



## *Practices for Becoming Mature Disciples* SIGN #9 - YOU TRUST GOD FINANCIALLY

### **Introducing** *The Nine Signs of Spiritual Maturity*

We have identified nine characteristics that define a transformed and mature follower of Christ. We hope to use these characteristics, or signs, as mile markers to help us pay attention to the path we're on. It is important to note that these are all broad simplifications. They're not meant to be a pass/fail test, but a gauge we check regularly and to know when and where to adjust as we go. Each week we will explore one of these nine signs in depth using a variety of exercises and spiritual disciplines designed to help you evaluate where you're at and how you can continue growing towards maturity in Christ.

### **This Week's Focus:** A Mature Disciple Trusts God with Their Finances

It can be easy to look at Jesus' ministry on Earth and assume that wealth is a negative thing. His life was spent among the poor and His earliest church gave everything they had to each other. The affluent around Him were consistently humbled and encouraged to let go of their possessions. But it is not wealth itself that is the problem. James 1:17 says "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" and financial blessing is a good gift. So it's not about getting rid of all our money, but about holding it with an open, humbled hand.

We believe a mature disciple views their financial blessings as a gift from God to be managed responsibly and given freely. We call this stewardship and generosity. For us, this looks like tithing with a joyful heart and investing our resources in God's kingdom here on Earth.

### **Quick Tip:** Learn More About Why We Tithe

Tithing is a long-held tradition in the Christian faith, but that doesn't make it an easy one. If you'd like to learn more about what tithing is and why we practice it, you can start by listening to Pastor Chris' sermon from the final week of our series Tangible Trust titled "[Why Tithe](#)." You can use the link or find it on our YouTube channel under "Tangible Trust Week 4 - 7.31.22"

# TIME ALONE

## PRAY: Generosity, Stewardship, and Trust

Finances look different in different seasons of life, but no matter your season God calls us to be generous with our resources. Generosity and stewardship are two things God lays out clearly in the scriptures. For many of us this does not come naturally. We may even want to make the commitment to trust God in this area, but it is still a difficult choice we have to make day after day. So we want to be praying that God continues to shape our hearts towards the ways of radical generosity.

This week in your alone time each day spend time praying the designated topic.

- **Monday:** Pray that God would help you to trust Him and His provisions.
- **Tuesday:** Ask God to give you a generous heart.
- **Wednesday:** Pray that God would align your financial priorities with His.
- **Thursday:** Ask God to give you wisdom, discernment & guidance around resources he provides for you.
- **Friday:** Pray about specific financial circumstances or situations in your life or those in your life.
- **Saturday:** Pray God would grant you contentment.

## READ: Matthew 6:19 - 24

Read through this passage each day. It can be helpful to read in different translations, such as NIV, ESV, or The Message.

## WORSHIP: This Week's New Song

We now have a playlist made up of worship songs that are meaningful to our community; including our Sunday setlists and even a few originals! Each week, we'll add new songs. Find the playlist using the links below. Here's what we added this week:

- Graves into Gardens by Brandon Lake



# TIME ALONE

## REFLECTION: Becoming Aware of Money's Influence (Part 1)

There's a saying that has circled the church over the last 50 years: "Show me your bank account and I will show you what you worship." Where we invest our time and finances exposes the desires of our hearts. Jesus knew this and it's why 16 of the 38 parables taught by Jesus centered around money and possessions. If we are honest, most of us are quite humbled by the subject. There are few among us who have broken free from the love of money and all that it promises: safety, security, power, control, status, image, beauty, leisure, travel & adventure. It appears to us that money can be exchanged for anything that we deeply want: acceptance, sensuality, comfort, importance, influence, certainty, education. It makes the promises of a god. We wonder, "Why is it so hard to trust God with my wealth?" Because, money makes so many promises. And seemingly delivers on those promises quite often.

To stay free with our finances, we need to be aware of its influence in our life and then continually hand that influence back over to God. We have to constantly pray over what God has given us so that we can be faithful stewards and practice radical generosity for the advancement of His Kingdom. Use the Reflection section and then the Action section to practice this. You can complete them both at the same time or on different days.

### Reflection\*

On a sheet of paper, write out your responses to these questions. Try not to judge your thoughts as they come, and don't worry about "fixing" any of it just yet, this is a time for you to observe. So just answer honestly.

