



Lazarus at the Gate

AN ECONOMIC DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Lazarus at the Gate

We spend most of our time either making money or spending money. Those of us who reside in the United States live in the wealthiest nation in human history.

Meanwhile, globalization has placed many Lazarus' at our gate. Half of the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day. Six million children experience and die from hunger each year.

Jesus had more to say about money than nearly everything else. And, He identified his own ministry and person with those who are poor. Faithfulness to Jesus Christ,



Slums in Kenya, Aaron Graham, 2005 (Above)

then, involves an assessment of how we relate to poverty and how we relate to money.

Lazarus at the Gate is a discipleship group intended to encourage "rich" Christians to seek justice in our relationship with those who are poor, starting with our own lifestyles.

Lazarus at the Gate is based on research conducted by Gary VanderPol, a pastor and ThD

candidate studying poverty and Christian missions. Gary and Mako Nagasawa, an InterVarsity Director, led the first *Lazarus* group with 12 friends in 2006.

In the summer of 2007, the Boston Faith and Justice Network began sponsoring *Lazarus* groups. Six groups have since been launched through the BFJN.

December 2007

Cover image: *Lazarus Begging for Crumbs from Dives's Table*, Heinrich Aldegrevier, 1552

What is Lazarus at the Gate?

Purpose

Lazarus at the Gate is a small group discipleship experience designed to impact global poverty.

One of the premises of *Lazarus at the Gate* is that Christians are called not just to belief in Christ, but also to follow Christ by deciding to live and act as Jesus did. Some Christian traditions call this discipleship; others call it spiritual formation. For all, this process of modeling our life decisions after Jesus' provides an invitation both to be transformed by God's grace and to more fully know Christ and his love more fully. As the Christian philosopher Dallas Willard writes, "practicing Jesus' word as his apprentices enables us to understand our lives and to see how we can interact with God's redemptive resources, ever at hand."¹

A second premise of this group is that money is a critical object of modern Christian discipleship. Those of us who live in the United States reside in the wealthiest nation in human history. We spend most of our time either making money or spending money. Most importantly, Jesus had more to say about money than nearly everything else. He identified his own ministry and person with those who were poor. In the parable after which this study is named, Jesus speaks a challenging word about the rich man who "dressed in purple and fine linen" and feasted sumptuously while a poor man lay, starving, at his gate.

Today, globalization has placed many Lazarus' at our gate. Half of the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day. Six million children experience and die from hunger each year.

At the same time, the experience of those who live on less than \$2 dollars a day is rarely discussed in the U.S. media and barely factors into our budgets: private or public. A recent study found that less than 15% of American charitable giving goes to international needs. Less than 0.5% of the U.S. national budget is dedicated to poverty-focused development assistance.

The modern reality of extreme poverty and inequality is so enormous that, were we to face it as individuals, we would quickly become paralyzed. However, Christ did not call us into discipleship alone. Instead, he gathered his followers into community and sent them out in pairs. Some of the first recorded Christian communities dealt with the matter of money in community – choosing to provide for those in need through community-wide collection.

¹ Willard, Dallas. "Why Bother with Discipleship?"
RENOVARE Perspective, Vol. V, No. 4. First published in a Biola University bulletin. www.dwillard.org

Lazarus at the Gate invites participants into community in which they are supported in their practice of economic discipleship. Over the course of the 12-session study, *Lazarus* discipleship groups support each other in making four *individual commitments*:

- Spend joyfully: Regularly give thanks for the blessing of our wealth
- Spend differently: Make one lifestyle change in order to consume more justly
- Spend less: Make one lifestyle change in order to buy less for ourselves
- Give more: Make a substantial gift to fight global poverty

Near the end of their time together, the group prayerfully selects one to four international charities. They then pool their individual gifts in order to give collectively to those who are poor. In this way, the discipleship group functions like a giving circle.

Lazarus groups are invited to re-connect and sustain their commitment to simplicity, just consumerism, and global giving at quarterly discipleship community gatherings.

History

Lazarus at the Gate is based on research conducted by Gary VanderPol, a pastor in the Evangelical Covenant church and ThD candidate studying poverty and Christian missions. The core exegetical conclusions first appeared in an article by Gary titled "How to Give Away your Money." You'll learn more about the path that brought Gary to these conclusions in the introductions he's written to several of the chapters.

Gary, together with Mako Nagasawa, an InterVarsity Area Director, led the first *Lazarus* group with 12 friends in Boston in 2006. After a year of prayerful simplicity and community support, the mixed-income discipleship group collectively gave \$40,000 to poverty-focused programs and ministries in Haiti, Thailand, India, Boston, and Bolivia.

In 2007, Gary and Mako partnered with the Boston Faith & Justice Network to promote and train leaders of *Lazarus* groups throughout Greater Boston. The Boston Faith & Justice Network was launched at a worship event at Tremont Temple Baptist Church in the summer of 2006, following three months of house meetings where Boston-area Christians discussed the connection between faith and justice. In those meetings, people shared stories of mission trips or international work or study that prompted awareness of global poverty and our participation in poverty and inequity through unchecked consumption. The Network decided that engaging Christians in Boston to impact global poverty must be among the first of its activities.

The Boston Faith & Justice Network launched a three part Global Justice Initiative, of which *Lazarus at the Gate* is the foundational step.

BFJN Global Justice Initiative

1. Live more simply to enable giving to those who are poor
2. Advocate locally to increase fair trade in Greater Boston
3. Advocate for aid, trade and debt reform policies that alleviate extreme, global poverty

At the time of this printing, seven small groups have participated in *Lazarus at the Gate* and the majority of these will replicate in order to engage more people. Imagine the collective impact that Christians choosing to spend and give differently could have on extreme global poverty and our own community in Boston.

People

In addition to Gary VanderPol and Mako Nagasawa, five other individuals led discipleship groups during the initial phase of *Lazarus at the Gate* in 2006-2007: Leslie Moore (ecumenical), Angela Letizia (Disciples/UCC), Andy Ober and Austin Calhoun (Evangelical Covenant), and Kristi Vrooman (Conservative Congregational). Each leader provided significant insight and feedback on leading *Lazarus* groups in their distinct denominational or ecumenical setting.

In the winter of 2007, this leader's guide was finalized with contributions to Gary's original outline by Mako Nagasawa and Rachel Anderson, Director of the Boston Faith & Justice Network. Andy Ober and Sandy North also made significant contributions to the editing and compilation of this version of the study and appendix.

Using this study guide

We are excited that you are embarking on the journey of economic discipleship and pray that you find the process as fruitful and challenging as we did.

The leader's guide and associated materials are offered free of charge. As our desire is to encourage other wealthy Christians to give freely, it is only right for us to offer the materials freely. We ask that you provide attribution to Gary VanderPol, Mako Nagasawa, and Rachel Anderson for the materials.

If you join or decide to lead a group, we ask that you add your experience to the *Lazarus* community. If you live in Greater Boston, you can join a *Lazarus* leaders cohort and quarterly discipleship community gatherings with the Boston Faith & Justice Network. Whether you are in or outside of Boston, we ask you share the following information with us:

1. Commitments made to lifestyle simplicity and just consumerism

We will add these ideas to the website and curriculum to inspire others

2. Amount your group gave collectively and to where

We are keeping a tally!

3. Changes or additions you would offer to the curriculum.

Lazarus at the Gate is both a work in progress and a work of community – we value your ideas.

4. Name and contact information of those in your group

If you would like to receive communication and updates about the growing community of Christians seeking justice as an expression of our faith (no more than once a month)

Please send this information to us via mail or email:

discipleship@bostonfaithjustice.org

Boston Faith & Justice Network

P.O. Box 180245

Boston, MA 02118

Leading a *Lazarus at the Gate* group

There are 12 sessions in the study. Within these sessions, a *Lazarus* group covers Old and New Testament themes regarding wealth and poverty, reflection on budgets and consumer habits, exploration of responsible consumerism (simplicity and fair trade), and research and discussion of global giving, culminating in the group's own gift.

A typical *Lazarus* discipleship group includes 6-10 regular participants. The minimum recommended group size is 6, with one or two leaders. Groups choose their own frequency of meeting (typically weekly or every other week).

Recruiting a group

If you are gathering a group of friends or offering *Lazarus* as a small group in your church, it is important to explain to potential participants and your church leadership what's involved in the group so each person knows what he or she is signing up for.

- **Candor** – In a *Lazarus* group, we'll do something that we rarely do in our culture: *talk about money*. Members of the group will share their own budgets in order to understand each person's starting point when it comes to money and spending
- **Change** – The goal of this candor is to create an opportunity for change in our lifestyles. Throughout the group, we will ask participants to make concrete changes in lifestyle including living more simply, buying fair trade, and contributing to the collective gift.
- **Collective Giving** – At the end of the study, each *Lazarus* group will pool the money they've saved and make a collective gift to alleviate global poverty. Where and how much to give will be up to the group.

The leaders cohort

Each season, *Lazarus* leaders who live in Greater Boston will meet three times as a leaders cohort for training on the curriculum and its Biblical and theological background. The leaders cohort will discuss issues that come up about the content and your own learning as a leader of a *Lazarus* group. In the course of leading *Lazarus*, you may encounter questions about how to handle fear or anxiety that emerge in discussions of money and lifestyle change, or you may ask yourself how you can challenge others to make lifestyle changes when you are on the same journey. This is what we'll talk and pray over in the leaders cohort.

In preparation for the group, we also encourage leaders to read Gary VanderPol's introductions at the beginning of each week. Leaders may also find the following books helpful background to the Biblical themes around economic justice and discipleship raised in the study:

Wealth as Peril and Obligation, Sondra Wheeler

Neither Poverty Nor Riches, Craig Blomberg

Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger, Ron Sider

The *Lazarus* guide and materials

Each week of the *Lazarus* curriculum consists of several items.

- An introduction to the session (written to provide you as a leader with some context and background on the materials covered)
- Suggested Goals, Agenda and Outline for the Session
- Readings or worksheets for the group (you will want to make copies of these)
- Evaluation and report back forms – the evaluation is for your own reflection as a leader. Please bring the report back forms to meetings of the leaders cohort or send copies to discipleship@bostonfaithjustice.org. This is how we learn from and connect *Lazarus* groups.

We recommend that you read through all of these materials in preparation for the session. Then, create your own agenda that adapts the resources provided in the curriculum to fit the timeframe and needs of your own group. Sessions may include up to two hours of material. You can use some or all of the material in each of your sessions or adjust the times assigned to each exercise.

Finally, there is a lot covered in this curriculum. You're not expected to know all of it. Instead, when you encounter difficult issues, encourage group members to be co-learners and researchers with you. You might assign a member of the group to do research on a question that is raised during a meeting. You may also want to think about how to pair members of the group with each other, especially for support regarding budgeting and simplifying lifestyle. Make it your role, as the leader, to facilitate an environment of mutual learning, risk-taking and Spirit-led change.

I want to begin by letting you know why economic discipleship has become such an important issue to me. I suppose it's because I really think how we spend our money and whom we spend it on is a central issue in following Jesus. You know, following Jesus is something that keeps growing as you get older. When I first became a Christian at age 16, I only had a small inkling of exactly what that commitment implied. I certainly didn't think it would mean spending my money any differently than anyone else. But I do now, and I believe there is a great deal of excitement, purpose and meaningfulness in it for anyone who is willing to place their pocketbook under the Lordship of Jesus.

I began to think seriously about God's concern for the poor during my sophomore year of college, during my first mission trip to Mexico. I grew up in an average suburb of a middle-sized town that seemed dreadfully boring when I was in high school. (Anyone ever heard of Modesto, CA?) But I was amazed at how heavenly Modesto looked after we took our 12 hour bus ride into Baja California. We did the normal stuff you do on short term mission trips—digging ditches and painting buildings at a Mexican orphanage with American connections—but I will never forget the afternoon we took a short trip out to a rural village of agricultural farm workers. Actually, it seemed more like a poorly supplied concentration camp to me. The smell of burning garbage, the sound of cursing and broken speakers playing *norteño* music too loud, the sight of corrugated iron roofs, shabby walls, and dirt floors, and the hollow, bitter eyes that greeted us gringos who had come to “minister.” The whole thing felt very awkward and wrong. I wondered why these people had to live like this, what could be done about it, how I must look to them.

This experience redefined poverty for me. Previously, when I thought of the poor, the graffiti-scrawled apartment complexes in the ‘scarier’ neighborhoods on the other side of the 99 freeway in Modesto came to mind. But this was a whole new thing. No running water, no privacy, no central heating, no doctor for miles—and I knew I was just looking at the surface of it. I remember that for a month after I came home I was deeply thankful every time I flushed a toilet. But while that experience opened my eyes in a new way, I gradually began to forget. Modesto again began to seem boring instead of paradisiacal; going to the bathroom was less of a thrill. As I got older and traveled to other developing world countries like Venezuela and the Philippines, the same cycle occurred: shock, sympathy, thankfulness, and forgetting. But each time I began to forget a little less, especially when I learned that this kind of poverty is not an anomaly. About one in five people alive today—more than a billion people (that's a thousand million)—live like those Mexicans—or worse.

And as I learned to remember that the world consists of more than just my immediate surroundings, I also felt a strong desire to find a way to help. Giving my money seemed like a good way, especially given my lack of expertise in social work and the geographic distance that separated me from the kind of people I had met in my travels. After becoming aware of global poverty I began to think seriously about my response as a Christian.

However, the more I thought about giving, the more complicated it became. Let me share a couple brief stories with you that illustrate what I mean. After one of my mission trips I decided to sponsor a child in the developing world—you know, you

send in \$20 a month to an organization who uses it to provide education, medicine and the like for the child and his family. I was struck at how easy it was. The organization took out the \$20 automatically from my checking account each month. I never even missed it. Yet that monthly \$16 (after administrative costs) that went to Sarunyu Pamprum's village potentially made the difference between abject misery and a hopeful future for them. Slowly I began to realize that any money I spent on myself could just as easily go to someone that needed it more than I. I began to think in stark terms: "I can either see a movie and go out to eat with my friends tonight, or I can save 10 children from dying unnecessarily of diarrhea. I could either go skiing this weekend, or I could provide running water for a village." Now, if you begin to think this way, you can drive yourself crazy with guilt. The question looms large: Given the tremendous needs in the world, how much is appropriate to spend on yourself—especially when it is so easy to relieve those needs by sending your money there?

The second story happened in the late 90s when I lived in a low income, immigrant district of Oakland, CA. Many of my neighbors were survivors of the killing fields of Cambodia or the civil wars of Central America. Our small church was trying to raise money for a preschool which we hoped would meet our neighbors' need for low-cost childcare. I knew well the hard road they had traveled, and I was enthusiastic about supporting the project financially. However, I also knew that my immigrant neighbors had it much better than many, many people in the developing world—including their relatives who remained in their countries of origin. At this time we had decided to give our tax refund to the poor. My wife and I wondered to whom we should give it. Was it more important to be a part of giving to our own church and our own neighborhood or were the greater needs overseas more important? Then after September 11, similar questions came up for us again. Like most Americans, I wanted to help in any way I could after the tragedy. But where to send the money? Many Americans sent money to the families of those killed at the World Trade Center; but they had already received an average of 500,000 dollars each, plus the life insurance policies that many of them had. The flood of money to the WTC victims also drained money from other programs around the country like homeless shelters, so should I send money to the Salvation Army? Or I could send aid to the 100,000 Muslim refugees fleeing America's military response in Afghanistan, many of whom hovered on the edge of starvation. So if I did want to make some financial response to this tragedy, to whom should I send it? What principles could help me make this decision?

One final story. When you give money to international charities, apparently word gets around, because you begin to be inundated with mail from many other organizations pleading for your money to alleviate all kinds of suffering. Which organizations would make the best use of my checks? Even if I could figure out what sort of cause I wanted to support, I would still have a choice of several organizations who claim to do well. Who does it best? And what about acquaintances who ask for money for mission trips, etc.? These questions were magnified after I took a short, introductory course in international development. The course was full of stories of well-meaning Western organizations which tried to help poor people in the Third World and wound up making it worse.

These three stories illustrate the list of questions running around my head. Once again: How much of my money should I give? With so many needs in the world close by and far away, to whom should I give it? And finally, which organizations

should I give to? How do I even know that what they do with my money will make things better instead of worse?

