The Junction

Life Jesus' Way

Lent Discipleship Guidebook 2023

Week 4

Discipleship Journey

THE JUNCTION | LIFE JESUS' WAY

Life presents choices. How confident are you in your decisions at every juncture?

This year on our journey through Lent we will learn from Jesus' first disciples what it means to answer Jesus' call in each decisive moment along the way. Our series focuses specifically on Peter's journey following Jesus. Each week in worship Pastor Laurie will preach on another choice that Peter faced as he and his fellow disciples followed Jesus. The purpose of this guide is to learn discipleship from Peter's story.

HOW IS THIS GUIDE ORGANIZED?

This guide follows a 2-4-1 rhythm for the week:

- 2 gatherings with others

  Sunday **WORSHIP** introduces the Scripture and theme for each week, and the Connect Group Guide (**MEET**) has discussion questions for your group. (Some groups gather on a Sunday so that just means you have an extra day in the week for rest or reflection.)

- 4 Daily Personal Reflections

  We provide four additional worksheet pages to help guide your personal devotions during this Lenten season. The worksheets help us to slow down for about 15 minutes each day to go deeper with the Bible passage for the week: **READ** to listen to God's word – **REFLECT** on what the Bible is saying about loyalty to Jesus – **PRAY** to invite the Spirit to lead us in following Jesus – and **SERVE** to turn our attention outward in love of others.

- 1 Day of **REST**

  We all need a day to rest in God's grace toward us.

- Bonus Material

  Daily readings from the Gospel of Matthew and a short prayer that you can read + pray at one of your meal times or before bed at night – to stay connected to the bigger picture of Jesus' story as we journey through Lent to Easter.

At one of the low points in Jesus' ministry – a day when many of his disciples decided to turn away from Jesus – He looked at the Twelve and asked them, "Do you want to leave as well?" Peter spoke for all of them when he said, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life – and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68)

Peter's words capture our hope this Lent: ***that this journey will strengthen your belief and lived experience that Jesus is the Holy One of God – and strengthen your resolve to remain steadfast in following him even on the most discouraging days of the journey.***

Week Four | Sunday Worship

SURRENDER – PETER CHOOSES TO LEAVE EVERYTHING FOR JESUS

Mark 10:23-31

Jesus talked more about money than any other topic. It has been observed that Jesus knew both how useful money can be to accomplishing God's purpose in the world and how easily it can hinder the purposes of God in our lives. Being a disciple means living into the risk of saying 'yes' to dedicating our material possessions to Jesus' kingdom mission in this world.

MEMORY VERSE

Mark 10:29-31

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

BONUS MATERIALS | DAILY READINGS

Monday:	Matthew 14:1-21	Tuesday:	Matthew 14:22-36
Wednesday:	Matthew 15:1-28	Thursday:	Matthew 15:29-39
Friday:	Matthew 16:1-12	Saturday:	Matthew 16:13-20

PRAYER

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
My memory, my understanding
And my entire will,
All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace.
That is enough for me.

Amen.

Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Meet

WEEK FOUR | CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

"The decision to grow always involves a choice between risk and comfort.
This means that to be a follower of Jesus you must renounce comfort as the ultimate value of your life."

—John Ortberg

WELCOME

As you begin your study discuss these questions:

- What has been a high and low for you this week?
- Who is a role model for you when it comes to money?

WORD

Anything in the readings or practices from the Discipleship Journey Guidebook from this past week or from the sermon on Sunday that inspired or challenged you?

Read **Mark 10:23-31**.

1. What stands out to you in this passage?
2. In this story what does Jesus say about the relationship between money, the kingdom of God and eternal life? (You may want to include 10:21 in your observations.)
3. The disciples (including Peter) are incredulous. Where do you sympathize with their amazement (verses 24, 28) and/or Peter's protest (verse 28)?
4. There are a number of other stories and teachings in the Bible about our possessions and God's purposes in the world – can you think of any? What do these stories add to your understanding of Jesus and Peter's interaction in this story?
5. What in your life could Jesus point to as something that is preventing you from receiving the kingdom?
6. What is your risky next step when it comes to your money and following Jesus?

WORSHIP

This week spend time together praying for surrender and entrusting your possessions to God.

- Pray together for surrender: that God would give courage to give our lives to Him. Pray for each other in the areas that they have a hard time surrendering.
- Entrust your possessions to God. Pray for each other to be given strength and grace to see everything as a good gift from God and to give everything to God.

WITNESS

Reflect on what message your handling of material possessions gives to those in your life who do not know Jesus. What is one thing you can do this week to demonstrate the gospel in the way that you handle your wealth?

WORSHIP ON MAUNDY THURSDAY AS A CONNECT GROUP! *As a group you are encouraged to come to the service together on April 6 at 6pm to worship, share communion, and reflect on Christ's great love.*

Read

This week we spend some time reflecting on the material possessions in our lives and how these relate to following Jesus way in this world.