- **What was your relationship like with money growing up?** Did you have a lot, a little, or somewhere in between? Is it something you thought about? Did you notice what you didn't have or what others did? Did you help support your family early on?
- **What is your relationship with money like now?** Are you comfortable talking about it? Is it something you think about often? Are you happy with your income? What kinds of decisions does it influence in your day-to-day life?
- **Where have you experienced generosity in your life?** How did it make you feel? Did it come with expectations or strings attached? What were you able to do with that support?
- **What does money "promise" you?** We often have subconscious expectations of how we think money will help us in life. We can fall into the idea that "if I just had enough money *then* I would..." What do you want money to do for you? Some common promises money makes are:

Comfort	Safety	Security	Power	Pleasure	Adventure
Status	Respect	Control	Freedom	Leisure	Low anxiety

\*This section of the activity comes from a previous sermon practice in our Tangible Trust series. If you already completed this section, review your answers from last time and move on to the next section.

# TIME ALONE

## ACTION: Handing Influence to God (Part 2)

Now that you have done some reflection, you hopefully have an idea of what role money plays in your life. Use that context as you complete this activity.

1. Gather several physical objects that represent each area of your finances. This could be credit cards, bills, statements, photos, keys, or anything else you can think of. Once you feel like you have enough, sit down with all the components to pray over each item individually.
2. As you pray over an item, ask God to provide in this area and help you trust Him in that provision.
3. Then when you're ready, hand that item over to God. You can say out loud "God, I give this to you" or simply set the item down as a metaphor for "letting go." Do whatever feels meaningful to you.
4. Repeat this for each item you've collected.

*Going Deeper: Slow this process down and do one or two items a day. During Step 2, talk to God about why this area of your financial life is important to you. Do you want to provide well for your family? Do these things make you feel successful? Do they give you a sense of freedom?*

*God cares about the things that matter to us. Share with Him why it's important to you that He provides in this area, and allow Him to show you that He cares. He may not always provide ways we think we need, but often it is because He has something better for us. So when we hand it over, we're trusting that God knows it's important to us and He won't take that lightly.*

# TIME TOGETHER

## Welcome:

- Icebreaker: What is an item on your bucket list? – something you've always wanted to do, but haven't done, or somewhere you've always wanted to go?
- Share somewhere you've seen God move recently. For example, an answered prayer, an important conversation with a loved one, a "win" from a ministry you serve in, etc.

## Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Have someone read the passage out loud in any translation. Others can take notes below.

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

## Discussion: *The Bible*

- Share any words, phrases, or pictures that stood out to you while reading.
- How does generosity fit into your personal finances? Do you regularly challenge yourself to live generously? Do you have room in your finances for generosity?
- Would you describe yourself as a "cheerful giver"? What would it look like to you to be a "cheerful giver"? What do you see as the obstacles to this?
- If you had unlimited finances, where would you cheerfully practice generosity?

## Discussion: *The Practices*

- How did your younger years shape your attitude toward finances and possessions?
- How do you respond emotionally with the issue of finances? Do you have anxiety, shame, confidence, denial, bitterness, or other emotions?
- In the past, have you seen your faith life and your financial life as related or separate?
- If you are married, how do you and your spouse relate to each other with the issue of finances? Are you in harmony or typically in conflict? Do you complement each other, or does one of you typically take the lead?

## Discussion: *The Journey*

- How have you been encouraged in your relationship with Jesus lately?
- What challenges have you experienced that seem to pull you away from trusting God?
- During this season, in what ways are you especially hoping to grow?
- How can the group encourage you and pray for you as we each walk together?

## Prayer:

In addition to prayer requests and anything else the group wants to pray about, ask God to give you all opportunities to practice generosity both as individuals and as a group.

# FAMILY TIME

## **Tithe as a Family**

If you do not already practicing tithing, now is the time to try! We can also teach our kids how to trust God with their finances. By teaching them about tithing now, you will help them embrace this practice in the future. Building the habit of giving 10% will become a natural reflex rather than something that feels overwhelming and hard. Furthermore, giving \$1 out of their \$10 allowance will build the muscle so that when they receive their first paycheck, giving \$20 from their \$200 or \$200 from \$2000 will be something they can do with a joyful heart. The best thing you can do as a parent to teach your kids to trust God with their finances is to demonstrate and model the practice yourself!