Whether or not you can relate to my stories, I hope you can relate to these questions. As Christians who want to follow Jesus in every area of our lives, including the economic area, I think these questions are essential, and they will be the focus of the *Lazarus at the Gate* economic discipleship group. During my doctoral program at Boston University, I had the privilege of studying these questions in a two-semester seminar taught by Prof. Peter Berger. Part of the curriculum you have before you comes from my research for that course. A year of concentrating on these questions had two main results: first, I became deeply convinced that economic choices are central to the life of Christian discipleship. Second, I was humbled by the complexity of the topic. We will not find all the answers during the *Lazarus* group, but I would like to invite you at least as far along into the journey as I've gotten so far.

I've started by sharing why our topic has become important to me, but before we continue, I'd like to say why I think it is significant to all of us. First, I propose that our inherited cultural values regarding money make it difficult to hear what the Bible says about the subject. As a society, Americans acknowledge that materialism is immoral and that American society is too materialistic. Just go to the mall in December and ask people what they think about Christmas—many will condemn how materialistic Christmas has become while they are holding an armful of expensive presents! As sociologist Robert Wuthnow trenchantly comments: “Somehow we have been able to convince ourselves that materialism is bad for our collective health, but we proceed in our individual lives as if nothing mattered more than a fat wallet, especially one made of expensive leather. . . How can a culture as thoroughly materialistic as ours generate such sweeping condemnations of materialism?”²

Since the 1950's, America's standard of living has gone up, yet most Americans feel poorer and actually give less of their money. Ron Sider cites a recent study that shows that the more Americans earn, the less they give.³ We tend to compare ourselves with the wealthiest people we know and then feel poor. In the words of one woman, “I don't think most people who are affluent feel affluent. We feel we are in debt and someone else is affluent...For my kids, poverty is not having Nintendo.”⁴ John and Sylvia Ronsvalle suggest that this phenomenon of feeling poorer despite increasing wealth is due to a steady shift in financial expectations. In their words, “A massive change occurred in four decades [1950-1990]. Americans switched from an agenda of survival to a pattern of widespread consumption unrivaled in even the richest societies in history.”⁵ ‘Keeping up with the Joneses’ is no longer just a goal—it has become a right.

Yet despite the American obsession with making and spending money, it is an intensely private, even a sacred or taboo topic.⁶ This privatized view of wealth seems odd to many other cultures. In China, for example, “How much money do

² Robert Wuthnow, *God and Mammon in America* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 155.

³ Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger : Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, <4th >. ed. (Dallas: Word Pub., 1997), 204-5.

⁴ John Ronsvalle and Sylvia Ronsvalle, *Behind the Stained Glass Windows: Money Dynamics in the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 171.

⁵ Ibid, 36.

⁶ Ibid, 132

you make?” is an appropriate question to ask right after you’ve met someone. Can you imagine this in America: “Hi, nice to meet you, Gary. Nice weather we’ve been having. So, how much money do you make?”

The point is, when you add up these cultural attitudes that we take in just by breathing, it makes it very difficult to hear any biblical challenge regarding money. For example, during a sermon on money, the person in the pew will have a tape playing in their heads “Yes, materialism is bad, but I’m not materialistic. Donald Trump, now he’s materialistic. In fact, I’m actually poor. Besides, what I do with my own money is nobody else’s business.”

So what about Christian attitudes towards money? Surely it’s different in the church? Actually, given the strength of cultural attitudes I’ve just described, it is not surprising that Christian attitudes towards money and giving are not very different from their secular counterparts. For example, two-thirds of American churchgoers think that “money is one thing, morals and values are completely separate”—exactly the same as non-churchgoers.⁷ Statistically, churchgoing also has little influence on how much money people spend or on how willing they are to get into debt.⁸ Another survey shows that 86% of churchgoers think that greed is a sin, but only 16% think it’s wrong to want lots of money.⁹ Finally, the cultural attitude that money is a private matter is just as strong among those who sit in the pews on Sunday morning. Pastors commonly live in mortal fear of preaching about money because their parishioners insist it’s a private matter. Robert Wuthnow summarizes the sad disconnect between religion and financial ethics: “For millions of us, faith nudges our attitudes and our economic behavior in one direction or another. It does so, however, in ways that . . . do little to challenge the status quo... Feeling ambivalent about the role of faith, we therefore go about our lives pretty much the same as those who have no faith at all.”¹⁰ If I am correct that the church has basically capitulated to American cultural attitudes about money, then we must urgently strive to correct this blind spot in our discipleship.

But there is one other reason I think this topic is especially significant. As I mentioned earlier, giving our money is increasingly complicated in our globalized, interconnected world. As I write this I am wearing clothes that were made in five countries and three continents. Our financial decisions also have potentially global influence. In medieval times, giving might have been quite simple: how much should I give to the beggars at the church door? But now our reach is much broader: the one billion desperately poor people are easily within our influence—and more than 200 million of them are fellow Christians.¹¹ To complicate things further, people debate stridently about whether globalization is good or bad. Does it result in rich countries exploiting poor countries, forcing them to chop down their rainforests so Americans can eat Big Macs? Or does it include the whole world in the prosperity of the West? Should we be protesting the WTO or encouraging free trade for everyone? Or perhaps we should take care of our own right here in America before we worry about the rest of the world? These are not just abstract, political questions. Our beliefs concerning these issues will have a deep impact on how we give our money and the impact it has—whether for good or bad.

⁷ Wuthnow, 129.

⁸ Ibid, 136.

⁹ Ibid, 126.

¹⁰ Ibid, 5.

¹¹ Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches : A biblical Theology of Material Possessions*, New Studies in biblical Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1999), 17.

Clearly economic discipleship in a globalized world is a huge and potentially overwhelming topic. So I want to be clear about the limitations of this group. During the first half, our primary aim is to carefully consider the voice of Scripture as we think about our financial lifestyle. The second half of the *Lazarus* group cannot definitively answer all the complex macroeconomic questions just mentioned, but it will at least provide a basic understanding of some of the 'best practices' in economic development. I think this kind of knowledge is important, because even though we won't be experts, we can learn to avoid some of the most egregious mistakes in our financial giving. Finally, in this discipleship group we cannot deal with other extremely important ways to serve the poor. I do not at all want to suggest that giving money is the only, or even the most important, way to serve the poor, but it is an important step, for "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."¹²

Gary VanderPol, 2007

¹² Matthew 6:21

This week's goals

- Introduce participants to each other
- Articulate each person's starting point when it comes to wealth and money
- Present an provocative view of giving: Peter Singer
- Establish a group covenant

Materials

- Budgeting Worksheet
- "The Singer Solution to World Poverty"
- "Living on Less than A Dollar a Day"
- Introduction to *Lazarus* & the BFJN

Homework for next session

- Bring your household budget to the next session.
Optional: Use Excel template to create budget.
- Input your earnings into www.globalrichlist.com. Report: Which % are you in?

Sample Agenda

- Welcome
- Discuss everyone's starting points
- Discuss contemporary engagement with poverty & wealth
- Scripture reflection on Shalom
- Homework
- Establish a group covenant
- Closing Prayer

Agenda

SESSION 1

As is true every session, there is a wealth of material to cover in your first meeting. The content you find below should take about two hours, depending on the size and composition of your group. As the leader, you should feel free to pick and choose which elements seem most important for your group within your allotted timeframe.

A. Welcome

15 MINUTES

- *Optional:* As people enter, ask them to write one popular catchphrase about money and/or one question they hope to have answered during the discipleship group on the whiteboard.
 - *Examples:*
Catchphrases: He who has the gold makes the rules. Show me the money! Put your money where your mouth is. etc.
Questions: How much should I prioritize saving? What should I say to homeless people who ask for money? Does the Bible say I should tithe 10% to my local church? Should I only give to Christian organizations? etc.
- Pray
- Ask for a person to serve as timekeeper for the session.
- Ask participants to share their names and one of the following:
 - The last thing they bought
 - One way their family or church background has influenced the way they think about money
 - One question they hope to have answered during the discipleship group
- Share an overview of the whole LATG discipleship group: schedule; commitments and actions asked of members; relationship to the BFJN (may provide members of the group copies of the handout about the BFJN)
- Share the agenda for the discipleship group
- Circulate a contact sheet

B. Discuss starting points

30 MINUTES

- Participants break up into groups of 3-4 and share how the backgrounds of their churches and families have influenced the way they think about money. Make sure to give the groups a definite amount of time (10 min).
- Each group reports back (10 min).
 - o Ask what the common themes were within the group.
 - o Ask what were similarities in people's histories with money? Differences?

C. Contemporary issues relating to money and giving

30 MINUTES

The purpose of this section is to remind participants that global poverty has become an important issue not only to people of faith, but also to mainstream American culture.

- *Option A:* One very challenging response to global poverty is Peter Singer's approach in "The Singer Solution to World Poverty." Exposing the group to Singer's extremely challenging philosophical ethics is a very effective way to emotionally grapple with the moral challenge of our world's economic inequality. <http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/19990905mag-poverty-singer.html>)
 - o Summarize Singer's arguments (or distribute the article before the first session and have people come prepared to discuss it). Ask participants what they *think* of Singer's ethical case and how it makes them *feel*. The main goal is not to resolve all the questions asked but merely to surface the issues and to engage people's hearts and minds before moving to the biblical material.
- *Option B:* Ask the group for examples of how popular culture deals with poverty relief. Some recent examples:
 - o American Idol Gives Back <http://www.cpefund.org/americanidol/>
 - o RED campaign <http://www.joinred.com/toolkit/>

D. Scripture reflection: Isaiah 65:17-25 on *Shalom*

20 MINUTES

A theme in this study is the biblical vision of Shalom. We will return to it in the final session as well. As your group reflects on this passage, you may want to write down some of the key ideas and images that your group generates and save them so that you can revisit these in the final session (Session 12).

- Ask the group to read the passage three times (with a different person reading each time).
- Suggested questions for discussion:
 - *What are images or words that jump out at you in this passage?*
 - *Why would we start a study on global poverty and responsibility with this passage?*

E. Homework

10 MINUTES

The purpose of the homework is to create a clear, honest understanding of each participants' personal wealth and to "break the silence" about money by sharing budgets with each other. Other groups have found sharing their budgets openly to be a very powerful experience, but if you are certain that this would be a "deal breaker," you may consider asking participants to share only the percentages assigned to each budgeting category and/or their global wealth percentile (as found on globalrichlist.com).

Assign budgets

- Ask each participant to create a budget for him/herself to share with the group in the next session.
- Present the budgeting worksheet.
- Explain the purpose and context for sharing our budgets in this group
 - The budgets are to be used as a reality check and starting point.
 - At this point, the goal is for everyone to figure out their actual patterns of spending and to give a snapshot of that spending for a period of time (can be monthly and extrapolated to year or year to date).
 - The group should expect diversity of income, spending and giving patterns within the group.

- o The purpose is **not** to compare but rather to think about where each of us is being called.
- Ask participants to input their annual income into globalrichlist.com and write down their percentile ranking

Reading

- Ask participants to read “Living on Less than a Dollar a Day.”
- Ask participants, in the coming week, to pray for their brothers and sisters around the world who live in absolute poverty.

F. Establish a group covenant (Goals & Norms)

20 MINUTES

Reaching clarity and agreement on goals and norms will enable the group to become both a supportive and a challenging community that will encourage members toward greater faithfulness about poverty and money.

Goals - what outcomes the group will achieve together

Norms - how the group will work together

- Ask for a note-taker during this portion. Ask that person to email the covenant to the group after the end of the session.
- Make sure all the participants are clear about what the group will do together (goals).
 - o Spend joyfully: Regularly give thanks for the blessing of our wealth
 - o Spend differently: Make one lifestyle change to consume more justly
 - o Spend less: Make one lifestyle change to reduce spending on ourselves
 - o Give more: Make a substantial communal gift to fight global poverty
 - May choose to set a base giving amount and a “stretch” amount
- Ask the group to brainstorm some norms that will enable them to work well as a group and reach these goals. Be ready to suggest norms, such as:
 - o *Strive for everyone to contribute to discussion. (May mean that talkative participants “step back” so others can participate and that quieter participants “step up” so their voice can be heard)*
 - o *Start from where you are and challenge yourself to make a real change.*

- o *Experiential learning - when addressing issues of poverty and inequality, especially on a global scale, it can be very difficult to identify the 'optimal' or 'morally ideal' choice. Consider adopting an experiential learning approach: action is a way to learn, and action should be followed by reflection and re-evaluation.*
- o *Respect*
- o *Courage*
- o *Confidentiality*
- o *Decision-making – how will the group make its collective gift? Consensus? Majority vote?*

G. Closing Prayer

Wealth as a Blessing

SESSION 2

Introduction

SESSION 2

A Summary of methodology for doing ethics with Scripture

Our task for the next several sessions is to gain a bird's eye perspective of the Bible's teaching about wealth in general. Of course, this is a Herculean task, and there are many ways we could begin to approach such a complex undertaking. This leads to a subject of method, which we must deal with at some length before we plunge into the Word itself.

It is curious that when God gave us the Scriptures, he didn't give an instruction manual along with it. So, the Bible has been used to validate socialism, monarchy, and democracy. It has leant its support to Jessie Jackson and Pat Robertson. It has justified Northern abolition and Southern slavery. As the old folk saying goes, "The devil can cite Scripture to his purpose."¹³

We must always beware of selectively quoting and interpreting passages to support our own desires, but it is rather difficult to avoid. The Bible gives many different perspectives on ethical questions like ours. If we are truly to allow the full force of Scripture to confront and change us, we must have some way of prioritizing certain passages while not conveniently disposing of ones that we like less. In short, we must think seriously about our *method* for constructing a genuinely biblical answer to ethical questions. This is especially true for *our* question about financial giving. As Fuller Seminary president Richard Mouw reminds us, "There is indeed a variety [of biblical data] —enough so, at least, for Christians with very different attitudes toward the poor to be able to sustain their perspectives by the selective citation of favorite biblical passages." He goes on to say, "[we] ought not to be content with this kind of proof texting stalemate."¹⁴

Let me begin with an example of a commonly-used methodology that I think could steer us in the wrong direction. I call it the "word study" approach. Let's say, for example, we wanted to know what the Bible says about financial giving. Using this approach, we might use a concordance to find all the places the Bible refers to the words "giving", "money," and "wealth." We would then gather all these references, turn them into a list of propositions, harmonize the propositions, and *voilà*—a biblical theology of wealth. I'm trying not to caricature this approach, but I've read lots of books and heard many sermons that use the Scriptures exactly as I've described. But there are serious problems with this method at each stage of its use. Let's take a closer look. First there is the problem of selecting the relevant passages. This is difficult, because there are many passages in the Bible that don't use the *words* 'money' or 'wealth' but have powerful implications for the topic. Also, some passages may only be using the word incidentally.

Second, when writers or preachers take these passages out of context and put them into a list, they neglect the context and genre of the book to which the text belongs. For example, the interpretation of a text should be powerfully determined by whether it is a parable, an epistle, a proverb, a covenantal contract, or a prophetic denunciation. Of course, it also matters whether the passage is from the Old Testament or the New.

¹³ Richard B. Hays, "The Church as a Scripture-Shaped Community" *Evangelical Review of Theology* 18: July 1994, 234.

¹⁴ Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells, *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World : Theology from an Evangelical Point of View* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 221-2.

Although we believe all Scripture is inspired by God, it does not make sense to give the same weight to a saying of Jesus and a passage from Proverbs.

Third, this method often imposes an artificial or contrived harmonization of the passages in the desire for a unified scriptural position. But this does not do justice to the diversity that God has actually chosen to leave in the Bible. For example, in Romans 13 Paul tells believers that the (Roman) government is ordained by God to do good and punish the unbeliever. In Revelation 13, however, the Roman government is portrayed as the beast that makes war on the saints.¹⁵ Or consider two passages concerning our own topic: in Luke's gospel Jesus tells his followers to sell all they have and give to the poor, while the author of Hebrews commands the church to practice hospitality. How can we practice hospitality if we have no possessions? This does not mean that the tensions between different theological perspectives in Scripture are irreconcilable, but we do not do justice to the Scripture as it exists when we try to artificially flatten it out. Finally, purveyors of this method often claim to have achieved some sort of eternal, objective interpretation of 'what the Bible teaches on x ethical issue.' But, as you will see, I do not think we can simply come to a timeless judgment, because some fallible human interpreter must always do his or her best to prioritize, sort out, interpret, and apply those passages. Even the "word study" practitioner unconsciously carries out this human act of discernment.

