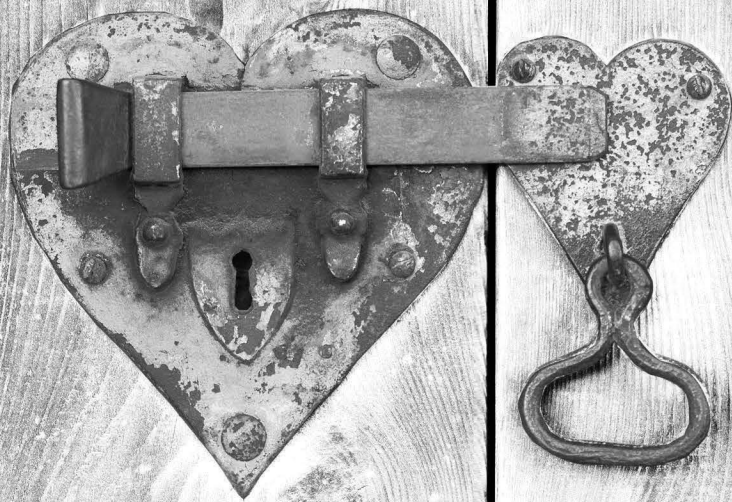


# Treasure



*Where your treasure is,  
there your heart will be also.*

Matthew 6:21

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## Jacob Armstrong

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Leader Guide

Treasure

Leader Guide

*"Where your treasure is,  
there your heart will be also."  
Matthew 6:21*

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## **Treasure** *Program Components*

The program presents a well-rounded stewardship program for use in sermons, worship, small groups, and at home. Components include:

### **Program Guide and Flash Drive**

Instructions for planning and using the program, including sermon starters and discussion guides, worship videos, Leader Guide for small groups, stewardship campaign materials, commitment cards, promotional materials, and graphics.

### **Leader Guide** (On flash drive and downloadable)

Everything needed for a leader to facilitate a four-week group study using the Daily Readings and DVD.

### **Daily Readings**

Day-by-day meditations for personal and group use.

### **DVD**

Casual, compelling talks by Jacob Armstrong on the weekly topics.

### **Program Kit**

One of each component.

# Treasure

A Four-Week Study on Faith and Money

Leader Guide

Jacob Armstrong

Abingdon Press  
Nashville

Treasure: A Four-Week Study on Faith and Money  
Leader Guide

Jacob Armstrong

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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# Welcome!

One Saturday, my wife and I packed up everything we owned except for some clothes and a few pieces of luggage and put them in a storage facility. We were in a time of transition between one home and another, and would be living with family for a few months. After packing, we found that the contents of our home fit into a 10' x 20' storage unit. I closed the door, put a lock on it, and left all my stuff in that unit, next to hundreds of others. All that I had ever saved for, deliberated over, and purchased was stacked in that room. At first I would go by every week or so just to check in on it. Eventually I didn't do that anymore, and for three months I didn't need one single thing from the unit.

There is 2.3 billion square feet of rentable self-storage space in the United States. We have so much stuff that our homes can't hold it. But our treasure is not found in stuff. The *Treasure* program is not an indictment of stuff. In fact, when my wife and I moved into our new home after three months with family, we used almost everything we had packed away. The couches, the refrigerator, the beds all went to good use. What I learned, though, was that those things are not my treasure.

The *Treasure* program urges participants to consider:

- Where is your treasure?
- Where are you investing your time, energy, and money?
- Where do you want to be investing?

These are important questions when we remember that Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). The question of treasure isn’t about stuff; it is about our hearts.

\* \* \*

Thank you for being willing to lead a small group in the *Treasure* program! One of the most beneficial parts of the program will be this group study. The study will allow participants to have a deeper experience with the biblical text, exploring questions of faith and money in community with others.

It is recommended that each small group participant have, in addition to a Bible, a copy of the Daily Readings for daily use between small group meetings. Each week for four weeks, participants will read the week’s daily readings, then meet together for group study. Participants may want to get a copy of the book in advance of the first study session so they can do the first week’s readings and be prepared for group discussion. Consider making extra copies of the book available at the first meeting so people who join the group at that time can take a copy home and prepare for the next week’s session.

During each session of the group study, participants will watch a video from the accompanying DVD, designed to inspire further and deeper conversation among the group. The DVD contains one video per session, each 5–6 minutes long. As the group leader, you should preview each segment of the DVD before showing it to your group.

## How to Use This Leader Guide

As a group leader, your role will be to facilitate the weekly sessions using this Leader Guide, the Daily Readings, and the accompanying DVD. Because no two groups are alike, this guide has been designed to give you flexibility and choice in tailoring the sessions for your group and the time constraints you have.

