



We are now in the third week of the ALL IN series. This is also the FINAL official Growth Group week for 2007. We will be taking off from Thanksgiving through the New Year. Groups will kick off again the week of January 13-19, 2008.

This weeks' topic is going ALL IN with our finances. Let's jump on in:

- ! **Of everything in your life, what would you say are the couple of things you value the most? Why?**

- ! **If someone looked at your financial records, would they agree with your claim? Why or why not?**

- ! **Would you say that your financial records display an attitude of trust and obedience to God? Why or why not?**

- ! **Read *Matthew 13:44-46*. What does this passage teach us about the value of our relationship to God compared to everything else?**

- ! **Read *Matthew 6:21*. What does this verse say about our money and what we consider important?**

- ! **Read *Malachi 3:8-9* What does this passage teach us about the connection between giving and God's blessing?**

- ! **Is there a way you need to adjust your spending habits to be able to go ALL IN financially?**

- ! **Is there an adjustment that you need to make in your finances to help increase your passion for God?**

- ! **Do you feel like God is withholding a blessing from you because you are not giving obediently? If so, what steps can you take to do something about it?**



Growth Group Leaders:

Wow! After this week, the 2007 weekly Growth Group Meetings are coming to a close. Be sure to take advantage of the holiday season to get together with your Growth Group for some social activities and to reach out to our community.

This is a time of year when hurting families hurt even more. This next 6 weeks is a HUGE opportunity for you and the folks in your group to step up and get off the couch. Over the next several days, I will be emailing you several contacts for possible service opportunities for your group to get involved with. Please keep me informed as we prepare to kick off the same groups the week of January 13-19. Also, be praying that our groups would grow and solidify so we can add more. Please identify your mentors soon and communicate with me who they are so we can begin training them together.

We talked about leadership and influence last week. My prayer is that this "ALL IN" series would prompt everyone in your groups to step up to make Journey Church a significant influence in the Auburn/Opelika area in 2008. Please be praying for what your contribution will be financially as we prepare for 2008 with the "Vision Offering" on December 2.

Also, remind your folks that Sunday Night Live on December 2 is going to an awesome event for our folks to bond and spend some time celebrating together what God has done in 2007.

I am pumped. I hope you are to!
Andrew

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This weeks' topic is going ALL IN with our finances. Let's jump on in:

Please keep these 2 primary points in mind as you lead the discussion this week:

- 1 - The way we handle our finances demonstrates what we value most.
- 2 - The way we handle our finances reflects our level of trust and obedience to God and His mission.

Generally speaking, the only people who complain significantly about lessons on giving are people who aren't obedient or passionate about giving. However, be prepared for a complainer. Just challenge them to approach the lesson with an open mind and an open heart. Then, challenge them to respond with the application questions at the end.

Also, I hope that each of you as a leader is committed to obedience in this area of your life. If you haven't been, I challenge you to respond to the Malachi passage and commit to trusting God with your finances in 2008. Commit to it in front of your group and ask them to hold you accountable. Give them a testimony follow-up as the months go on. Encourage your group to join you as an experiment.

The first three questions are openers that set us up for the discussion from the Bible. The answers you get for the first question will have a great affect on the direction you will take in the second and third questions.

! **Of everything in your life, what would you say are the couple of things you value the most? Why?**

I imagine most folks will understand the goal of this question and answer with God, family, friends, career, and similar answers. However, someone might limit their focus to material things like cars, computers, TVs, etc. Others might even claim Auburn (or other team) Football. Be careful not to condemn any answers. There may be some folks in your group that honestly value some of their “things” more than people. Be glad if you get an honest answer. Use it as an opportunity to move on and challenge them as we go through the discussion.

! **If someone looked at your financial records, would they agree with your claim? Why or why not?**

The goal of this question is to demonstrate main point #1 and to set you up for the discussion on *Matthew 6:21*. Encourage the discussion around this question to link finances with values. Listen carefully for examples to use later in the discussion.

! **Would you say that your financial records display an attitude of trust and obedience to God? Why or why not?**

Regardless of what their top priorities and values are coming in to the discussion, this question zeroes in on the primary value we desire for our folks to hold. I purposely put a question related to main point #2 before the verses to challenge them as we head into what the Bible says:

! **Read *Matthew 13:44-46*. What does this passage teach us about the value of our relationship to God compared to everything else?**

You know your folks better than I do. If you feel you need to, use this passage as an opportunity to share a little of the Gospel: “The Kingdom of God” is essentially eternal life – a relationship with God found through faith in Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, both of these little illustrations demonstrate that a relationship with God is the greatest treasure anyone could ever have. I personally find the field illustration especially meaningful. Here, the treasure itself is more valuable than the guy could ever afford. To him, it is impossible to reach on its own, but the value of the field is attainable. By reaching for the field, he gains the treasure found in the field. By reaching out in faith to Jesus, he gives us the whole treasure that we couldn’t attain on our own.

! **Read *Matthew 6:21*. What does this verse say about our money and what we consider important?**

If you think it would help your discussion feel free to put this passage in context (*Matt 6:19-24*). Some of your groups may need verse 24. If your folks are tied to poor financial decisions, they may find themselves serving their money and losing sight of God. The only way to get out of the spiral is to change masters – see next point.

Be sure to point out the order of this verse. It does NOT say “Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also.” It doesn’t matter what we *claim* is important to us. It doesn’t even matter what we *want* to be important to us. The reality is, how we spend our resources will drive our passions over time. We can claim to value something, but if we don’t invest in it, our passion for it is sure to fade. We can claim to not value something, but if we spend our resources on it, it tends to consume our passions.

! Read *Malachi 3:8-9* **What does this passage teach us about the connection between giving and God's blessing?**

BOTTOM LINE: It's about obedience. When we are obedient, God can open up the door of blessing to us. When we choose to not trust and to not obey, God withholds his blessing. This is the only passage in the Bible where God truly encourages us to test him. He challenges us to try out trusting Him and giving generously just to see what happens.

If anyone tries to argue that this is Old Testament and refers to the Law and its requirements to tithe . . . point out that verse 8 says "tithes and contributions" (ESV) or "tithes and offerings" (NIV). God is not only referring to tithes. He's also referring to the free-will offerings . . . the gifts of a person's own choosing . . . those gifts that were not required by the Law but encouraged as an expression of worship and of faith in God.

The last three questions are our application questions for the week.

The first two questions are very closely related, but each is directly related to one of the passages we looked at above. Additionally, I have separated them out so you have an opportunity to reinforce that it's not just about giving money to Journey Church. It's about lining up your finances with what our priorities ought to be so that our hearts truly will follow. You may even want to talk about integrity vs. hypocrisy and how values are more closely related to actions than verbal claims.

Help your folks set real, measurable goals to take steps toward trusting God through these questions.

! **Is there a way you need to adjust your spending habits to be able to go ALL IN financially?**

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