Well, enough of me beating up on other people's methods. Here is the method I tried to use for this course. I want to give credit to New Testament scholars Richard B. Hays and Sondra Wheeler, whose thinking about methodology was especially helpful in developing this course. Partly following Hays¹⁶, my approach can be broken down into four phases: descriptive, synthetic, hermeneutical, and applicational.¹⁷ In the descriptive phase, my goal was to find all the relevant texts that might relate to the issue of financial giving. So it was necessary to cast my net wider than texts that spoke explicitly to my question. Once all those texts had been gathered, I sought to understand them in their literary and theological context. I asked questions like, "How does this text fit into the overall theme of the book?", "What is its genre—narrative, poetry, prophecy, parable, etc.?" and, "On what level does it make an ethical claim?" For example, is it a direct command to do something, or is it part of a story that provides a precedent for action, or does it provide a general principle?¹⁸

In the next step—the synthetic phase—I distilled from all this mass of biblical data the major themes that recur in different parts of Scripture. It was also necessary to understand how these various major themes relate to each other. Sometimes the themes are complementary; other times they are in tension. Obviously, these descriptive and synthetic phases are a lot of work. But fortunately I didn't have to do it alone—there are mountains of exegetical writing that I could mine for help. Two works were especially important: *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, by Craig Blomberg of Denver Seminary, and a similar work entitled *Wealth as Peril and Obligation* by Sondra Wheeler. Both of these contributions are excellent examples how to begin with the descriptive phase—dealing with all the biblical material in its context—then move to the synthetic phase—identifying the major themes and their relation to each other.

¹⁵ Hays, 237.

¹⁶ The general thrust of this section is from Hays, but I have modified and added to his categories for the purposes of this project.

¹⁷ Hays, 236.

¹⁸ Ibid, 240.

In this discipleship group, we will focus on the four most prominent biblical themes regarding money and wealth as identified by Wheeler and Blomberg (and modified slightly by me). Two are from the Old Testament¹⁹ and two are from the New²⁰. The four themes are:

- Wealth is a blessing (OT)
- Wealth must be justly distributed (OT)
- Wealth is a potential idol (NT)
- Wealth is for sharing with the poor (NT)

The descriptive and synthetic phases are primarily exegetical, literary, and interpretive. But the hermeneutical and application stages are more prophetic and practical. We must ask God, “What are You saying to us about financial giving?” It is one thing to know, for example, that the synoptic Gospels often regard wealth as a competing suitor for our spiritual affections, but it is quite another to hear what God is saying to *us now*. And ethical reflection must always have that *now* quality about it—the important thing is not to produce some static, generic ‘biblical theology of wealth’ but to find out how the scriptural witness practically impacts our budgets for the next several years of our lives.

Ultimately, the hermeneutical phase requires us to make judgments based on spiritual discernment. We must discern, with the help of the Holy Spirit, which particular texts, stories, or principles speak to our cultural and historical context in an especially incisive way. This means assigning proper weight and emphasis to the various themes manifest in Scripture. To make this judgment I relied on Hays’ three criteria: frequency, canonical authority, and relevance or ‘fit’. The first criterion of frequency asks how often a particular theme appears in various Scriptures, whether it comes up in different genres, etc. Obviously, if a particular theme keeps coming up, it deserves more attention.

Second, canonical authority recognizes that different parts of Scripture carry more or less weight. The most obvious example of this is the Old and New Testament division. Since the formation of the canon, Christians have always believed that the New Testament fulfilled the Old and that the Old was to be interpreted in light of the New. This means, for example, that themes only emphasized in the Old Testament carry less importance than those which are carried through in the New. Canonical authority also asks whether a particular theme flows directly from the central elements of the scriptural story, or whether the theme is more tangential.

The third criterion of relevance considers which themes or passages speak directly to us in a timely way. For example, if a scriptural story closely parallels our contemporary situation, it might be good to pay extra attention to it. Or if a principle straightforwardly answers the questions that motivated the study in the first place, it also deserves more weight. In scholarly terms, the task of discerning what scriptural texts are most relevant requires *an integrative act of the imagination*.²¹ In theological terms, the criteria of relevance emphasizes two truths that Christians have classically understood about using Scripture: first, the word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). God uses the Word not just to dispense eternal theological truths but to speak in a fresh and timely way as each new situation comes up. Second, interpretation of Scripture is dependent in some way on the illumination of the Holy Spirit. This means that we aren’t just doing wooden literary analysis but are trying to hear afresh, for our time, “what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 3:13).

¹⁹ Blomberg, 82.

²⁰ Wheeler, 127-131.

²¹ Ibid, 237.

In our course, I have reflected the hermeneutical phase by choosing two passages which I feel speak especially powerfully to middle class American culture in the 21st century. During the weeks in which we focus on the New Testament themes, we will carefully examine Luke 18:18-30, which has particular relevance to our culture's materialism, and Luke 16:19-31, which forcefully addresses the tragic divide between super-rich and ultra-poor in a world that is so closely connected through globalization.

Finally, after the first three stages, it becomes time for action. Study is of little value unless it has some practical import. However, in most cases the input of Scripture is not exhaustive. For instance, we may see that giving to the poor is a central scriptural principle, but the Bible may not tell us *how* to best carry it out. For this, it is necessary to make the use of the best thinking and human experience available. In this course, participants will experiment with applications that they themselves choose, guided by the experiences of past *Lazarus at the Gate* groups. Each week's theme will introduce a practical step that expresses the scriptural value in question. So,

- After the first theme *wealth is a blessing*, participants will begin to regularly give thanks for their wealth.
- After we study *wealth must be justly distributed*, participants will alter one aspect of their consumer behavior to spend more justly.
- After *wealth is a potential object of idolatry*, participants choose at least one concrete way to simplify their lifestyles by limiting their spending/consumption.
- After *wealth is to be shared with the poor*, participants will commit to giving a certain sum to the poor at the conclusion of the course.

Thus, in addition to thanksgiving, everyone in the course will spend differently, buy differently, and give differently.

B. Background to Theme #1— Wealth as a Blessing

As we begin actually open our Bibles this week, we immediately encounter a problem. It is obviously totally impossible to look at all the hundreds of relevant biblical verses that deal with finances (in their context!) in an hour and a half. None of our brains work that fast! So, we are forced to skip the first descriptive phase and move directly to the synthetic phase. However, we've included in your program a list of the most important Scripture passages I dealt with in the descriptive phase. If you want to look more closely at the exegetical detail of these passages, Blomberg's book is a great place to start.

The first Old Testament theme emphasizes *the goodness of wealth*. This has several different manifestations throughout the entire Hebrew Bible, although it is striking that this theme appears most frequently in the Pentateuch and the Wisdom Literature. The OT consistently speaks of land and produce (the primary sources of wealth for ancient Israel) as being good. This goodness comes from the creation itself, where in Genesis 1-2 God evaluates every material thing God has made as being "good." There is no room in the Hebrew Bible for a denigration of the material in favor of the spiritual. God has made it, and it is good. Deuteronomy 14:22-27 even commands Israelites to use a tithe of all their wealth just to enjoy themselves with a huge party. They are to sell their produce and spend it on whatever they wish—even "strong drink!"

In the OT, material blessings are a sign of God's covenant with Israel. The paradigmatic Scripture for this theme is Deuteronomy 28, which can be seen as the charter of the Mosaic covenant. Written in the genre of a suzerainty agreement in which a weaker king agrees to submit to a stronger one in exchange for his protection, Yahweh assures Israel that if they remain faithful, blessings in the form of health, children, livestock,

produce, and safety will be theirs. The impact of this covenant echoes throughout the entire OT, and wealth is a central benefit of it.

Of course, the blessings only come if Israel is faithful to the covenant. Thus, wealth is a blessing for those who are righteous. In the Psalms, for example, “wealth and riches are in their [those who fear the Lord] houses.”²² In Proverbs, “Misfortune pursues sinners, but prosperity rewards the righteous.”²³ Yet, the converse is not always true in the OT: poverty does not necessarily mean unrighteousness. Many times people are portrayed as poor because of the oppression of the rich, and God is on the side of the poor.²⁴

²² Psalm 112:3

²³ Proverbs 13:21

²⁴ e.g. Jeremiah 22:16

This week's goals

- Introduce biblical view of wealth as a blessing and give thanks
- Situate ourselves in global context through global rich list and our budgets
- Establish a starting point for personal change by sharing our budgets
- Introduce theme of wealth distribution and fair trade

Materials

- Our budgets
- Banana trade readings (for homework)

Homework for next session

- Readings on banana trade

Sample Agenda

- Welcome & Introduction
- Discuss Scriptures
- Discuss Budgets
- Prayers of thanks
- Introduce fair trade: homework
- Closing Prayer

Agenda

SESSION 2

A. Welcome and Introduction

5 MINUTES

- Present Agenda
- Introduce purpose/Goals of this week's group

B. Discuss Scripture

20 MINUTES

Coming to ethical positions on controversial topics using Scripture is complex because the Bible contains 66 books written by 30+ authors over 1000 years. We need to hear the Scripture in all its diversity yet hear its voice in such a way that it guides our actions concretely. In preparing this section, read through the introduction's "summary of methodology for doing ethics with Scripture" for background on how Scripture is applied in this study.

Scripture: Genesis 1:28-31; Proverbs 13:21; Deut 28:1-11

- Introduce the texts by giving some historical context.

Consider: In the Old Testament, wealth was often in the form of land or livestock, not money. Wealth is a major theme of the Old Testament, especially as the Israelites were getting established in the Promised Land, and later during the time of the prophets—unjust use of wealth and idolatry were the prophets' two major complaints.

By the time of the New Testament, the Roman Empire was increasingly using money as a primary source of wealth exchange. Thus, money becomes a major theme in the New Testament.

- Divide the group into groups of 4. Ask each group to carefully read the Scriptures listed under this week's theme and together write a brief "slogan" or "headline" that encapsulates the theme. Give them a strict time limit, perhaps 10 minutes.
- Next, ask each group to choose a leader to share their "slogan" in turn with the whole group, explaining how they got it from the passages they read. [Groups may ask the oldest person, or the person with the next upcoming birthday, to serve as leader]. After each group shares, offer additional observations and compare their "slogans" with the words scholars use to describe the theme: "Wealth is a blessing".

Wealth as a blessing

Unlike some other sacred texts, the Bible views the material world, from which wealth is generated, as good (Genesis 1).

The context of Deuteronomy 28 is Yahweh's covenant with Israel as they're entering the Promised Land.

Prosperity gospel preachers strongly emphasize this biblical theme, but to the exclusion of the themes you will encounter in the following sessions.

C. Discuss budgets

1 HOUR

The goal of this exercise at this point is to realize how tremendously wealthy we are as literate North Americans. You might talk about the importance of “wealth” as a relative term—it depends on with whom you compare yourself. If you like, share personal illustrations about comparing your wealth with others around you.

- Begin by sharing your own budget, including your percentile ranking on the Global Rich List. After you share, share your answers to the following questions with the group:
 - o What did you learn about your spending/giving patterns through doing your budget?
 - o How did doing your budget make you feel? Why?
 - o If “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,” then what does your budget indicate about the state of your heart?
- Ask participants to share their budgets with one another in groups of 2-3. Have them respond to the questions above. Give a time limit of 15-30 minutes depending on group size.
- Report back from small groups to the full group. What did you notice about your own budget? What were common themes you noticed as you compared budgets?
- Ask the group how they felt about locating their income on the Global Rich List.

D. Giving Thanks

15 MINUTES

In sessions 2-5, your group will respond to the Scripture study by applying the emphasized theme to your personal lives by making individual commitments. This

week, you will respond to your deepening understanding of *wealth as a blessing* by giving thanks together in prayer and considering one way to incorporate thanksgiving into your lifestyles.

- Lead participants in prayers of thanksgiving for their wealth. Pray in whatever fashion is most comfortable for your group.
- Explain the concept of making personal commitments in response to biblical teaching. For this commitment, ask participants to choose one way to give thanks regularly for the blessing of our wealth. Each participant should choose some commitment for him/herself and begin to practice it regularly this week. For example:
 - *Say a prayer of thanks every time you swipe your credit card. You may even attach a little sticker to your credit card reminding you to do this.*
 - *Memorize a Scripture on the goodness of wealth, and recite it every time you buy something.*
- Tell the group that they will share their commitment with the group next session.

E. Homework/Frame for next session

15 MINUTES

In this section, you'll prepare participants with the topic and homework for the next session. The next session's theme, the distribution of wealth, follows from this session's discussion of wealth as a blessing and recognition of your own wealth. Americans are residents of one of the world's wealthiest nations and have access to goods that are made all over the world. As you prepare for next week, think about how your consumption has an impact on the distribution of wealth in the world.

- Ask the group to name some of the things we consume that we couldn't enjoy but for agriculture in other regions of the world. For example:
 - *Tropical fruit: bananas, pineapple, guava, mango*
 - *Cocoa*
 - *Coffee*
 - *Tea*
 - *Spices*
- To prepare for next week, ask members of the group to research one of the items: bananas.
- Distribute readings and ask people to come back and report on what they learned about: 1) the history of the banana industry that serves North America; 2) the impact of the banana industry on communities where bananas are grown and people who grow them; 3) how wealth is distributed within the banana industry

F. Closing Prayer

Wealth Must Be Justly Distributed

SESSION 3

Introduction

SESSION 3

The second major OT theme warns that *wealth must be used justly*. A significant facet of this theme is found in God's desire that His people avoid extremes of riches and poverty. In Leviticus 25:8ff, this concern is embodied in the Year of Jubilee, when any land that has been sold reverts back to the original owners' families. There are a host of similar commands in the Pentateuch designed to make sure that everyone at least has enough wealth on which to live. This desire is also symbolized by God's provision of manna in the wilderness, where we read that "those who gathered much had nothing left over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed."²⁵

Besides property laws and manna from heaven, there are also a flood of OT commands to share with the poor. Moses says tithes are to be set aside for the poor;²⁶ Ezekiel condemns Sodom not for sodomy, but because "she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy."²⁷ And Isaiah tells Judah that true piety is "to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house."²⁸ The Old Testament takes special interest in widows, orphans, and strangers, whose powerlessness epitomizes poverty.²⁹

In the Prophets, commands to avoid oppressing the poor are even more common than injunctions to share with them. The rich are constantly condemned for using their wealth to withhold wages from the poor,³⁰ steal their land,³¹ and deny them justice.³² Sometimes the Prophets lambast the rich for ignoring the poor as they enjoy their riches.³³

There is a certain tension between these two themes. Although wealth is good and comes from God as a blessing, it also has a dangerous tendency to be used unjustly. It is also interesting that the Old Testament cannot be characterized as 'capitalist' or 'socialist.' The Old Testament upholds the private ownership of property, but (1) reminded Israel that they were still a pilgrim people,³⁴ and (2) upheld laws that prevented anyone from falling too deeply into poverty. The Year of Jubilee and the rest of Israel's land practices express the desire for every Israelite family to have its own land as part of the family unit. Land could not be permanently bought or acquired; one tribe or family could not make a vassal of another. If an Israelite fell upon hard times and was forced to sell family property, a kinsman-redeemer was required by Law to intervene. This provided the background of the book of Ruth,

²⁵ Exodus 16:18.

²⁶ Deuteronomy 14:28.

²⁷ Ezekiel 16:49.

²⁸ Isaiah 58:7.

²⁹ Deuteronomy 24:19, Leviticus 19:9.

³⁰ Jeremiah 22:13.

³¹ Micah 2:2.

³² Amos 5:12.

³³ Amos 6:4.

³⁴ Leviticus 25:23.

where Boaz restored Naomi to her ancestral land by marrying Ruth. God's removal of interest rate lending from Israel put an institutional check on greed and acquisitiveness.³⁵

Session Overview

SESSION 3

This week's goals

- Identify some of the ways you are connected globally.
- Describe how we are connected economically, using bananas as an example.
- Apply Old Testament biblical principles related to economic relationships.