The guide helps you prepare for each session with these features:

Session Goals  
Before the Session

Then, for the session itself, you are given a variety of activities to help the group explore the topic through use of the Bible, the DVD, and the Daily Readings. The activities are listed below. Use some or all of them, depending on your group and the amount of time you have.

Times indicated within parentheses are merely estimates. You and your group may move at a faster or slower pace. You can make adjustments as necessary to fit your schedule. The study is designed for a 60-minute session, as shown below, but can easily be adjusted to a shorter or longer time period.

Opening Prayer (2 minutes)  
Opening Activity (5 minutes)  
Bible Background (10 minutes)  
Video and Discussion (20 minutes)  
Deeper in Devotion (10 minutes)  
Life Application (10 minutes)  
Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

Although you are encouraged to adapt the sessions to meet your needs, you should try to make prayer and Scripture regular components of the weekly group sessions. Feel free to use the opening and closing prayers provided here or to create your own prayers. God will be present with you as you and the group pray, discuss, and explore. The Scripture verses provided for each session are intended to serve as a biblical foundation for the group session, as well as for participants continuing reflection during the following week.

\* \* \*

Here are some helpful hints about facilitating group sessions:

- Become familiar with the material before the group session. Watch the DVD segment in advance.
- Choose the activities you will use during the group session, including the specific discussion questions you plan to cover. (Highlight these or put a checkmark beside them.) Remember, you do not have to use all the questions provided, and you can create your own.
- Secure a TV and DVD player in advance, oversee room setup, and make sure everything is working properly.
- Begin and end on time.
- Be enthusiastic. Remember, you set the tone for the class.
- Create a climate of participation, encouraging individuals to participate as they feel comfortable. Communicate the importance of group discussion. However, make it clear that no one will be forced to share and that silence is fine.
- If no one answers at first, don't be afraid of a little silence. Count to seven silently; then say something such as,

“Would anyone like to go first?” If no one responds, venture an answer yourself. Then ask for comments and other responses.

- Model openness as you share with the group. Group members will follow your example. If you share at a surface level, everyone will follow suit.
- Encourage multiple answers or responses before moving on to the next question.
- Ask “Why?” or “Why do you believe that?” to help continue a discussion and give it greater depth.
- Affirm others’ responses with comments such as “Great” or “Thanks” or “Good insight”—especially if this is the first time someone has spoken during a group session.
- Give everyone a chance to talk, but keep the conversation moving. Moderate to prevent a few individuals from doing all the talking.
- Monitor your own contributions. If you are doing most of the talking, back off so that you don't train the group not to respond.
- Remember that you don't have all the answers. Your job is to keep the discussion going and encourage participation.
- Honor the schedule. If a session is running longer than expected, get consensus from the group before continuing beyond the agreed-upon ending time.
- Consider involving group members in various aspects of the group session, such as asking for volunteers to run the DVD, to read the prayers or say their own, or to read the Scripture.

Remember to pray. Pray in advance of the meeting times, and after you know the participants take time to pray for each by name. God can do life-transforming work through small group studies of God's word.

As you prepare and lead, remember that God is ultimately in charge of what happens in the group. Whenever you feel inadequate, overwhelmed, or not up to the task, take heart. God is with you, and you are God's treasure.

## **Week One**

### **Where Is Your Treasure?**

“Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”  
(Matthew 6:19-21)

# **Week One**

## **Where Is Your Treasure?**

### **Session Goals**

This session is intended to help participants:

- think about Jesus' countercultural call for us to live in such a way that we lay up treasure in heaven;
- consider where we are investing our time, energy, and money, and to think about the disconnect that many of us feel related to where we are currently investing and where God is calling us to invest;
- understand that God cares about our treasure because God cares about our hearts.

### **Before the Session**

- Confirm your meeting place and time. Communicate this clearly with all participants.
- Secure a TV and DVD player and ensure that they are operational.



- Obtain extra copies of the Daily Readings to have on hand so that each participant will have a copy.
- Have extra Bibles available for participants to use during the session.
- Secure paper and pencils for participants.

### Opening Prayer

*God, we are grateful to begin this study together. We believe that you are with us and that you have something to say. Help us to listen. We admit that we have sought treasure in many, many places. Let this be a time when we consider where we are truly investing our lives. Lead us always to seek our treasure in you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### Opening Activity

Have group members tell about items they have collected over the years or hobbies that include collecting. Ask:

- What are some of the things that people collect?
- Why is collecting so popular? What makes these collections special?
- Have you ever lost a collectable? How did it make you feel?

Collecting can be fun and meaningful. Jesus has something to say, though, about the things we collect and store up in this life that might lead our hearts away from God. He has something to say about where we invest our treasure.

### Bible Background

Jesus' words about treasure are situated in the middle of what is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. The sermon is one of the longest continuous portions of Jesus' teaching that we have. You may be familiar with the opening part of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus describes the people who are truly blessed or happy. These statements are traditionally called the Beatitudes. Ask one or more people in the group to read aloud Matthew 5:1-12.

