions that might help you heal.

PART FOUR

30-45 min



LARGER GROUP SHARING (OPTIONAL)

If you have the time, conclude your session by inviting each small group to share a summary of their conversations from Part Three with the larger group.² Recognize that this is vulnerable information to share; you may want to open this time with prayer and with the reminder that it is a sacred gift to bear witness to one other's stories and we must carry them with care.

Sharing together as a larger group is especially beneficial if you are completing this exercise with a stewardship committee or the team/staff who will help lead your stewardship campaign. Learning more about your personal money stories will become valuable as you work together. When you know each other's stories, you can more gracefully support one another when you are facing challenges or difficult money decisions. You can help each other identify when your personal money stories might be causing conflict or limiting your capacity. You can also better celebrate the gifts of your team members when you know the parts of their money stories that hold promise.

Close the session with prayer, lifting up the challenges, vulnerabilities, and gifts you have encountered in sharing each other's stories.

GROUP SHARING FACILITATION TIPS

- Pay attention to any common threads or trends. Pay attention to where the money stories of your team overlap and where they differ. If it feels appropriate to do so, you might write some common threads/experiences on a dry erase board or paper pad. This is simply to help you assess the composite stories of your team.
- Similarly, pay attention to the gifts within your team. Who might have gifts for visioning possibilities? Who might be well-suited for assessing risks? Who might have energy around particular missions of your church or community? If it feels appropriate to do so, you might write these gifts on a dry erase board or paper pad.
- Be sure to invite each small group to share the “God’s Money Story” they have written together. We encourage you to save these. If you are completing the “Your Community’s Money Story” curriculum next (which we highly encourage you to do!), bring these documents to that session. You might also consider adapting these stories for your worship liturgy, perhaps using them as prayers or as Affirmations of Faith throughout your stewardship series. Get creative—you could even write a composite version of God’s money story and share it with your larger community in some way.

² Part Four could also be completed as a separate session at another time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



This resource was created in partnership with Mieke Vandersall & Erin Weber-Johnson from the Vandersall Collective

The Vandersall Collective serves churches and faith-based organizations as they imagine, identify, and implement their call for the 21st century. Learn more by visiting vandersallcollective.com

Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity, *Founder, Creative Director of A Sanctified Art*

Lisle Gwynn Garrity (*she/her*) is a Pastorist (*pastor + artist*), retreat leader, and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. A graduate of Davidson College, where she majored in English (*and unofficially minored in visual art*), Lisle also completed Master's degrees in Divinity and Practical Theology (*with a concentration in worship*). Serving the Church at-large, Lisle travels widely to share her gifts as an artist and pastor. She founded *A Sanctified Art* with the conviction that, in order to thrive, the Church needs more creative expression and art-filled freedom.

A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshiping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.

Learn more about their work at sanctifiedart.org.



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