Materials

- Quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. on global interconnectedness
- "What We Buy" worksheet
- Fair Trade FAQ
- "What's the Deal with the Seals?"

Homework for next session

- Research an item that you buy that is produced internationally.
- Choose one change you will make in what you buy to support equitable production practices.

Sample Agenda

- Welcome & sharing of commitment #1
- Discuss findings from research on what we buy
- Discuss Scriptures
- Discuss fair trade and responsible consumerism
- Homework: decide on one way to spend more justly
- Closing Prayer

³⁵ Exodus 22:26-27, Leviticus 25:35-38, Deuteronomy 23:19, Ezekiel 18:10-18, 22:12.

Agenda

SESSION 3

A. Welcome and sharing of commitment #1

15 MINUTES

- Sample opening question: *What was the best thing you had to eat in the last week?*
- Ask people to share how they chose to give God thanks for their wealth and how giving God thanks impacted them.

B. Discuss findings from research on what we buy

30 MINUTES

- Ask each person to report on their reading about banana production.
- You may want to share facts about the banana industry from the readings to stimulate and frame discussion.

The banana industry

A handful of companies import the majority of bananas to the United States (especially Dole and Chiquita). These companies operate differently in different nations. In some cases, they own the land on which bananas are grown, and in other cases, they buy bananas from contract plantations.

In 2004, the monthly minimum wage for an agricultural worker in Ecuador was \$143 / month. In 2004, the poverty line in Ecuador was \$279 in monthly income. (Source: FoodFirst Information and Action Network)

In 2002, Human Rights Watch reported that many children in Ecuador were paid \$3.50/day, less than the minimum wage.

Banana production has taken different forms in Central America, South America (which export bananas to the U.S), and the Caribbean (which exports bananas primarily to the UK).

The cultivation of Central and South American land for bananas had mixed impact. On the one hand, the banana industry enabled the building of roads and schools in rural areas. On the other hand, it produced an agricultural monoculture (overuse of land for one kind of plant) that threatens the environment and bio-diversity.

C. Discuss Scriptures

40 MINUTES

Scripture: 1) Exodus 16:16-18; 2) Leviticus 25:8-10 and 23-28; 3) Deuteronomy 24:10, 14-15, and 17-18.

- Divide the seminar into three groups. Ask each group to look at one of the passages listed above.
- Ask participants to carefully read the Scriptures listed under this week's theme and together write a brief one-sentence summary or "newspaper headline" that encapsulates the theme.
- Next, ask each group to choose a leader to share their summaries in turn with the whole group, explaining how they got it from the passages they read. After each group shares, offer additional observations and compare their summaries with the words scholars use to describe the theme: "Wealth must be justly distributed."

Ex. 16:16-18: During the Exodus, God made sure everyone had enough; no one could hoard food.

Lev. 25:8-10, 23-28: This passage describes the Year of Jubilee. God returned the land to its original tribal boundaries; the land was not Israel's to do with as they chose. By doing this, God provided each family with roughly the same portion of land, Israel's basic form of wealth.

Duet. 24: God defines how to have righteous economic dealings with a poor person (lending, payment of wages) in a way that entitles that person to dignity and basic welfare. In 24:17-18, God relates just treatment of the poor and outsiders to the history of the people of Israel: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this."

- After the groups have reported their summaries, ask: How might these principles of distribution and economic dealing apply to the banana industry we researched this week? To other industries?

D. Discussion of Fair Trade

20 MINUTES

Fair trade is a modern practice that aims to make the distribution of wealth in the global market more just. The concept of fair trade covers everything from small scale mission-driven businesses and craft projects that provide jobs in underserved areas to larger-scale farms, cooperatives, and manufacturing firms that guarantee health, safety, labor and environmental standards. Many fair trade products bear a

specialized label—this indicates that they have been certified by an independent nonprofit (NGO) to confirm that the products are really benefiting the producers.

- Introduce some of the principles and processes of fair trade.
- Handout the BFJN Fair Trade FAQ.

About fair trade

Fair trade is a voluntary system that enables farmers, workers, and craftspeople to participate in direct and equitable trade in the global market.

A fair trade label guarantees that certain standards have been observed in the production of a good: labor standards, environmental standards, prohibition on child labor, and sustainable wage in the local economy.

Fair trade favors companies that are worker-owned, assuming that worker-ownership helps empower those who are poor and prevents massive concentrations of wealth

- Share some examples of fair trade companies (you may want to read about these in advance).
 - o *List of banana cooperatives whose products are marketed to the US as “fair trade”* <http://transfairusa.org/content/certification/profiles.php>
 - o *Coffee cooperative in which fair trade premium is reinvested in community* (see www.coopcoffees.com, www.equalexchange.coop, www.puravidacoffee.com)
 - o *Crafts collaborative – Cards from Africa (Rwanda) – Christian community development organization dedicated to employment and empowerment -* <http://www.cardsfromafrica.com/>
- Ask members of the group to take 3 minutes to look over the “What We Buy” worksheet and think about items they typically use.
- “What are concrete examples of products or businesses that are committed to investing in poor communities, giving direct benefit to those who are poor?” Some examples are provided in the first column. Ask the group to share the names of organizations or corporations that practice fair trade. Include those names in the first column.

E. Homework

10 MINUTES

The homework for this week is to decide on one way to spend more justly.

- Have participants identify one way they regularly spend money that they can change to distribute wealth more justly. Encourage people to research some of the alternative businesses described above.

- Share copies of the handout, “What’s the Deal with the Seals?” which explains some of the different certification systems that consumers can consult to determine the history of a product.
- Share copies of the Martin Luther King quote for reflection over the next week.

F. Closing Prayer

Wealth is a Potential Idol

SESSION 4

Introduction

SESSION 4

We turn now to the major New Testament themes on wealth and giving. The first NT theme is quite negative, warning that *wealth is a stumbling block or competing object of devotion*. In general, the New Testament is much more suspicious of wealth than the Old (compare this theme to OT theme #1—*wealth is a blessing*). This emphasis is especially prominent in the synoptic gospels. In the parable of the soils the lure of wealth is bad soil number three, which chokes God's word.³⁶ In another parable a rich man loses his soul because he has spent his life making money instead of "being rich towards God."³⁷ Jesus says explicitly, "Do not store up treasures on earth...You cannot serve God and money."³⁸ This theme is repeated in the famous phrase found in 1 Timothy, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."³⁹

The major reason for this shift is the global evangelistic mission of Jesus. Mosaic Israel was, for practical purposes, a settler people. Jesus, however, made absolute God's earlier reminder, "You are but aliens and tenants,"⁴⁰ and made his people a pilgrim people. Whereas in Mosaic Israel, God called His people to inherit the Promised Land, Jesus called his people to claim the nations as *his inheritance, his possession*.⁴¹ Jesus therefore commissions his people to evangelize and disciple others.⁴² This mission to the world frames Jesus' development of his disciples.

This week we also carefully consider Luke 18:18-30. Looking closely at a Lukan passage makes sense because Luke wrote more about money and possessions than any other biblical author; he's also trying to tell us what Jesus himself said about our subject. One NT scholar has said of Luke: "There is no repentance in Luke that does not practice sympathy toward the poor and outcast, no welcoming the saving act of God in Jesus Christ that does not do justice and kindness, no waiting for his return that does not expect and anticipate God's vindication of the humble poor, no participation in this community that does not give alms or share one's goods or practice hospitality."⁴³

In Luke, spiritual matters are always intertwined with material ones. How we use our money is a good gauge of our spiritual life, and this is dramatically illustrated in Luke 18. Jesus gives the rich ruler a surprising reason for getting rid of all his possessions. In this passage, Jesus doesn't tell him to give because of compassion for the poor; he doesn't lecture him on global inequalities of wealth. He tells the ruler that his stuff is blocking him from seriously following Jesus. In fact, it's

³⁶ Mark 4:18.

³⁷ Luke 12:16-21.

³⁸ Matthew 6:19-24, Luke 16:10-13.

³⁹ 1 Timothy 6:10.

⁴⁰ Leviticus 25:23.

⁴¹ Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:8, Psalm 2:8, Ephesians 1:14.

⁴² Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:7, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21-22.

⁴³ Sondra Ely Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1995), 61.

preventing his inheritance of eternal salvation! Perhaps even more startling are Jesus' comments after the man leaves sadly. Jesus makes it clear that the ruler was not a special case who was especially addicted to his money. According to verses 24-25, *anyone* who is rich will have a difficult time entering the kingdom of God. At this point, Jesus doesn't say why riches are such an impediment, for as we saw this morning, nowhere in the Scriptures is material wealth as such considered intrinsically evil. In fact, Jesus was not calling the man to become poor himself, but to trust that his needs would be provided for as he followed Christ in the company of disciples.

But look at verse 28. Peter's response hints at why being rich is so dangerous for a life of discipleship. Peter clearly understands that following Jesus can only be done with a reckless abandon that makes all other concerns relative. In the case of the ruler, his possessions—tied to a particular place—did not allow him to physically leave home and continue with Jesus on his itinerant ministry. His wealth was dangerous because it prevented him from joining the community of disciples whose lives were fully centered around following their Teacher.

So how does this passage shape our practice of financial giving? Luke 18 is a passage especially appropriate for most of those who will be the participants in this course. As college graduates from American universities, it is statistically true that they have automatically reserved a place for themselves in the richest 5% in the world. When Jesus warns that it will be hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, he is speaking directly to us. According to this passage, if our career paths and financial spending patterns unthinkingly follow the average Americans', we are in deep trouble.

On the most basic level, Jesus demands that all of our financial and vocational decisions be absolutely subordinated to the twin goals of world mission and our discipleship. This is the context for all other thinking about giving. According to this passage, this kind of radical devotion is not for religious fanatics but is a prerequisite for entering the Kingdom of God at all. This has powerful implications for the jobs we choose next year, the entertainment we pay for, the hours we work, and what parts of our budget we fund most generously. All these decisions should be constellations that rotate around following Christ. One way to speak about the ethical import of this passage is its emphasis on simplicity, or single-minded devotion. As Kierkegaard entitled one of his books, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." Jesus puts his finger on riches as one of the top contenders to sully our purity of heart. And in this context, financial giving does not only benefit the recipient, but also serves as a spiritual discipline that draws us closer to the ideal of single-minded pursuit of Christ.

This week's goals

- Articulate some of the NT principles about wealth and apply them to modern, middle-class American lifestyle.
- Generate examples of minor adjustments and major paradigm shifts that could allow us to give more to the poor

Materials

- Whiteboard or flip chart, markers
- One participant with laptop (and LATG spreadsheet)

Homework for next session

- Decide on one concrete way to spend less on yourself

Sample Agenda

- Welcome people
- Discuss homework: one consumer decision that each group made
- Discuss Scripture
- Discuss American materialism in light of Luke 18:18-30
- Brainstorm ways to simplify our lifestyles
- Assign homework
- Closing Prayer

Agenda

SESSION 4

A. Welcome

5 MINUTES

- Review the week's agenda and goals.

B. Discuss homework

15 MINUTES

- Ask each person to share how he or she decided to spend differently as a result of researching what they buy and fair trade alternatives.
- Ask a note-taker to keep a list of ideas and alternatives discovered by members of the group. Explain that these will be incorporated into future curriculum and BFJN resources (separate from the names of the people who shared these ideas).

C. Discuss Scriptures

30 MINUTES

Mark 4:18-19, Matthew 6:19-24, Luke 12:16-21, 1 Timothy 6:10

- Divide the seminar into groups of four. Ask each group to look at all four passages. Ask participants to carefully read the Scriptures listed under this week's theme and together write a brief one sentence summary or "newspaper headline" that encapsulates the theme.
- Next, ask each group to choose a leader to share their summaries in turn with the whole group, explaining how they got it from the passages they read. After each group shares, offer additional observations and compare their summaries with the words scholars use to describe the theme: "Wealth is a potential idol."

Consider: The approach to wealth in these passages is in contrast to the OT theme of wealth as a blessing. Wealth is now a potential obstacle.

Jesus has given us a mission to the world, to bring his healing and justice. This supersedes the Old Testament's temporary provision for Israel to be settled in a land.

Jesus' commands concern both our motivations (where our heart is) and our actions (do not store up treasure on earth).

After each group has reported their summaries, ask the group: How might these principles of distribution and economic dealing apply to the banana industry we researched this week? To other industries?

D. Discuss American materialism in light of Luke 18:18-30

30 MINUTES

First read together slowly through Luke 18:18-30, asking each participant to read one verse in turn. Ask participants for their thoughts or impressions.

Consider: The danger of wealth for contemporary Americans.

Jesus gives a particular command to the ruler, but he states a general principle about anyone who is rich.

Jesus sees money as almost radioactive material or as a pathogen—in small quantities, it can be a useful vaccination, but in large quantities, it can kill you.

Lead your group through the following explanation of American wealth:

- But are we rich? Sociologists have shown that most Americans like to say they're middle class. Refer to the global rich list. Where did we stand in relationship to global wealth?
- If you didn't do this in Session 2, consider also emphasizing that we are richer than at any other time in history. Discuss the resources available to us that weren't even available to kings 500 years ago.
- So we're the richest people in the world at the richest time in the world—Jesus' words certainly apply to us.

Discussion questions:

- *Are we rich? Why or why not? Do you think of yourself as rich?*
 - *Why might Jesus say this? In what ways might our wealth inhibit our relationship with God?*

E. Brainstorm how to simplify our lifestyles

20 MINUTES

Encourage participants by saying that, despite the extremely challenging nature of the Scriptures, we can take steps of grace beginning **right now**. Remind everyone that the benefits of simplifying lifestyle (spending less on yourself) are twofold:

- o It helps protect us from idolatrously worshipping our wealth.
- o It frees up money to give to the poor.

Using a whiteboard or flip chart, ask participants to suggest possible means of simplifying lifestyle to increase giving, divided into two categories: Minor adjustments vs. Major paradigm shifts. Write ideas in the appropriate column on the whiteboard or power point. Some ideas suggested in previous seminars:

- o *Get out of debt/don't get into debt*
 - o *Haircuts at home*
 - o *Have a simpler wedding*
 - o *Buy a smaller house*
 - o *Travel less*
 - o *Commit to public, not private, colleges for your kids*
 - o *Don't upgrade what you already have*
 - o *For one year, switch what you spend on dining out & entertainment with what you give to the poor*
 - o *Live in community; have a housemate or roommate*
 - o *Form a cooking rotation with other people*
 - o *Form a parents' group to hand down clothes among children*
 - o *Modify your entertainment and eating patterns, give away the savings*
 - o *Bag your lunches and give away the same amount of \$ you spend on restaurants to global hunger*
 - o *Drink tap water; buy a water bottle*
 - o *Watch only DVDs, not movies in theaters*
 - o *Buy clothes from thrift stores*
 - o *Use a cheap, reliable car; or have no car and use public transportation*
- Ask the group to identify how much they think some of these changes would save. Ask a member of the group to input these numbers into an Excel spreadsheet that calculates how much more money someone could give away over the course of a lifetime if they made some of these lifestyle changes. (It's more than half a MILLION dollars for one middle-class person, without exceptionally radical lifestyle changes.)

F. Homework

10 MINUTES

Ask people to think about potential major paradigm shifts and minor adjustments. Come back to the next group describing one change that they can commit to making over the next year.

G. Closing Prayer

Wealth is for Sharing with the Poor SESSION 5

Introduction

SESSION 5

A second New Testament theme views wealth as a resource for human needs that must be rightly distributed. While the OT idea of material blessing as a reward for righteousness is not repeated in the New Testament, its emphasis on right distribution of wealth does carry over. Further, in this theme, the NT does not celebrate the goodness of wealth but does levelheadedly acknowledge it as a necessity for material needs. This theme dominates the epistles. For example, Paul speaks often about the role of money in the nascent church, from his opinions about how apostles like himself should be financially supported⁴⁴ to the church-wide collection for the poor in Jerusalem.⁴⁵ I Timothy 5:9 gives instructions about which widows should be supported by the church, and in Acts 6 the apostles invent the office of deacon because of ethnic strife about church welfare. Clearly the epistles are concerned about just economic patterns within the emerging church. The Gospels speak to this theme as well; the most intense example is Matthew 25:31-46, where Jesus makes everyone's eternal destiny dependent on their generosity to the poor.