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up a mountain. He sat down and his disciples came to him. He taught them, saying:

"Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

"Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.

"Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.

"Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.

"Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

"Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.

"Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God's children.

"Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

“Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you, all because of me. Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you.” (Matthew 5:1-12)

In the Beatitudes, Jesus describes how the kingdom of God is different from the prevailing culture. It was then, and it is now. Ask:

- What about the Beatitudes runs counter to the way we have been trained to seek blessing or happiness?

Jesus continues to share countercultural messages in Matthew 6, when he speaks about the relationship between heart and treasure. Jesus talks about what we collect and store up. Ask:

- What do you think Jesus means when he speaks of treasures in heaven?

### Video and Discussion

Play DVD Session 1: “Where Is Your Treasure?”  
Running Time: 5:44

In the video, Jacob Armstrong talks about moments that remind him of what is truly important. Ask:

- Can you think of a moment recently when in the midst of life’s chaos you saw the hand of God? How did it make you think about the use of your time, energy, and money?

Jesus talks about how our hearts follow our treasure. Ask:

- What do you think Jesus meant by this statement? How have you seen your heart follow the way you spend your time, energy, and money?

- What does our culture tell us we should we treasure? What are we taught to value and give our lives to? Are these things all bad? How do these pursuits connect with what God wants us to pursue?
- Do you see places in your life where you are giving your life to things you don’t treasure? How does this disconnect make you feel?

### Deeper in Devotion

Lift up this excerpt from the first week of the Daily Readings, Day 2. Then use the questions below to discuss as a group.

I have the opportunity to spend time with people during their last days on earth. . . . I can’t ever recall a time in those last moments when they wanted to talk about the things they had acquired on earth. No one has ever mentioned a beach house or fancy car. Rarely do folks share personal accomplishments or business ventures that went well. These things have their time and place to be celebrated, but it is not usually in the final moments.

- What are some of the things you might reflect on if your life were coming to an end? How are these things different from what you have reflected on this day, this week, or this year?
- If indeed our earthly possessions and accomplishments “have their time and place to be celebrated,” what is that time and place?
- Have you ever had the privilege of spending time with people at the end of their lives? What was your experience doing so?

## Life Application

This might be a good time to consider the disconnect we often feel between the things we treasure and the things to which we currently give our time, energy, and money. Use the questions below to lead a discussion of treasure. Make sure group members know they are free to think over the questions but not join the discussion.

These questions are also found in the first week of the Daily Readings, Day 7, along with spaces to fill in. Encourage group members to fill in the spaces during the coming week, if they have not done so already.

- What do you want to invest in? If you didn't have the debt or the commitments you have, what would you want to invest in? If you had no restrictions in choosing where you would spend your time, energy, and resources, where would you invest?
- What are you currently investing in? Where are you spending time, energy, and money? Two good indicators are your calendar and your checkbook. When you look at your calendar for this week, where are you spending the majority of your time? With whom are you spending it? When you look at where your money is going, what are your major areas of investment? Which areas would you like to see increased? Decreased? When you feel tired at the end of the day, where does it feel as if you've spent your energy? On what efforts?

## Closing Prayer

*O God, thank you for caring not just about what we do but who we are. Thank you for looking not just at our actions but at our hearts. We want our treasure to be in you. Give us the courage and confidence to live for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Week Two

### The Problem with Two Masters

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” (Matthew 6:24)

# **Week Two**

## **The Problem with Two Masters**

### **Session Goals**

This session is intended to help participants:

- consider the many different allegiances that each of us has;
- consider together the power that money can hold in our lives when it is not in its rightful place;
- take a first step toward a singular devotion to Christ.

### **Before the Session**

- Confirm your meeting place and time, and communicate this clearly with all participants.
- Secure a TV and DVD player, and ensure that they are operational.
- Have extra Bibles available for participants to use during the session.
- Provide paper and pencils for participants.

## Opening Prayer

*God, we invite you into this time with us. We pray that your Holy Spirit would guide us as we pray, consider, and discuss. Teach us what it means to claim Jesus as Lord. Help us to let go of other idols that hold our allegiance. Help us to find our treasure in you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Opening Activity

We don't often use the terms *master* and *lord* to describe those who have authority over us. However, we do have people in our lives to whom we report and are responsible—people we serve. Ask:

- If not *lord* and *master*, what are the words we use today to describe those who have authority over us?
- Who are the people in your life who in some way are lord and master? How do you feel toward these people? What makes you feel positive toward some while you feel negative toward others?

## Bible Background

The people Jesus was addressing in the Sermon on the Mount would have connected with the terms *master* and *lord*, because these people lived in a time of servants and masters, and they lived under an emperor who clearly was lord.