- Circle any reference to God or Jesus in these passages.
- Underline any reference to money or material possessions and things.
- Box any direct commands (such as “do not…” or “watch out…”)
- ★ Put a star next to the verse that especially captures your attention as you read.

MATTHEW 6:19-27, 31-34

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? …

So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

LUKE 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

LUKE 6:37-38

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What themes jumped out at you as you read these Bible passages?

2. What is clearly stated about God or Jesus in these passages? What is assumed or implied about God's character or actions as related to material things?

3. There are many direct commands in these passages about the attitude toward material possessions, about our attitude toward God, and concerning the actions to take or not take. Make a list of these here for yourself. If Jesus gives a reason list that as well. Here is an example to start your list:

   Do not store up treasures on earth – do store up in heaven (where treasure is heart will be)

4. Which of these teachings from Jesus really hits home for you? Which do you agree with but resist following? Any that you disagree with or are confusing?

Finish this time of study with a short prayer to God about what you have read and learned.

Reflect

INVESTING IN ETERNAL LIFE

Last week we heard Peter declare that Jesus had the words of eternal life. Jesus often Jesus talks about life, eternal life and the kingdom of heaven when he talks about money. This connection is central to the story from Mark 10 in Sunday's sermon and also to the passages on the READ page. Jesus' practical teachings about money and possessions are 'words of eternal life' because, let's face it, if there is no promise of eternal life then our only choice is to find our security, comfort and pleasure in this life through the material world. Jesus repeatedly calls his disciples to set their full hope on the gift of eternal life, letting this inheritance transform our relationship to money and goods.

There is both a warning and an invitation when it comes to the relationship between our wealth God's kingdom and eternal life. The warning is that we will naturally seek our security, comfort, pleasure from material possessions. Our possessions can imprison us in the present. The invitation is to find our security in Jesus' gift of salvation, to receive comfort from God the Father's care of us, and to take our pleasure in those actions that please God. Then we are free to enjoy material security, comfort, and pleasure as good gifts dedicated to Jesus' mission in this world.

One way to identify Jesus' followers when it comes to material possession is **freedom from anxiety over material concerns**. Jesus' teaching invites us to seek first the kingdom of God – warning that we cannot serve both God and money. God the Father knows and cares about what we need. This gives us the assurance to learn and care about what God needs from us so that his kingdom comes and will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does your own level of financial anxiety or concern tell you about your faith that God sees you, knows what you need, and loves you as a parent who provides for their children?

Where does your own anxiety result in serving money rather than God?

What would it look like to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness when you are anxious in these ways?

Another way to identify Jesus' followers is **sacrificial generosity that directs material possessions toward Jesus' kingdom mission**. There are times in life when everything that we earn goes toward supporting the basic needs of ourselves and our families. At other times we have surplus to spend. (And let's be honest that our cultural definition of 'basic need'' is extravagant compared to much of the world.) In Jesus' teaching he warns that life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. Additionally, when it comes to generosity toward others, the teaching in Luke 6 is important – and not only the part about giving and it will be given to you. Think about how easy it is to judge, condemn and hold resentments when it comes to money. Judgment, condemnation and resentment smother generosity.

Where has judgment, condemnation, or resentment on your part hindered your capacity to give generously to others?

What do you lose in the near term if you choose sacrificial generosity over abundance of possessions? What do you gain in the long term by directing your money in sacrificial ways toward Jesus' mission on earth?

A third way to identify Jesus' followers is by **where they store their treasures**. The rich man in Mark 10 was invited to give his possessions to the poor "and you will have treasure in heaven". In Matthew 6 Jesus exhorts us to store treasures in heaven – because "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." In Luke 12 the landowner's plan to stockpile his surplus for the sake of his own comfort and pleasure is exposed as foolishness. God intends for us to receive with gratitude and enjoy with thanksgiving the security, comfort and pleasure that he has given us for today. God does not intend us to stockpile the surplus in order to make sure that we secure for ourselves the security, comfort and pleasure we desire for tomorrow.

When has someone else used their money in a way that increased your own security, comfort or pleasure. How did that feel and how did you respond to that generosity?

What are ways that you try to store today's material blessings to make sure you stay secure and comfortable tomorrow?

What would it look like for you to use your money or possessions to store treasure in heaven? Another way to ask this question is to ask how we can spend our money or dedicate our possessions this week in a way that extends the security, comfort or pleasure of God's grace to someone else?

[Note: When this guide uses the term 'pleasure' about material items we are referring to those things or experiences in God's creation that bring pleasure to human persons, (things like the creative arts, good food, the pleasure of working with one's hands or hearing birdsong)which people with spare money and time can take for granted. Imagine an amazing palace garden once cultivated for the sole pleasure of a wealthy ruler that is opened up daily for anyone to enter and enjoy. We may regard these pleasures as less important than the basics of life, but less important does not mean unimportant to the flourishing of the human soul created to enjoy God's good creation.]

Finish your time with a prayer.