In this week's 'focus' passage, Luke 16:19-31, Jesus tells the shocking parable of a rich man who goes to hell for doing nothing. What a curious parable! In the literary world it creates, the rich man apparently roasts eternally simply because he enjoyed his wealth, and Lazarus gets off the hook just because he had a hard time in life. It doesn't say anything about him causing the poverty of Lazarus. But if we take a closer look, this parable speaks powerfully to our questions. It is important to note that when the rich man asks to warn his relatives, he is told they don't need a warning because they have already been warned in the Hebrew Bible. Apparently, the rich man has failed to do something commanded in the Law and Prophets and doesn't want his family to make the same mistake. From the context, it is clear that the rich man has failed to fulfill the many Old Testament injunctions to share with the poor. He was aware of the poor man's needs but did nothing. It's as simple as that. Like the previous passage, eternal life is linked to choices about the use of wealth. In this case, however, the problem is willfully ignoring the needs of the poor. This passage is similar to Matthew 25, where Christ decides people's eternal destinies based on whether they met the needs of people around them.

This passage has important implications for us. First, evangelicals need to take seriously the force of this parable's teaching on our definition of salvation. Too often they tell people that if they walk up the aisle at a Billy Graham crusade their eternal destiny is settled. This is not the place to develop a full-fledged definition of salvation, but whatever we believe, it must include this passage and Matthew 25.

Second, this passage implies that if we are aware of the needs of the poor and are in close enough proximity to alleviate that need, then we are deeply responsible to do so. If this is true, we must think again of our globalized world. How many of our parents said, 'Eat your Brussels sprouts; you should be grateful because children in China are starving'? Of course, some of us stubbornly refused, saying that we

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:3.

⁴⁵ E.g. Romans 15:29ff.

should send the Brussels sprouts to China where they could be more appreciated. This childhood response, which illustrates both our picky appetites and our callous disregard of the poor, also illustrates something else. We don't often feel responsible to care for starving people in distant lands because they are so far away, and we could do nothing to help. They just don't take Brussels sprouts in the mail.

However, we can very easily be informed about the human needs all around the planet. In fact, you have to make a conscious effort to flip the channel or turn to the sports page in order to avoid them. We can also very easily be involved in meeting those needs. Non-profit organizations exist for every kind of human suffering, and many of them would gladly automatically withdraw a monthly donation from your checking account. My point is that our globalized world has laid a vast number of Lazaruses at our gate, and we are responsible to share more than just the crumbs from our table. We have the Law and Prophets, and we have been warned.

Session Overview

SESSION 5

This week's goals

- Consider the meaning of the story of Lazarus at the Gate in context of modern globalization and wealth inequality
- Prepare participants to decide on amount they will give

Materials

- Whiteboard or flip chart, markers
- News article and/or DVD on extreme poverty

Homework for next session

- Decide how much you will give (both baseline and stretch goals)

Sample Agenda

- Welcome people
- Discuss Scripture
- Focus on global poverty in light of Luke 16:19-31
- Pray for those who are poor
- Discuss homework: our commitment to living simply
- Assign homework: each member decides how much he or she will give
- Closing Prayer

Agenda

SESSION 5

A. Welcome

5 MINUTES

- Review the week's agendas and goals.

B. Discuss Scriptures

20 MINUTES

1 Timothy 6:7-9, Acts 4:32-35, 1 John 3:17-18

- Divide the seminar into groups of four. Ask each group to look at all three passages. Ask participants to carefully read the Scriptures listed under this week's theme and together write a brief one sentence summary or "newspaper headline" that encapsulates the theme.
- Next, ask each group to choose a leader to share their summaries in turn with the whole group, explaining how they got it from the passages they read. After each group shares, offer additional observations and compare their summaries with the words scholars use to describe the theme: "Wealth is for sharing with the poor."

Consider: This theme is similar to the second Old Testament theme, "Wealth must be justly distributed."

Notice how concretely John intends his audience to act. We must always unite heart motivation and outward action.

C. Focus on global poverty in light of Luke 16:19-31

30 MINUTES

This section is very facilitator-driven—it's the most direct "teaching" you've done so far. First read together slowly through the text, asking each participant to read one verse in turn. Ask participants for their thoughts or impressions.

Consider: Globalization has created a tremendous responsibility for giving to the poor. The rich man was sent to hell for doing nothing; he didn't cause Lazarus' poverty, but merely *ignored* it.

- Ask the question, "How much should he have given to Lazarus?"

The rich man ignored theme #2 from the Old Testament.

Principle: It was in his power to help and he didn't (back to Singer).

- Be mindful that people may experience discomfort thinking about this passage, and Jesus' heart for the poor. This discomfort can be appropriate and constructive. As the leader, let people sit with these emotions without moving too quickly to action. Let them know that we'll pray and act on these things shortly, but don't move too quickly through the Scriptures.
- Ask questions to encourage people to challenge their own giving. Example:
 - o *"Can we give any less than what we said the rich man should have given to Lazarus?"*
- Consider some of the following issues that relate the passage to life in America today:
 - o *As some regions of the world have experienced significant economic growth (remember that in previous centuries, nearly everyone was poor), the gap between wealthy and poor has increased. In 1820, the biggest gap between the world's richest economy (UK) and the poorest region (Africa), was a ratio of 4:1; In 1998, the gap between the richest economy (the US) and the poorest region (Africa) was 20:1.⁴⁶*
 - o POVERTY in the world hasn't changed much from when Lazarus laid there, hungry, homeless, and diseased.
- Encourage the members of your group to interact with the passage on multiple levels by using the following methods:
 - o To intellectually engage participants with the scale of world poverty, go through statistics on the PPT.
 - o To imaginatively engage participants with what it's like to be poor, divide the class in half, asking them to imagine that the seminar participants are a microcosm of the world. Pick one participant—he represents the rich, and gets to keep his entire current income. Then point to half the seminar—they represent the world's "middle class" and must live on 50% to 75% less income than they currently do. Ask them to imagine what lifestyle adjustments they would make. The other half represents the 3 billion people who live on less than \$2 a day. Ask them to close their eyes as you read aloud this text: <http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC26/3rdWrld.htm>. Ask them to imagine what it would be like to live on that income.
 - o To emotionally engage participants, tell the story or show a video of one poor person's life. Suggested resources:
 - NY Times, August 24, 2007 "Africa Adds to the Miserable Ranks of Child Labor"
 - World Vision DVD *Acting on AIDS* or website

⁴⁶ Sachs, 28.

D. Pray for the poor

15 MINUTES

- Pray together for the half of the world who must live on less than \$2 a day (the Lazaruses that are laid at our gates).
 - o *Optional:* If participants have spent time in extremely poor environments, encourage them to pray for people or places by name.
- Pray for those of us who are very rich (remember Session #2) to respond differently than the rich man in Jesus' parable.

E. Discuss homework: one concrete way to spend less on yourself

Last week, your group asked thought about major paradigm shifts and minor adjustments you could make to your lifestyles over the next year. Ask the group to share what commitments they made. Does this session help in strengthening that commitment? Expanding it?

F. Homework

Ask each person to prayerfully decide how much they will give to the poor at the end of the course. Ask them to come up with a minimum figure, and a higher "stretch" number that they might be able to reach. As you close, remind people that God is calling us to take significant steps of growth, but that we won't become a saint tomorrow. Mother Teresa tells a wonderful story that beautifully illustrates this point:

"Not so long ago a very wealthy Hindu lady came to see me. She sat down and told me, "I would like to share in your work." In India, more and more people like her are offering to help. I said, "That is fine." The poor woman had a weakness that she confessed to me. "I love elegant saris," she said. Indeed, she had on a very expensive sari that probably cost around eight hundred rupees. Mine cost only eight rupees. Hers cost one hundred times more...It occurred to me to say to her, "I would start with the saris. The next time you go to buy one, instead of paying eight hundred rupees, buy one that costs five hundred. Then with the extra three hundred rupees, buy saris for the poor." The good woman now wears 100-rupee saris, and that is because I have asked her not to buy cheaper ones. She has confessed to me

that this has changed her life. She now knows what it means to share. That woman assures me that she has received more than what she has given."⁴⁷

Ask the group to decide over what span of time will the money be given, and in what intervals? For example, will it be:

- A one time gift at the end of Session 12
- Over one year, in quarterly intervals
- Etc.

G. Closing Prayer

⁴⁷ Mother Teresa. *No Greater Love*, New World Library, 1997.

Introduction

Some thoughts on integration and the first half of the course

In the first half of the course, the Scriptures urged us to work towards spending less money on our own needs. There are two reasons for this. As we have seen, hoarding too much money or striving to gain more can be dangerous for our focus on God. The less we worry about money, the more freedom we have to follow Christ in any way He should lead. Second, by spending less money on ourselves, we are freer to give more to others. In other words, we should strive to live simply in order to be more generous.

Second, the Scriptures we have examined give practical direction to our life of generosity. This lifestyle is motivated by the acknowledgement of both our responsibility to care for the needs of the poor around us, and our desire to see greater equality and harmony among Christian believers worldwide. The Scriptures call us actively to choose to seek out those in need wherever they may be, “especially those who belong to the household of faith.”⁴⁸ Think of how bizarre and absolutely counter-cultural this sounds. Can you imagine a group of people getting together to try to spend *less* money on themselves so they can give away their hard-earned salaries to people they’ve never met? This sort of behavior is utterly nonsensical outside of a committed community of Christian believers. In other words, if one doesn’t share what Wayne Meeks called “the moral world of the New Testament”—its eschatology, its belief in Jesus’ resurrection, its loyalty to the church as primary reference group, and its charge to Christians to be ministers of the kingdom—all its teachings about money won’t make any sense. From the perspective of mainstream culture, “Christians should be conspicuous for their odd behaviour in their theoretical and practical rejection of the prevailing financial ideas.”⁴⁹

But within a Christian moral world, it is the deepest wisdom to give away much of my salary in order to gain treasure in heaven; it is utterly rational to give up my own comfort for the sake of someone else’s, since Christ did it for me first; it is the only safe path to lose my life so that I can save it.

It is also important to acknowledge the questions to which the Bible has spoken *less* forcefully. For example, we aren’t told exactly how much to keep and how much to give away. We are simply told to be as generous as possible and to possess only that which does not distract us from following Christ. There is no magic number—no ten percent of your net income, like many churches would like to teach. Likewise, we aren’t told exactly to whom we should give our money. The two categories of people who merit our ‘alms’ are 1) the neediest people we have access to, and 2) fellow believers who are poorer than us. The Scriptures simply do not say what proportion of income we should give to the poorest, and what should be given within the Body of Christ. And finally, we are given little to no help in Scripture for our second question, “How can we more effectively and faithfully apply these ethics today?” For that, we will have to move beyond the realm of biblical ethics, a task we will take up in the second half of the course.

⁴⁸ Galatians 6:10.

⁴⁹ Redmond Mullin, *The Wealth of Christians* (Orbis Press: Maryknoll, 1984), 218.

This week's goals

- Decide how much the group will be able to give collectively.
- Integrate 4 biblical themes to identify a core principle regarding wealth and poverty.
- Discuss lifestyle change as a spiritual discipline.
- Imagine what would happen if Christians pursued these disciplines in community.

Materials

- Whiteboard or flip chart
- Meditation on discipleship (optional)
- Your own statement on the biblical message of economic discipleship
- Your research on intentional Christian communities

Homework for next session

- Three participants will research one aspect of development each (the leader should email relevant research links to participants)

Sample Agenda

- Welcome and Introduction
- Discuss homework: each person shares how much he or she decided to give
- Discuss scriptural themes covered in weeks 2- through 5
- Read meditation on personal experience of change
- Discuss examples of Christian communities and individuals committing to lifestyle change
- Preview second half of the course
- Homework
- Closing Prayer

A. Welcome and Introduction

5 MINUTES

B. Discuss homework

30 MINUTES

As noted at the end of the guide for the last session, having members of the group share the amount each has committed to give can create tension and perhaps competition between members. While some discomfort is natural and may even be helpful, it is important for you to help all group members feel comfortable sharing, even those that have not stretched themselves. Encourage participants to respect and support one another in their commitments, recognizing that everyone is starting at different points and that this is a life-long journey for all Christians.

- Ask participants to share how much they have decided to give. Encourage them to provide both a realistic and a stretch goal for their giving. Consider giving either in one lump sum or in several installments. Installments can be especially helpful for those without much of an income (e.g., students).
- Total how much your group has given.
- Pray to give thanks for reaching this milestone.

C. Discuss Scripture: review of all 4 themes

30 MINUTES

Since participants have been exposed to a wide range of extremely challenging information, it is important to summarize it and pastorally to help them to respond well to it. Since participants have taken concrete, practical steps to apply each of the 4 scriptural themes on economic discipleship, it is also important to consider how the 4 themes integrate both conceptually and in lived experience. This activity (B.) aims for conceptual integration, while the stories of Christian communities (C.) provide example “best practices” for how faithful economic discipleship might be enacted.

- Ask who can remember (without looking) all 4 biblical themes. Give hints and review as necessary, looking back at the past lessons.
- Read a representative verse from each week to refresh the group’s memory.
- Give participants 10-15 minutes to come up with a short, one sentence mission statement [or theme, slogan, headline] that encapsulates all 4 themes. The goal is to write a single statement summarizing biblical teaching on economic discipleship.

Share your own statement (which you have written ahead of time) and participate in the discussion.

- *Optional:* Ask participants to draw a picture/diagram that encapsulates the 4 themes if you sense they are wearying of writing summary statements.
- Discuss what participants have written, asking how they incorporated each theme into their statement.
- You may adopt or adapt the following summary of the biblical teaching on economic discipleship:

God calls us to grow in giving to the poor powered by joyful, just simplicity.

Each part of this statement relates to a particular theme:

- “giving to the poor” (4), deciding how much we’ll give
- “joyful” (1), giving thanks for our wealth revealed in our budgets
- “just” (2), deciding how we will buy different products to promote just distribution
- “simplicity” (3), deciding how we will spend less on ourselves

(See the “leaders’ resources” section for this session for further discussion.)

D. Reflection on members’ experience of lifestyle change

25 MINUTES

- Ask members of the group to write down the commitments they have made in previous weeks:
 - o One way they are giving thanks
 - o One way they are spending differently
 - o One way they are consuming less
 - o The amount they are willing to give
- Ask members to reflect silently on the process of making and keeping these commitments, using the following questions:
 - o What has been challenging about the last 5 sessions?
 - o What has been life-giving about the changes you have made?
 - o Where or how has God revealed himself to you during the process?
- *Optional:* Read (or have a member of the group read) a meditation on lifestyle change as a spiritual discipline (One is provided in the “leaders’ resources” section).

- Ask each person to name one thing he or she is learning about lifestyle change as a spiritual discipline. Use the questions above or the meditation reading as a jumping off point for discussion.

E. Christian communities striving for economic discipleship

20 MINUTES

- Pose one of the following questions to the group:
 - o What would happen if more Christians began to live out lifestyle simplicity, justice, and giving?
 - o What if Christians did this in community?
 - o What would those communities look like?
 - o What impact might they have?
- Summarize or read an excerpt of two of the following stories of Christians striving to live simply for the sake of generosity. (You will need to research these organizations in advance or identify communities of their own).
 - a. *Gary Ginter, a wealthy businessman who gives away most of his money to missions:*
http://www.generousgiving.org/images/uploaded/WIERICK_Profit_Prophet_Ginter.pdf
 - Other individuals are profiled here: www.boldergiving.org
 - b. *Jubilee Partners, a Christian service community in rural Georgia that lives and shares together in order to host refugees and work for peace.*
www.jubileepartners.org
 - c. *A fictitious example (see "leaders' resources")*
- Briefly discuss these examples with one or two of the following questions:
 - o Which of the 4 themes manifested themselves most clearly in each community?
 - o Which community best integrated the 4 themes, and why?
 - o Which community would you most like to emulate in your own church/fellowship group? What aspects would you adopt? Which aspects would you adapt?

