

THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR MONEY STORY

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 UNE WRITING THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR MONEY STORY | 30-45 min

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

PARO TYO 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





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.

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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 OND WRITING THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR MONEY STORY (continued)

CHARACTERS

Look to the past: Throughout your childhood and formative years, who were the leading character of your money story? Who taught you—directly or indirectly—about finances and practices of giving What did you learn or absorb from them? Who are the protagonists and antagonists of your more story—who gave you positive and healthy perceptions of money and who negatively impacted you money narrative?	
Reflect on the present: Who are the leading characters of your money story now? Who do you look to as models, guides, or experts? Who in your community or in your faith tradition inspires you to give o your gifts and resources?	

PLOT

Look to the pas How would you					

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Reflect on the p					now. practices right now

PART OND WRITING THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR MONEY STORY (continued)

CONFLICT

Look to the past: What financial challenges or limitations have you faced? Where is there tension wrestling in your money story? Where has there been conflict between characters?	10
Reflect on the present: What money challenges do you wish to overcome and heal from? What habits	
you want to retrain? Name any fears, baggage, scars, limiting beliefs, or shame you wish to release.	s do
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TONE

perceptions of money.	ughout your childhood and Perhaps your attitude towa s fluctuated or shifted with t	rd money has change	
Trace now the tone has	s indetuated of similed with	me major turimig po	ints of your money story.
	t: How would you describe the your current attitude toward		r money story now?

PART ONE WRITING THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR MONEY STORY (continued)

THEME

Take a few moments to look over your notes. Pay attention to any patterns or motifs.

Trace any overarching themes. Then, in one to three sentences, write the main takeaway or idea of your money story. Like a thesis statement, this tries to summarize the overriding philosophy or belief within your money story. If you want structure for your theme statement, you might begin your sentences with the following phrases, filling in the blanks however you see fit:

"I believe money	"
"I use money	" ————————————————————————————————————
"I give money	"



PROMPTS FOR INDEPENDENT REFLECTION



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?
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 TWO PROMPTS FOR INDEPENDENT REFLECTION (continued)

3. Return to the "theme" section of your money story. Is this the money story you want to embod moving forward? What is missing that you wish to include in your story as it continues to unfold In the space below, add onto or rewrite your money story with the one you want to live into.



PROMPTS FOR SMALL GROUP SHARING



Gather in a group with one or two other people. Practice vulnerability and compassion as you reflect on your money stories together. Keep in mind that your partners may have very different money stories than you. In your conversation, resist statements that may inadvertently cast judgment or cause harm. Instead, be open and curious, perhaps asking follow-up questions to help your partners share and process their stories.

- 1. First, take turns sharing with your partners as little or as much as you feel comfortable sharing about your money story. You might offer a summary of each element of your money story, or simply share some of the larger motifs or turning points you discerned. Make sure each participant has plenty of time to share.
- 2. Now refer to questions 1-3 in Part Two. With your partners share as little or as much as you feel comfortable sharing about your reflections.

3. As a group, imagine and write God's money story. Recall scriptures where Jesus teaches about

money, power, and possessions. What characters or passages in the bible teach us about faithful stewardship? What is the overall theme of God's money story? In the space below, write (in a		
series of statements or a few short sentences) what you imagine is God's money story.		
		

4. With your group, close in prayer, reading aloud your version of God's money story as part of your prayer.

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.





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 <u>vandersallcollective.com</u>

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.

