

Developing a Money Autobiography

Background:

The following questions can be useful in assisting members of leadership groups and/or study groups to examine the role of money in their lives. Having participants respond to this questionnaire in advance of a leadership (e.g. Church Vestry) workshop to develop a group Stewardship Statement is highly recommended. You may want to copy and paste the instructions and questions below into a word processing program for use by your participants.

Instructions:

The following questions deal with the subject of our life as it relates to God and to money. As you answer these questions, it is important to focus on feelings and relationships as well as reflecting on factual accounts.

A. What do you believe about God? How would you describe your relationship with God? Does what you believe about God shape the life you live and who you are? How does it? What does God ask of us as a community of God's people? Does God give us anything? If so, what and why? Can you think of one Bible verse that sums up what you believe about God?

B. What is your happiest childhood memory in connection with money? What is your unhappiest memory? What attitude did your mother have toward money? What attitude did your father have toward money? What was your attitude toward money as a child? Did you feel poor? Or rich? Did you worry about money?

C. What was your attitude toward money as a teenager? What role did money play in your life as a young adult? If you are one, as a parent? At age 45? 50? 65? Did your attitude or feelings shift at these different stages of your life?

D. How do you feel about your present financial status? Are you generous or sparing with your money? Do you feel guilty about the money you have? Do you feel covetous about the money of others? Do you take risks with your money? Do you worry about money? Does having or not having money affect your self-esteem?

E. When you eat with friends and there is a group check, are you the one to pick it up? Do you make sure that you pay your share and that it includes tax and tip?

F. If you lacked money, how would you feel about others helping you pay your rent or mortgage, or treating when you went out and were not in a position to reciprocate?

G. How has your approach to money and its use been shaped by being a woman or by being a man? How have your thoughts about money and your giving behavior been shaped or hindered by the church? In what ways is your relationship to money a training ground for your spiritual journey, or an expression of your deepest values?

H. How do you feel about your giving to your parish? Do you consider your pledge as part of your household budgeting process? Do you have a household budget? In setting your pledge do you reconsider your priorities? Would you be comfortable giving more? What do you feel about tithing? How do you feel about asking other people for money for a worthy cause? ... for your parish?

I. Have you made a will? If not, why not? Did you include anyone in your will besides your family? Did you include your parish? The Episcopal Church? Did you include some oppressed or needy segment of society? If not, would you consider such bequests?

J. How do you deal with the fact that 2/3s of the people of the world are poor? If you have personal relationships with folks who are poor and/or work for social justice, how has that affected your attitude toward money? What experiences have you had of rich and poor living happily together? What did it require of each? How do you feel when beggars approach you for money?

K. What Bible passage best sums up your understanding of how God wants us to relate to our money and possessions?

L. Since 1982 the General Convention of our church has urged households to adopt Proportionate Giving (giving a percentage of income) as the basis of our pledge. As you prepare to make your pledge for the coming year to support the mission and ministries of your parish consider the following:

1. What is your actual total household income?

2. What is your present annual pledge?

3. What percentage of your income does this represent? (Move decimal point two places to determine 1%. Ex: if income is \$35,000.00, 1% = \$ 350, 2% = \$ 700, 5% = \$ 1,850, etc)

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