F. Preview of Part 2

5 MINUTES

- Review the amount the group has decided to give.
- Hand out a table of contents for successive weeks for second half. Remember, the second part of the study helps participants decide where and how to give.
- Explain that each week participants will research a particular method or approach to poverty relief and several Christian organizations that exemplify that approach on the ground

G. Homework

5 MINUTES

Session 7 will focus on *economic development*.

- Provide the group with the handout, “Dimensions of Poverty” from Bryant Myers book, *Walking with the Poor*. This framework will guide future discussions on different groups and their approach to alleviating poverty.
- Ask for 3 volunteers for the first week to research *one each* of the following 3 aspects of development. Participants should be prepared to summarize their findings in 10 minutes or less. Links provided should be considered starting points. Encourage participants to see where their web surfing will take them. (Leader should email these links to volunteers)
 - d. Public health/health care (The Carter Center’s Guinea Worm Program)
http://www.cartercenter.org/health/guinea_worm/index.html
 - e. Public health/health care (Aravind eye clinic)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cjinPua7Ag>
 - f. Agriculture (Different programs providing fish ponds)
http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/virtual.nsf/stable/c2c_segele?Open&campaign=&cmp
http://donate.wvus.org/OA_HTML/xxwvibeCCtpItnDspRte.jsp?section=10047&item=1445780
http://www.worldfishcenter.org/cms/list_article.aspx?catID=45&ddlID=102
 - g. Infrastructure (greater access to clean water)
<http://www.xanga.com/Project440>
- After researching their subject more broadly, participants may visit the following NGO’s websites to determine what how they are carrying out these methods on the ground
 - Mennonite Central Committee: <http://mcc.org/>
 - World Vision: <http://www.worldvision.org/>

H. Closing Prayer

Introduction

Introduction to the second half of the course

In the second half of this course, we begin to consider the issue of how to give effectively. This is a serious and complicated question because much giving to the poor in our globalized world is ineffective at best and creates serious, negative, unintended consequences at worst. For example, in the late 1990s a group of Christians became aware that the northern-dominated, Muslim Sudanese government was rounding up its thousands of its southern Christians citizens and selling them into slavery. The Christian group compassionately founded a society to redeem these oppressed people out of slavery, and thousands of U.S. dollars went to free large numbers of slaves from the slave market. Great, right? Wrong—actually, the efforts of the Christians drove up the price of slaves, making the market for slavery even more lucrative, and slave-trading became worse!⁵⁰ In another example closer to home, one church youth group in southern California decided they should respond to the massive poverty that plagued an entire town on the other side of the Mexican border. With characteristic youthful American energy they put together a short term mission trip to build better housing in the town, taking with them thousands of dollars of building materials. After the first year they felt so good about themselves they decided to do it every year. Unfortunately, however, their well-intentioned effort had two nasty side effects. First, many Mexicans in the town became less concerned about maintaining their houses since “the Americans will just come next year and fix everything.” Second, the American infusion of free, high-quality construction decimated the job market for many local construction workers, and some ironically came across the border as illegal immigrants. Similar versions of this story could be told all around the world. The infusion of foreign money can be a blessing or a curse.

However, the story is even more complex than these relatively straightforward examples. Since World War II ended, the field of economic development has undergone much change and controversy. In the fifties and early sixties most economists were confident that Third World countries could become economically prosperous if they would just move through the same stages of development that the West had passed through. By the mid-sixties, however, a rising tide of economists rejected this theory, claiming that the Third World was trapped in a permanent cycle of dependence on the West. According to these dependency theorists, the solution was to isolate and protect themselves from the West, not to emulate it. By the late twentieth century, the demise of communism and the success of capitalism in Asia has regained the initiative for free market advocates. Still, the strong undercurrent that protests globalization as a cloak for neo-colonialism and environmental exploitation has demonstrated the continuing salience of the debate.⁵¹

This background is important because underlying any long-term attempt at alleviating poverty is some kind of economic theory. If the organization you send your

⁵⁰ See [Gardner, Christine-J](#), “Slave Redemption : Americans are becoming instant abolitionists: But is the movement backfiring?” [Christianity-Today](#). 43 (Ag 9 1999), p. 28-33.

⁵¹ This paragraph is based on Peter L Berger’s accessible summary in *The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions about Prosperity, Equality and Liberty*. (New York: Basic Books, 1986.), chapter 6.

money to depends on an unproductive theory of economic development, or is working towards misguided political legislation in order to change the structures that cause poverty, your money actually becomes part of the problem, not the solution. Therefore, even if you're not an expert in development, it's still worth it to research the background and philosophy of organizations you would consider giving to. Even though we will not become experts in economic development, even our short time together in the second half of the course can help us become much wiser and more effective givers.

Background to week 7 on relief and development

In II Corinthians 8: 7-15 we have an excerpt from the most extended discussion of giving in the New Testament. Paul is exhorting the Corinthian believers to pay what they said they would for the Jerusalem collection, which will go to their faraway Jewish brothers and sisters, who are threatened with lean times by a famine. The first things I notice about Paul's appeal are the positive arguments he makes for giving. If Jesus' warnings in Luke were the stick, perhaps Paul is giving us the carrot. Paul tells the Corinthians to be excellent in their giving because they are already virtuous people. He reminds them that this is an opportunity to express their sincere love and to imitate the generosity of Christ. Then in vss. 11-15 he puts forward a very interesting argument. He draws from the Old Testament theme that is concerned with equitable distribution, even quoting the passage about manna provision from Exodus (remember theme #2). He assures the Corinthians that they do not need to impoverish themselves while the Judeans get comfortable on their contributions; rather, Paul's goal is to work towards equality of resources.

This passage is especially rich in its implications for our giving practices, so let's jump right in. First, I note that concerning giving to the church, Paul does not think in terms of local congregations giving only to their own local church. Instead, he surveys the entire worldwide body of Christ and encourages believers to give money where it is needed the most. His primary concern is to work toward relative, not absolute, financial equality among all Christians. For Paul, need outweighs proximity—it took days or weeks to travel from Corinth to Jerusalem, much longer than it takes today to go from Boston to anywhere in the world. It also outweighs ethnicity and personal acquaintance, for Paul is telling a group of Greek Christians to sacrifice for the sake of Jewish Christians whom they have presumably never met. If we were to follow these principles in our giving to the church, as I suggest we should, the results would be powerful. For example, many churches now teach that members should give 10% of their paychecks to the local church. These churches may send a token portion away for missions, etc. but spend the majority on their own congregation. This practice creates vast inequalities among churches, as those with wealthy congregations build opulent buildings and others struggle to pay a pastor. Perhaps it is time to follow Paul's example by giving our money to the church in a way that contributes to greater partnership among the worldwide body of Christ, instead of exacerbating class differences.

This week's goals

- Check in on each person's practice of the four commitments since last session.
- Scripture reflection: II Corinthinans 8: 12-15 as a 'bridge' passage.
- Define & describe relief and development.
- Case studies presented by participants.
- Prepare for next session's discussion of micro-enterprise and fair trade.
- Prayer

Materials

- Poverty Diagram
- "A Closer Look at Microfinance" (Tearfund) (Homework)
- "Hardship in the Malto Development Project" (Homework)
- "Demystifying Microfinance" (Tearfund) (Homework)
- Prevention is a Better Cure: Fair Trade Prevents the Exploitation of Children", Fr. Shay Cullen. (Homework)

Homework for next session

- Four participants will research and present on organizations dedicated to promoting fair trade and micro-enterprise loans.

Sample Agenda

- Check in on commitments
- Discuss II Corinthinans 8: 12-15 as a 'bridge' passage
- Define and describe 'poverty'
- Define and describe 'relief' and 'development' as means to combat poverty
- Reports on relief and development organizations by participants
- Homework
- Closing Prayer

A. Check in on commitments

10 MINUTES

As you begin the second half of the group, you will begin each session by providing space for participants to support each other in their practice of the four commitments. Recognize that while these commitments are intentional reflections of God's grace, they are profoundly counter-cultural, and may bring up difficulties, struggles or strong emotional reactions.

- Break up into groups of two (these can be consistent groups every week so trust is built between two people, or they can rotate so each person has contact with everyone in the group).
- Each person should spend five minutes each sharing insights or feelings arising from their practice of the four commitments.
- Briefly pray for each other's practice of the commitments—that they would be a means of grace, growth, and generosity.

B. Discuss II Corinthians 8: 12-15 as a 'bridge' passage

20 MINUTES

This passage not only emphasizes several of the biblical themes we've seen in the first half of the course (especially #2 and #4), but it also introduces us to the themes of the second half: To whom should we give, and how can we give wisely?

- Before introducing the text, ask participants what criteria or standards they currently use to guide their giving. Write them on a whiteboard.
- Read II Corinthians 8:12-15 three times aloud. Ask different participants to read.
- Referring back to the introduction, provide the following context for the group:

I Corinthians 8-9 is the clearest & most extensive teaching in the NT about giving money. On his missionary journeys, Paul is collecting money for the poor at the founding church in Jerusalem.

The distance from Corinth to Jerusalem is more than 3 weeks by boat. Yet Paul called the Body of Christ to give to the poor whom they had never met, of a different culture, language & ethnicity, separated by more than 3 weeks travel time with no internet, news, video, or phones.

Verse 14 recalls theme #2 (Wealth must be justly distributed). Giving is a matter of justice and equity, not generosity or "charity."

- Ask participants what criteria or standards Paul was using when asking the Corinthian church to give to the Jerusalem church. Write them on the whiteboard.
- Explain to the group that the second half of the course is guided by this text, which is one of the most important in the New Testament on *where* and *how* giving should be prioritized.
- Emphasize that today's world demonstrates the same inequalities as it did in Paul's day, and that inequality extends to Christian believers globally. Provide the following examples:
 - o *In the last 50 years the church has grown rapidly in the global south, especially among the poor. Currently, the majority of Christians in the world live in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia. For more details see http://www.bu.edu/sth/focus/spring01/shifting_southward.htm.*
 - o *Thus, the Family of God is divided into those who are very wealthy (like the Corinthians) and those who are mired in absolute poverty (like the Jerusalem church).*
 - o *When Christians do give, it tends to be local and to our own churches, which means our money rarely gets to half of the world living on less than \$2 a day. This exacerbates inequalities, just as when rich areas of town have better schools because they're funded by property taxes (see Kozol's Savage Inequalities).*

Inequality is increasing—the rich keep getting richer, while the poor continue to live on the edge of life and death.

- Ask participants how they think the passage could impact the way they give today. Below are suggested applications:
 - o *The poor are poor precisely because they don't have social capital—we can't just keep our giving local and to those we know.*
 - o *We should think of giving as a way to move towards income equality among all God's children as a matter of justice, not just "charity."*
 - o *We should emphasize need-based, globally focused giving.*

C. Define and describe poverty

10 MINUTES

The purpose of this section is to expose participants to the complex, multi-dimensional nature of poverty. Different responses to poverty that you will examine in the next three weeks address these different dimensions.

- Discuss the "dimensions of poverty" graphic handed out at the end of last session. Ask which aspects of poverty are most familiar, and which are most surprising.

D. Define and describe relief and development

10 MINUTES

Today's session emphasizes relief and development as means to combat poverty. This section briefly defines those terms before moving to the case studies. Each week, you will think of poverty relief in terms of the well-known proverb: ***Give a man a fish, and he'll eat for a day. Teach a man a fish, and he'll eat for a lifetime.*** [If you are in need of some humor, you can just google "Give a man a fish" and see all the smart-alecky variations people have created.]

Relief

When you say, "Give a man a fish, and he'll eat for a day," you are talking about relief.

Relief is, of course, necessary when disasters occur. If relief is not carried out well, it will lead to chronic problems such as disease (in the medium term) and economic collapse (in the longer term). Look no further than New Orleans to see the consequences of poorly planned and executed relief.

Relief is perhaps most familiar form of giving and is often the default method; it's the easiest to raise funds for relief because:

- The overwhelming immediate needs generated by a famine or natural disaster are easy for anyone to grasp.
- Disaster receives greater media coverage.
- The victims are obviously not at fault (whereas sometimes the causes of chronic poverty are more ambiguous).
- It doesn't seem to require long-term commitment on the part of the giver.

Ultimately, relief is like putting a band-aid on a wound. It will stop the bleeding and help for a time, but it can only alleviate the symptom temporarily. What is needed is a cure, which is what *development* tries to achieve.

Development

When you say, "Teach a man to fish, and he'll eat for a lifetime," you are talking about development.

Bryant Meyers of World Vision, defines development this way: "Transformational development is the process that helps people to discover their true identity as children of God and to recover their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of gifts from God for the well-being of all. Transformational development is seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, and spiritually.¹

Aspects of development include:

- Health care
- Agriculture (or, in this case, aquaculture)
- Infrastructure (wells, roads, housing, latrines)

E. Reports from participants

45 MINUTES

- Remind participants that reports should be limited to 10 minutes per person.
- After presentations have been made, ask the group, “Which organization would you be most inclined to support? Why? Do you know of other organizations whose development work you respect?”

F. Homework

10 MINUTES

- Ask all participants to read two articles to provide background for the next week:
 - o “Demystifying Microfinance” (Tearfund)
 - o “Prevention is a Better Cure: Fair Trade Prevents the Exploitation of Children”, Fr. Shay Cullen.
- Ask four people to research the following organizations:
 - o Opportunity International – www.opportunity.org
 - o EFICOR (Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief) – Review “Hardship in the Malto Development Project,” published by Tearfund and www.eficor.org for additional information.
 - o People's Recovery, Empowerment and Development Assistance Foundation www.preda.net
 - o Catholic Relief Services www.crsfairtrade.org
- Each person should be prepared to give brief presentation (no more 10 minutes, including time for questions).
- Ask presenters to consider these questions:
 - o What does the organization do?
 - o What are the dimensions of poverty that the organization addresses?

G. Closing Prayer

Session Overview

SESSION 8

This week's goals

- Check in on each person's practice of the 4 commitments since last session.
- Reflect on Scripture.
- Define micro-enterprise and fair trade.
- Discuss organizations that impact poverty through microfinance and fair trade using case studies presented by participants.

Materials

- Articles for next session's homework:
 - “Why U.S. Farm Subsidies are Bad for the World” Philadelphia Inquirer, May 6, 2002 (homework)
 - “Why our Farm Policy is Failing” TIME, November 2, 2007 (homework)
 - “Campaign Against the Patuca Dam, Honduras” Tearfund Advocacy Case Study (homework)
 - “Sex Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation” International Justice Mission fact sheet (homework)

Homework for next session

- Read articles on the Farm Bill, Advocacy Case Study, Sex Trafficking
- Three participants research organizations engaged in political advocacy

Sample Agenda

- Check in on commitments
- Opening Discussion
- Scripture Reflection
- Define and describe microfinance and fair trade as means to combat poverty
- Reports on microfinance and fair trade organizations by participants
- Homework
- Closing Prayer

A. Check in on commitments

15 MINUTES

- Break into groups of two.
- Spend five minutes each sharing insights or feelings arising from their practice of the 4 commitments. Participants should also share their progress on their commitments.
- Briefly pray for each other's practice of the commitments—that they would be a means of grace, growth, and generosity.

B. Opening discussion questions

10 MINUTES

- To start discussion, you might ask:
 - o Name one thing you worry about financially.
 - o What is the last time you/your household faced an unexpected or significant financial crisis? How did you meet the challenge? What made it possible to get through it (spiritually, financially)?

B. Scripture reflection

15 MINUTES

Scripture: Luke 12:13-35, Acts 2:42-47

- Invite participants to reading these passages aloud
- To start discussion, pose one of the following questions
 - o How do we deal with the fear of not having enough as individuals and as communities?
 - o From the passages you just read, what might God call us to do when faced with these fears?

C. Define microfinance and fair trade

5 MINUTES

Microfinance provides financial resources that enable those who are poor to pursue income generating activities. Fair trade opens markets in the global north to products made by the poor and ensures that producers receive direct and equitable benefit for their work. Both microfinance and fair trade are ways to support local ownership, protect individuals against uncontrollable risk, and provide capital for business creation and expansion.