Pray

FOLLOWING A GENEROUS GOD

The idolatry of security in our wealth and possessions is strong in all of us, yet God's gracious invitation is to return to our first love and to trust in Jesus' grace and provision. Answering these questions prayerfully can help you imagine what living generously could look like in your circumstances and to give you ideas to 'step out of the boat.'

Beware of false guilt as you pray. Conviction from God's Spirit will turn you wholeheartedly in trust toward God's good pleasure in you and restore the capacity to give joyfully. Be patient. Don't rush to a legalistic list of good works or wallow in guilt. Turn your eyes to Jesus, ask the Spirit to light up the fearful or anxious corners of your life, reveal any sinful attachments to money, and empower you to dedicate your material possessions to God's mission in our world.

GIVING THANKS

How has God been generous to you in tangible, material ways? What are some examples of Gods generosity toward you recently? After you write this list down pray words of thanks back to God.

ENTRUSTING OUR ANXIETIES

Where do you feel anxious right now about financial or material matters in your life? What are you afraid of? Write these concerns down as a prayer to God the Father who knows your needs.

SEEKING FORGIVENESS

Where do you judge or condemn the decisions that others make or have made with their money? Whom do you resent? Write down a prayer of confession here to God, asking forgiveness for your own judgment and condemnation of others. Pray also for God's forgiveness over others whose actions have harmed or sinned against you in material ways.

REDIRECTING OUR TRUST

Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your awareness any place that you are storing treasures to secure your own security, comfort or pleasure. Ask Jesus to redirect your attention to ways that he is calling you to seek his kingdom or to take right actions towards those who do not experience the same material security, comfort or pleasure that you enjoy.

Serve

LISTEN — LEARN FROM — AND LIVE!

"I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give.
I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare."

—C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis outlines a challenging rule for giving. How might God be nudging you this week to practice generosity and to put your total trust in Jesus? Today we review three ways the Bible teaches about directing our money toward God's mission on earth. If you are feeling resentful or guilty as you work through this pages STOP – take that response back to Jesus in prayer – go back to the order of the PRAYER page with those feelings (Thanksgiving, Entrusting, Confession, Redirection). We give in response to God's generosity to us in Jesus.

TITHING

Choosing freedom from anxiety

As the children of Abraham were preparing to enter the Promised Land Moses taught them to dedicate 10% of their earnings as a 'tithe' back to the Lord. Moses reminded them that everything in the land belonged to the Lord. The 10% tithe was intended as the foundation for a life built entirely upon trust in God's provision. Giving the first 10% as an act of worship is an act of faith against our worry and anxiety that God will not provide all that we need. Tithing was not God's way of raising money. It was God's way or raising women and men who lived their belief that, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it; the world and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1)

There is only one verse in the entire word of God where God says, 'Test me in this.' It is in Malachi 3:8-12 when the Lord calls on the Israelites to tithe and he will bless them. "Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven…" How can you adjust your budget to set aside a tithe to give as an act of worship? If you already tithe, how has this practice secured your trust that God provides in material ways?

Parents *– tithing is taught. Do your children know that you tithe? Are you teaching them the habit of setting aside the first 10% of allowance or income to give to the worship and mission of the church?*

FREEWILL OFFERINGS

Choosing sacrificial generosity

Building on this foundation of trusting God for all things, the Israelites also brought additional offerings given out of joy, as a response to God's goodness. Randy Alcorn writes, "The tithe was never a ceiling for giving, only a floor. It was a beginning point. Beyond it, God's children gave more, sometimes much more, as needs and opportunities arose. The tithe was a demonstration of obedience. Voluntary offerings were a demonstration of love, joy and worship."

Are you alert to ways that you can give toward God's mission in our city and the world? Are there ways you can use your possessions to extend the hospitality of the gospel to others? Consider the people that go in and out of your life. How can you be the loving hands of God's provision to someone you know?

Parents *– you know as well as anyone that sharing has to be taught. Your actions and reactions toward your children when they share model for them God's pleasure in his children when they choose generosity with others. Some parents involve the whole family in decisions about giving to ministries whose work extends God's kingdom, finding a ministry that also has a way for the family to serve together and/or remember the work of that ministry in family prayers. What is the next step for your family in learning generosity together?*

GENEROSITY TO THE POOR

Choosing to store up treasures in heaven

The poor lack the power to provide for their own security, comfort or pleasure in God's good creation. Jesus said that when we give to the poor we are giving to Him. We habitually store up treasures for our own security, comfort or pleasure. What are ways you can store up treasures in heaven by giving toward the security, comfort or pleasure of another? Here are a few ideas:

Sponsor a child through an agency with a long record of ethical support for the poor

Set up a regular gift to a local ministry that helps the poor

Pay attention to spending in your budget that benefits your own comfort or pleasure but is not 'essential' – is there a way to balance, match, or substitute this spending and give toward the comfort or pleasure of others?

Parents – seek creative ways to teach generosity toward the poor. Some families keep 'blessing bags' in their cars to give to people they see in need. Others include a 'spare bag' when grocery or school shopping to buy things for others. How are you learning together to seek Jesus in the face of the poor?