Thinking back to the discussion of the dimensions of poverty in session 7, microfinance and fair trade address three key challenges of poverty: 1) vulnerability in the face of unexpected change; 2) lack of resources and lack of capital; 3) risk of exploitation by predatory lenders and middlemen.

- Ask participants to share their key learnings about micro-enterprise and fair trade from the two readings shared last week: “Demystifying Microfinance” and “Prevention is a Better Cure”

Microfinance

Definition: the provision or creation of financial services in poor communities. The term microfinance covers a variety of activities: collective saving and lending circles, financing for small businesses.

An alternative to predatory lending: provides the poor with access to credit at a fair rate.

An alternative to predatory middlemen: provides the poor with access to markets in a way that ensures fair return on sale.

Fair Trade

Definition: Fair trade is a voluntary initiative for farmers, workers, and craftspeople to participate in direct and equitable trade in the global market. Fair trade guarantees that certain practices and principles have been observed in the creation of a product. (See Fair Trade FAQs, Session 3.)

Fair trade provides an alternative to the vulnerability that many of the poor face when market prices fall below their own production costs. Fair trade products are also typically produced by worker-owned organizations or in organizations that make a high level of investment in their workers. In that way, workers are protected from the vulnerability of isolation.

D. Reports from participants

40 MINUTES

- Ask presenters to share a 10-minute presentation on their organization.
 - o What does the organization do?
 - o What are some of the problems of poverty that the organization seeks to address?
 - o What are the dimensions of poverty that the organization addresses? (Refer to Myers' "Dimensions of Poverty" chart).

E. Review and discuss presentations

10 MINUTES

- After presentations have been made, ask:
 - o Which organization would you be most inclined to support? Why?
 - o Are there other organizations whose development work you respect?

F. Homework & Introduction to the following session

10 MINUTES

Think back to the "Dimensions of Poverty" chart discussed in previous weeks. One of the dimensions of poverty identified by Myers in that chart is powerlessness manifested in lack of influence, lack of social power, and exploitation by other powers. Politics relates directly to these problems, since it is the process by which we decide roles, delegate authority, and make decisions.

- Introduce the next session on political advocacy

The next session explores organizations that use political advocacy to address the powerlessness that accompanies poverty. Specifically, we will look at how those who are poor are often excluded from key roles and decisions and how political advocacy can be used to include the poor.

In Session 9, we will look at the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion of the poor in two ways: 1) the creation of laws or changing unjust laws; 2) the enforcement of just laws.

- Ask the whole group to read the following articles to provide background on political advocacy
 - "Why U.S. Farm Subsidies are Bad for the World"
<http://www.commondreams.org/views02/0506-09.htm>
 - "Why our Farm Policy is Failing" TIME
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1680139,00.html>
- Ask one person to research the organization Tearfund:

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development organization that works with a global network of local churches to help eradicate poverty. A portion of the money raised through Tearfund goes to fund local advocacy activities such as the work of MOPAWI in Honduras to empower indigenous people defend their rights.

“Campaigning against the Patuca Dam, Honduras”

<http://tilz.tearfund.org/webdocs/Tilz/Topics/Advocacy%20case%20study%20-%20Mopawi%20Honduras.pdf>

You can find additional case studies on groups supported by Tearfund here:
<http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/Advocacy/Partner+case+studies.htm>

- Ask one person to research the organization Bread for the World, a U.S.-based, anti-hunger organization that advocates for inclusion of the interests of the global poor in American law, especially on issues surrounding the farm bill:
www.bread.org
- Ask one person to research the organization International Justice Mission, a U.S.-based organization which enforces laws to protect those who are poor from violence: www.ijm.org (Share handout on sex trafficking.)
- Ask presenters to consider the following questions and prepare to make a 10-minute presentation.
 - o What does the organization do?
 - o What are some of the problems of poverty that the organization seeks to address?
 - o What are the dimensions of poverty that the organization addresses (Refer to Myers' chart)?

G. Closing prayer

Introduction

SESSION 9

This week covers the topic of political advocacy as a response to extreme poverty. Embedded in this topic are themes of inclusion and accountability.

To understand the theme of inclusion, we look to Jesus' teaching, recorded in the Gospel of Luke, told while Jesus dined at the house of a high-ranking religious leader.

[H]e also went on to say to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'⁵²

In Jesus' time, eating was culturally a very intimate thing. It was not just serving homeless people in a soup kitchen line. It was inviting someone in to your house to sit at your table and putting your resources at that person's disposal because hospitality meant everything. Once that person entered your home, you shared your life with them. You were saying, "You are my friend and equal, and you have a claim on what's mine. I am including you. I am inviting you." Eating was not just a SLICE of life. It was the activity that expressed ALL of life! If you included someone at your table, you included them in your concerns, your decisions, and your life.

Jesus and the Pharisees had completely opposite opinions about the purpose of eating. The Pharisees wanted their mealtimes to reflect social status; who was there and where they were seated were important parts of the experience. Jesus, however, wanted to show how God's kingdom invites all and wants to include all. In first century Israel, the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind were considered accursed because of their sins. They were on the margins. They made people feel uncomfortable. They made people's lives inconvenient at times. Imagine having to build a wheelchair ramp into your house so you could get them in, something that could cost a few thousand dollars. Not only that, these folks were usually thought of as being disadvantaged because of sin, either their own or their parents'. Jesus spoke many times against that view, and he went further by inviting the accursed and including them in his circles.

To understand the theme of accountability, we look to John the Baptist, preaching about repentance in the Jordan region.

So he [John the Baptist] began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down

⁵² Luke 14:12-14

and thrown into the fire.’ And the crowds were questioning him, saying, ‘Then what shall we do?’ And he would answer and say to them, ‘The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.’ And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.’ Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, ‘And what about us, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.’⁵³

The first time the word “repentance” is found in Luke, it is on the lips of John the Baptist as he prepares people for the kingdom of God that will dawn with Jesus. Three different audiences approach him: the Jewish crowds, the tax collectors, and the Roman soldiers. All ask what they must do to prepare for the dawning of the kingdom. John discusses material wealth and its use with each of these groups. Thus, the word “repentance” appears in proximity to a dense teaching on the appropriate use of wealth. To the Jewish crowds, he says, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.” To the tax collectors, he says, “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.” And to the soldiers: “Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.”

Of particular interest to us today is the tax collectors. Jewish tax collectors made their income by collecting more than what the Roman Empire required, so the tax collector collecting *nothing* beyond what was assigned would have no personal income at all. He would simply be dependent henceforth on the covenant community. The kingdom of God calls for this kind of action. Can both the individual and the faith communities take such stands together against the pain of structural injustice? For we, too, must confront deep structural problems in the relations between peoples. John the Baptist addresses people in various professions, just as we must. He does this publicly, in the hearing of all, just as Christian reflection on the various segments of the marketplace should happen in the hearing of all. Although the precise form of obedience does not look the same for all, I believe we are on firm ground in saying that on the one hand the underlying principles of the kingdom—repenting from materialism, being generous with others, even addressing structural injustice—must be present, and, on the other, there must be context-specific forms of obedience, usually involving self-restraint, sacrifice, and community.

A word must be said about “systemic” or “structural” forms of injustice. Often in our contemporary context, we address people as a part of but also distinct from a “system” of injustice. This frame has some accuracy, and Scripture demonstrates sensitivity to such issues, not least with the tax collectors in Luke’s Gospel, or corruption of judges and land monopolization in the Old Testament. However, as totalizing and rigid we may feel a system to be, ultimately Scripture does not allow people to blame a “system.” In their preaching, John the Baptist and Jesus personalize even systemic injustice. Tax collectors perpetrate injustice in Jesus’ day, and they don’t do it because the Roman government sets up conditions that make it inevitable for some Jews to become tax collectors and skim off the top of their own people. No: Tax collectors perpetrate injustice because *they choose to do so*. Some people are oppressed because other people *choose* to oppress them.

⁵³ Luke 3:7-14

This approach, while not blind to the complexities of systemic incentives, tendencies, and abuses, personalizes the injustice so that people that the word of God addresses must choose to obey or disobey. We fundamentally cannot place the responsibility elsewhere. We must acknowledge culpability and repent. And we are called, not to find another profession and thereby simply to open the door for another tax collector to take his place, reinforcing the power of the “system,” but to absorb the injustice *within our own person*. The tax collector is called to stay and make nothing. This calling is generally an underappreciated point. The example of the tax collectors shows us that while injustice *can* indeed be mitigated by systemic policy change, injustice *must* be personalized. A person’s professional life is still a part of his or her *person*. The preaching of the gospel treats people not as dichotomous entities with private versus public personas but as one integrated whole. Christian leadership must bring theological and sociological analysis together to disciple *people who live simultaneously in two realities: within the world’s political structures on the one hand, and within the Christian community on the other*.

This week's goals

- Review each person's practice of the four commitments since last session.
- Reflect on biblical themes of inclusion and accountability.
- Distinguish two contexts for political advocacy: 1) including the global poor in the creation of laws or changing unjust laws; 2) including the interests of the poor in the enforcement of law.
- Discuss organizations that impact poverty through political advocacy.
- Prepare for upcoming decision of where to give.

Materials

- Copies of handouts provided in the last session's homework
 - o "Why U.S. Farm Subsidies are Bad for the World" Philadelphia Inquirer, May 6, 2002
 - o "Why our Farm Policy is Failing" TIME, November 2, 2007
 - o "Campaign Against the Patuca Dam, Honduras" Tearfund Advocacy Case Study
 - o "Sex Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation" International Justice Mission fact sheet

Homework for next session

- Have participants bring a list of organizations they would like the group to consider as giving recipients.

Sample Agenda

- Welcome
- Share commitments
- Scripture reading: Jesus' Radical Inclusion
- Including the interests of the poor in the creation of laws or changing unjust laws
- Including the interests of the poor in the enforcement of laws
- Scripture reading and reflection
- Homework
- Closing Prayer

Agenda

SESSION 9

A. Welcome

5 MINUTES

- Review the week's agenda and goals.
- Remind participants of the kinds of global outreach covered in the second half of the discipleship group.

Relief: Give a man a fish.

Development: Teach a man to fish.

Microenterprise: Help him start a business.

Fair trade: Buy a fish from the business.

Advocacy: Grant fair access to the fishing pond, stop others from dumping in the pond, keep the pond clean, and develop sustainable practices.

B. Share commitments

10 MINUTES

- Break up into groups of two. Each person should spend 3-5 minutes sharing insights or feelings arising from their practice of the four commitments since the last meeting. Briefly pray for each other's practice of the commitments – that they would be a means of grace, growth, and generosity.

C. Scripture reading: Jesus' radical inclusion

15 MINUTES

Scripture: Luke 14:12-14

- Ask people to look at the scripture in pairs and summarize back to the whole group what they sense is going on.
- Share historical points about this text.

Remember: In Jesus' time, eating was culturally a very intimate thing.... Once that person entered your home, you shared your life with them. You were saying, "You are my friend and equal, and you have a claim on what's mine. I am including you. I am inviting you."

- Pose questions regarding the relation of this passage to global poverty:
 - o *What would it mean to be radically inclusive in addressing global poverty?*
 - o *How can we include more people at the table and at the fishing pond?*

D. Including the poor in the creation of laws

40 MINUTES

The goal of this section is to discuss the biblical concept of inclusion in relationship to political life and the creation of laws. Specifically, the organizations discussed here work to include the global poor over against exclusion by corporate interests and national interests.

If one of the members of your group watched *The Corporation*, that person can share some of the history of the corporation as a legal structure that allows people to avoid accountability. A corporation can externalize the true cost of producing something. Hence, environmental costs, for example, are not factored into the cost of doing business. Neither are poor farmers in other countries. A corporation exists to benefit its shareholders, and this structure excludes other voices and concerns. It can even become powerful enough to influence policy to exclude the interests of the poor. However, Jesus calls us to be radically inclusive in our lives and decisions, especially toward the poor.

- Ask the group to discuss the articles on the Farm Bill. Pose questions or statements for discussion, such as:
 - *Some people believe in free trade only insofar as it furthers national interests (and probably self-interest). Are the interests of the global poor included in such “free trade” policies?*
 - *Compare the possible impacts of giving to charity to dismantling our own privileges in relation to policies such as the farm bill.*
- Ask the person who watched the first 40 minutes of *The Corporation* to share a summary. Pose questions relating the interests described in the film to the interests of the poor.
 - *How might large corporations be controlling American policy on farm issues?*
- Ask presenters to share a brief presentation about the organizations that they researched.
 - Bread for the World – working to include interests of the poor in farm policy
 - Tearfund – working to include the interests of the poor in policies in developing countries. (For Tearfund, the presenter should discuss the organizations that have been recipients of advocacy grants from Tearfund, such as MOPAWI).

- For each organization, the researcher may share:
 - o What does the organization do?
 - o What are some of the problems of poverty that the organization seeks to address?
 - o What are the dimensions of poverty that the organization seeks to address? (Refer to Myers chart)
- Note that advocacy-focused organizations often face a challenge raising funds for their activities because the outcomes have a more indirect impact on poverty. However, their work is highly valuable.

E. Including the poor in the enforcement of laws

20 MINUTES

The issue here is that some countries have laws on the books that protect people from kidnapping, being sold into sex slavery, or other forms of physical harm. However, there is often very little money to enforce these laws, particularly when the victim of the crime is poor.

- Ask the person who researched International Justice Mission to share about the organization and what it does and what dimensions of poverty their work addresses.
- Ask participants, in the coming week, to pray for their brothers and sisters around the world who live on less than \$2 a day.

F. Scripture reading and reflection

15 MINUTES

Scripture: Luke 3:7-14

- Read, or have a member of the group read, the passage.

Remember: Jewish tax collectors made their income by collecting more than what the Roman Empire required. So, the tax collector following John's call to "collect no more than what you have been ordered to" would have no personal income at all. He would simply be dependent, henceforth, on the covenant community.

- Pose questions or share key points with the group.
 - o *How did John the Baptist ask for repentance from those who worked within unjust systems (e.g. Roman military, tax collection system)?*
 - o *How might we, as followers of Jesus, take responsibility for the oppression of others while living within an oppressive society?*

G. Homework

- Ask each person to bring a list of organizations (those discussed formally in this group or others that you know about) to the next session, where the group will discuss potential recipient organizations and make a decision regarding where to give.

H. Closing Prayer

Choosing Where to Give

SESSION 10

Session Overview

SESSION 10

This week's goals

- Determine principles for effective giving
- Brainstorm potential recipients of our giving
- Discern as a group to whom we will give

Materials

- List of organizations mentioned so far
- Whiteboard

Homework for next session

- Bring your checkbooks!
- Bring something for the potluck

Agenda

- Check in on commitments
- Group prayer and introduction
- Decide which principles will guide your giving
- Brainstorm possible organizations that fit your criteria
- Narrow down the list
- Determine your giving schedule
- Homework
- Closing Prayer

Agenda

SESSION 10

A. Check in on commitments

15 MINUTES

- Break up into groups of two (these can be consistent groups every week so trust is built between two people, or they can rotate so each person has contact with everyone in the group).
- Spend five minutes each sharing insights or feelings arising from their practice of the 4 commitments.
- Briefly pray for each other's practice of the commitments—that they would be a means of grace, growth, and generosity.

B. Group prayer and introduction

10 MINUTES

- Read & meditate on Philippians 1:9-11—

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

- Lead the group in prayer for the group's decision. Pray especially that our love would be well informed and that our good intentions would be discerning.

C. Decide which principles will guide your decision

25 MINUTES

- Using a whiteboard, write some or all of the questions below:
- Should organizations be:
 - *Faith-based?*
 - *Christian?*
 - *A particular size?*
 - *Established?*
 - *Focused on a particular area?*
 - *Familiar to participants?*
 - *Should organizations focus on particular initiatives or issues (relief, development, microfinance, fair trade, political advocacy)?*
- Ask for other issues that people are contemplating add them to the list.
- Pose these questions to the participants, asking people to begin with what they feel most strongly about. Make sure everyone is able to participate, either by going

around in turn or by inviting those who haven't spoken to share after a time of open discussion.

- Absolute consensus is not necessary at this point, but a general road map to what the group values is helpful for choosing which organizations to support.

D. Brainstorm possible organizations that fit your criteria

15 MINUTES

- List organizations mentioned so far on the whiteboard.
- Write down organizations or initiatives your church gives to.
- Ask for other candidates & write them on the board.

E. Narrow down the list

25 MINUTES

- Ask the group which ones, if any, can be crossed off since they clearly don't meet the group's criteria.
- Have participants write down their top 3 choices.
- Invite participants to share why they chose their preferences & tally the results alongside each organization.
- Ask if anyone would like to change their preferences based on other's thoughts.
- Eliminate all but the top 3 to 5 candidates.
- Discuss how many of the finalists should be funded, and in what proportion (groups often choose 2-3 recipients, but each group may decide for themselves.)
- Decide.

F. Determine your giving schedule

5 MINUTES

- Decide how you will give as a group.

Some groups choose to give the whole amount in the giving week (next session), while some groups choose to give in installments over a period of time so that members can use the money freed by implementing their lifestyle changes. Every quarter (September, December, March, May), *Lazarus* groups are invited to re-connect as small groups and as a larger discipleship community in a worship gathering hosted by the Boston Faith & Justice Network. Your group may choose to use these gatherings as a time to re-connect and make your next giving installment.

H. Homework

- Organize the potluck for next week.
- Point people to the recipes that will enable them to cook more simply and more justly.
 - o The Mennonite Central Committee publishes several cookbooks with recipes that are both simple and representative of what the world eats. A sample of these recipes are available online at http://mcc.org/gallery/04_06/recipes.html.
 - o This second website comes from an organization based in the UK. These recipes feature fair trade ingredients that are available in the UK. It would be interesting to find out how many of these foods are available in Boston, since there are far fewer fair trade products available in the U.S. than the UK. <http://www.fairtradecookbook.org.uk/>
- Remind participants to bring their checkbooks.

G. Closing Prayer

- Give thanks for the process.
- Optional: read Philippians 1:9-11 again.

Giving Together

SESSION 11

Session Overview

SESSION 11

This week's goals

- Give together
- Pray together

Materials

- Post-it notes
- Envelopes with addresses of recipients
- Reflection: St. John Chrysostom
- *Optional:* Candle

Homework for next session

- Prayerfully consider next steps; read optional next steps emailed out by leaders
- Create Budget 2.0

Sample Agenda

- Potluck: Eat and celebrate!
- Check in on commitments
- Reflection: St. John Chrysostom
- Write checks and give prayerful blessing
- Pray for those who will benefit from the gifts
- Homework
- Closing Prayer

A. Potluck: Eat and celebrate!

B. Check in on commitments

- Break up into groups of two (these can be consistent groups every week so trust is built between two people, or they can rotate so each person has contact with everyone in the group).
- Each person should spend five minutes each sharing insights or feelings arising from their practice of the four commitments.
- Briefly pray for each other's practice of the commitments—that they would be a means of grace, growth, and generosity.

C. Reflection: St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom was Patriarch of Constantinople from 398-404. At that time Constantinople was one of the wealthiest and most cities in the world, and much of the church's leadership was content to curry the favor of the upper class. But Chrysostom, whose rhetorical ability earned him the nickname "Golden Mouth," spoke up powerfully for the poor in his many sermons. His deeds also matched his words: despite strong resistance from others in the church hierarchy, he gave much of his personal wealth to the poor and sold the Church's luxury goods to buy grain for the starving. When he extended his critique of the nobility's materialism and disregard for the oppressed to the Empress, the Emperor exiled him to a remote province, where he died soon after. Today's reflection from one of his sermons helps set the tone for our giving.

- Share the above background with the group. Print out the following reading for the group. You may ask them to read it in silence or invite a participant to read it aloud.

*Remember how we have been created. All human beings have a common ancestor. Thus all human flesh has the same substance; there is no difference between the flesh of the nobility and that of peasants. When we commit an act of charity, in which we use our excess wealth to help someone with too little, we are acknowledging our unity with others. After all, the rich and the poor have the same flesh, the hunger of the poor should cause pain to the rich; and the pain can only be soothed through assuaging that hunger. Sadly, rich people often speak about charity, expressing their good intentions, but their deeds do not match their words. Good intentions give some cause for hope: they mean that the rich recognize their unity with the poor. Our challenge is to persuade the rich to turn words into actions. Preachers must try to do this; and so also must everyone who has an opportunity to speak to the rich. (St. John Chrysostom, **On Living Simply**, meditation 3)*

D. Write checks and pray

- *Optional:* Begin prayer time by lighting a candle placed in the middle of a central table.
- Invite the participants to write out their check, and attach a post-it note to each check. Write prayers of blessing for the intended beneficiaries on the post-its.

E. Pray for beneficiaries

- Place the checks on the table and, in whatever manner your group is most comfortable, pray for those who will receive a blessing from God's resources that the group has given back.
- *Optional:* If the group chooses and you are able, you may give together online. It is important for the participants to realize that online giving is just as spiritual and worshipful as giving cash to someone directly.
- Remind participants of installment giving timeline

F. Homework

We will prepare for the final session in two ways. First, ask each participant to create a new budget prayerfully for him/herself that can act as a goal for living a life with more faithfulness to biblical messages about wealth. Use the previous budget as a starting point, and consider what changes would be appropriate. Second, invite

participants to consider next steps for the group and for the role of community in supporting their lifestyle of economic discipleship.

- As they create their 'Budget 2.0', ask participants to answer these questions:
 - o *How can my budget reflect steps that God toward simple living that God is calling me to make for the sake of generosity toward the poor?*
 - o *How will that budget be different from the snapshot budget I created at the beginning of the group?*
- Tell the group that we will share the answers to these questions with the group next time.
- Distribute the handouts included below. Ask everyone to read them and consider what next steps they might want to take together.

G. Closing Prayer

Next Steps

SESSION 12

Session Overview

SESSION 12

This week's goals

- Compare current budgets with budgets from the beginning of the course.
- Reflect on the experiential learning throughout the course.
- Discern next steps of communal economic discipleship.
- Evaluate the course.

Materials

- "Keeping the Commitments: Continuing as a *Lazarus* group"
- "Building a Movement: Joining the Boston Faith & Justice Network"
- "Engaging your Church: Forming a Core Team"
- Contact Form
- Report Back Form
- Evaluation Form

Sample Agenda

- Welcome
- Scripture reading and reflection: Revelation 21:1-5
- Review Budgets 2.0
- Discuss next steps as a community
- Evaluation
- Closing Prayer

A. Welcome

5 MINUTES

- Review the week's agenda and goals.

B. Scripture reading and reflection

20 MINUTES

This section recommends approaching scripture using the *lectio divina* method. *Lectio Divina* (translated “divine [or sacred] reading”) is an ancient practice for praying with Scripture that “sets us up to listen for the word of God spoken to us in the present moment.”⁵⁴

Scripture: Revelation 21:1-5

- Using the *lectio divina* method, reflect on Revelation 21:1-5. In this process, you will read the passage four times, each time asking participants to approach the passage in a different spiritual posture (listening, reflecting, responding, resting).
- If your group is unfamiliar with this method, you may want to read the description prior to each step. Participants can respond aloud or silently after each reading.
- If you looked at Isaiah 65 in the first week, you could then compare and contrast what was shared about that passage with what is shared at this time.

⁵⁴Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, InterVarsity Press, 2006. 54

Encountering God through *lectio divina*

1. **Preparation** (Silencio). Take a moment to come fully into the present. With your eyes closed, let your body relax, and allow yourself to become consciously aware of God's presence with you. Express your willingness to hear from God in these moments by using a brief prayer, such as "Come Lord Jesus" or "Here I am" or "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."
2. **Read** (Lectio): *Listen for the word or phrase that is addressed to you.* Turn to the passage and begin to read slowly, pausing between phrases and sentences. You may read silently, or you may find it helpful to read the passage aloud, allowing the words to echo and resonate, sink in and settle into your heart. As you read, listen for a word or phrase that strikes you or catches your attention. Allow a moment of silence, repeating that word or phrase softly to yourself, pondering it and savoring it as thought pondering the words of a loved one. This is the word that is meant for you.
3. **Reflect** (Meditatio): *How is my life touched by this word?* Once you have heard the word that is meant for you, read the passage again, and listen for the way this passage connects with your life. Ask, *What is it in my life that needs to hear this word?* Allow several moments of silence following this reading, and explore thoughts, perceptions and sensory impressions.
4. **Respond** (Oratio): *What is my response to God based on what I have read and encountered?* Read the passage one more time, listening for your own deepest and truest response. In silence after the reading, allow your prayer to flow spontaneously from your heart as fully and truly as you can. At this point, you are entering into personal dialogue with God, "sharing with God the feelings the text has aroused" ... Pay attention to any sense that God is inviting you to act or to respond in some way to the word you have heard.
5. **Rest** (Contemplatio): *Rest in the Word of God.* In this final reading, you are invited to release and return to a place of rest in God. You have given your response its full expression, so now you can move into a time of waiting and resting in God's presence, like the weaned child who leans against its mother (Psalm 131:2)
6. **Resolve** (Incarnatio): *Incarnate (live out) the Word of God.* As you emerge from this place of personal encounter with God to life in the company of others, resolve to carry out this word with you and to live it out in the context of daily life and activity... As a way of supporting your intent to live out the word you have been given, you may want to choose an image, a picture or symbol that you can carry to remind you of it.

Ruth Haley Barton, Sacred Rhythms. InterVarsity Press, 2006. 59-61

C. Review Budgets 2.0

10 MINUTES

- If time permits, break up into pairs and exchange budgets, discussing how these budgets are different from the previous ones.
- In the large group, ask each person to respond briefly to the questions given in the homework last week: How can my budget reflect next steps God is calling me to make in living simply for the sake of generosity to the poor? How will that budget be different from the “snapshot” budget I created at the beginning of the course?
- If time permits, ask the group to reflect on their experience of the four commitments. Which do they feel should become permanent in their lives? Which will lead to other steps? Which will they simply stop doing? Why?

D. Next steps

60 MINUTES

The purpose of this session is to encourage people to think about how they can sustain the lifestyle changes that they made in this group and to offer opportunities for continued support and action for this group and the Boston Faith & Justice Network. There are three key decisions for the group to make, and opportunities are offered by the Boston Faith & Justice Network for each next step. 1) How shall this group continue? 2) How could we deepen our impact on global poverty? 3) How will we engage our church?

As you lead discussion on next steps, it will be helpful to reflect on how community has been a resource for the members of the group. Perhaps individuals took greater risks or kept to their commitments because of encouragement and accountability from the group. Perhaps participants were exposed to new ideas about living simply or how to impact global poverty by other members of the group.

It will also be helpful to share the collective impact of *Lazarus* groups with your group and to consider the impact that your group can have in the context of a whole movement of people practicing economic discipleship.

As a leader, you should take time prior to this session to think through what level of ongoing activity you are willing to provide and whether there are participants in the group that could take on leadership in the next steps. Come prepared for members of the group to either opt in or opt out of future commitments. It is important for members of the group to have real choices; assume neither their continued participation nor their disinterest in continuing.

Keeping the commitments: continuing as a *Lazarus* group

- Ask the group to imagine what their experience would have been if they had each read a book titled *Lazarus at the Gate* and tried to keep the four commitments on their own. What difference did keeping these commitments as a community make? What new things did people learn from this community?
- Share with the group the potential collective impact of *Lazarus* groups in Greater Boston.

If each *Lazarus* group continues to give on a yearly basis, **over a quarter of a million dollars will be given to the poor** in the next five years.

If each *Lazarus* group continues to give on a yearly basis AND launches one new *Lazarus* group, **over \$1 million dollars will be given to the poor** in the next three years.

If each *Lazarus* participant asks their local grocery store to carry fair trade, basic items such as **fair trade fruit, sugar, and rice could be widely available in stores in Greater Boston.**

- Ask members of the group if they would like to re-gather on a quarterly basis to update each other on the practice of their commitments, make future installments on their pledge, or continue to give.
- Share the opportunity to re-gather at quarterly, area-wide Boston Faith & Justice Network meetings.

Discipleship Community Gatherings

Every quarter (September, December, March, May), the Boston Faith & Justice Network will host a Discipleship Community Gathering as an opportunity to re-connect with your small group, re-commit to your lifestyle changes, and learn from other discipleship groups. At each gathering, there will be:

1. Small group meetings – meet as a *Lazarus* small group or as a church team. Share what's gone well and where you need support in your commitments. You might use this as a time to collect your quarterly pledges.
2. Testimony – *Lazarus* groups share updates on recipient organization, ideas about how to live simply or more justly.
3. Fair trade update – opportunities for individuals and groups to help increase fair trade in Greater Boston.
4. Advocacy update – opportunities to use the collective *Lazarus* voice for justice in partnership with Christian advocacy organizations such as Bread for the World and World Vision.
5. Prayers of giving and thanksgiving – give thanks to God for the blessing of wealth and spend time in prayer for those to whom we give.

Engaging the church

One way to impact global poverty on a larger scale is to engage our churches and members of our congregation in the four commitments.

- Share the purpose of a core team in engaging your congregation.

A core team is a group of 4-8 people within a church who have hearts for justice, will take responsibility for engaging their congregation in economic discipleship and fair trade, and will connect their congregation with the Boston Faith & Justice Network.

What does a core team do?

1. Coordinates future rounds of *Lazarus at the Gate* at the church.
2. Helps the congregation take a step toward global justice by using fair trade.
3. Connects the church with the regional Boston Faith & Justice Network.

The Boston Faith & Justice Network provides training and support at core team sessions that start in September and January.

- Ask if any members of the group have an interest in starting such a core team. It is not critical to decide all the details of the team, only that there are people who will take responsibility to form a team.

Relating to the broader church

Members of the group have the opportunity to become part of a larger church movement through the Boston Faith & Justice Network (BFJN). The mission of the BFJN is to build a movement of Christians in Greater Boston who are more deeply aware of poverty and committed to justice as an expression of faith. The Boston Faith & Justice Network works to inspire, unite, and mobilize Christians in Greater Boston to alleviate poverty and promote social justice through education and advocacy. *Lazarus at the Gate* is the first step in the BFJN's global justice agenda.

BFJN Global Justice Agenda

4. Live more simply to enable giving to those who are poor.
5. Advocate locally to increase fair trade in Greater Boston.
6. Advocate for aid, trade and debt reform policies that alleviate extreme, global poverty.

The BFJN is an individual membership organization in which members of any church can participate.

- Share the fact sheet about the BFJN and membership form
- Invite participants to share their name on the BFJN contact sheet in order to receive updates about all of the BFJN's global justice activities.

Roles & Responsibilities for next steps

Once your group has had a chance to discuss their own hopes for next steps and the opportunities for participation and action with the Boston Faith & Justice Network, the best way to clarify your decisions will be to identify who will take responsibility for each of these steps. Some recommended roles for ongoing activity are listed below. Your group should adapt these based on the decisions you reached about whether you will continue and how.

Lazarus Coordinator – would enable the members of this *Lazarus* group to keep their commitments, stay in contact and continue to give together, if they decided to do so, by reconvening the group (at the BFJN Discipleship Gatherings or another regular time) and sending reminders in advance of these gatherings. The *Lazarus* Coordinator should leave with the contact information of the members of the group.

Giving Manager –would collect the money promised at agreed-upon intervals if the group decides to continue to give, ensure that money is given to the group-designated charities, and send updates from the charities to members of the group.

Core Team Coordinator – would help to engage new people (members of your congregation) in economic discipleship and global justice by developing a team that would offer future *Lazarus* sessions in your congregation and would also help the congregation make fair trade commitments. The Core Team Coordinator could be the same person as the *Lazarus* Coordinator, or it could be a different person. The Core Team Coordinator should leave with the names and contact information of all members of the group who are interested in engaging their congregation.

- **Ask the people who have taken on roles and responsibilities to provide their information on the Report Back form for Session 12.**

E. Evaluation

10 MINUTES

- Hand out the written evaluation form. Ask participants to complete it on their own. Explain that these will be shared with the coordinators of the *Lazarus* program and can be anonymous.
- If there is time, invite participants to share their key learnings and feedback on what worked well and what could be improved about the *Lazarus* group curriculum.

F. Closing Prayer