In addition, their Hebrew Scriptures gave them many examples of the Israelites being called upon to choose between God or gods. One example is found in 1 Kings, when Elijah called the people to choose between the Lord and Baal. Have someone read 1 Kings 18:20-21.

Ahab sent the message to all the Israelites. He gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. Elijah approached all the

people and said, “How long will you hobble back and forth between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow God. If Baal is God, follow Baal.” The people gave no answer. (1 Kings 18:20-21)

- How do you think “hobbling back and forth” between God and Baal relates to Jesus' words about God and wealth?

## Video and Discussion

Play DVD Session 2: “The Problem with Two Masters”

Running Time: 6:13

In the video, Jacob Armstrong describes his encounter with Stephen, a young man who had recently given his life to Christ. This unrelenting, sole devotion was apparent in the way Stephen thought, spoke, and acted.

- Have you ever encountered someone who seemed to have a singular devotion to God? How did this person (or meeting this person) affect the way you thought about your life?

Most of us would confess Jesus as our Lord, but the question today is how many other lords do we have.

- What are some of the things that can easily become master and lord in our lives?

Many of the things that require our time, attention, and money are good and appropriate things to serve.

- How do we distinguish between the things we should give our lives to and the things we shouldn't?

Jesus warned about having both God and money as our masters

- What does he say can happen when we serve both?
- How can money be a master? How is it a master to you; how do you serve it?

We will never get away from our dependence on money. We need it, and it is appropriate to put forth time and effort to earn it. What Jesus taught was to give the pursuit of money a proper place in our lives. Discuss how money can find its rightful place when we make Jesus the lord of our lives.

### Deeper in Devotion

Lift up the following excerpt from “Every No Is a Yes,” Day 9 of the Daily Readings. Then use the questions below to discuss as a group.

One of the reasons we have multiple masters is that we say yes too much. It’s hard to say no, and we don’t like to do it. . . . Multiple yeses lead to multiple masters. Every time a yes obligates me to another commitment, I am stretched thinner and have less time for what I truly want to invest in. We must choose our yeses carefully. We must also learn that every time we say no, we have an opportunity to say yes to something else. Every no, in other words, is really a yes.

- Do you say yes too much? If so, why do think that is?
- How is every no really a yes? Is there a way in which every yes is really a no?
- What are some yeses you’d like to choose more of? Why?

### Life Application

Many people have more than two masters—for some of us, it’s more like three, four, or five. Last week we spent some time writing an inventory of where we are currently investing our treasure (time, energy, and money) and where we desire to be laying our treasure.

- As you reflect on those investments, which of them do you feel subservient to?
- Are there some things in your life that you need to give up? Is this the time for you to work through an addiction, a codependent relationship, an unhealthy debt?
- Knowing that nothing is impossible with God, what would it mean to take a first step toward health and healing in that area today?

### Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus, we confess that we have run after many other idols and served many other masters. Give us a singular devotion to you that will change every area of our life. Give us undivided hearts that allow all of our other allegiances to find their proper place beneath you. In your name we pray. Amen.*

## **Week Three**

# **Giving Your Treasure Back to God**

“Be careful that you don’t practice your religion in front of people to draw their attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

“Whenever you give to the poor, don’t blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that you may give to the poor in secret. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

“When you pray, don’t be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:1-6)

## **Week Three**

# **Giving Your Treasure Back to God**

### **Session Goals**

This session is intended to help participants:

- consider the rewards of investing our treasure in the things of God;
- think about what they are holding onto that they need to let go of or give away;
- understand that regular, faithful giving to the church is a way to join in God's work and experience the blessing of enough.

### **Before the Session**

- Confirm your meeting place and time, and communicate this clearly with all participants.
- Secure a TV and DVD player, and ensure that they are operational.
- Have extra Bibles available for participants to use during the study session.
- Provide paper and pencils for participants.



## Opening Prayer

*God, we desire not only to receive but to give. Teach us in our time together how to give as you give. We know this will mean sacrifice on our part. We are willing. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Opening Activity

Ask participants to tell about a time when they received an unexpected or extravagant gift.

- Who gave the gift? How did it make you feel?
- What did you want to do in return? What could you do in return?

## Bible Background

Praying, fasting, and giving should lead us to focus on God, not on ourselves. Likewise, when we pray, fast, and give, it should lead others to focus on God, not on us. Everyone likes to be noticed, but in this week's Scripture, Jesus warns about practicing our religion in such a way that it garners attention from others.

“When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get. But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:5-6)

The Treasure study is about taking inventory of where we are spending our time, energy, and money so we can invest them in

the things of God. One hope is that we might be able to use our treasure to serve God's children who are in need. Jesus talks about this in Matthew 6:2a:

“Whenever you give to the poor, don't blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. . . .”

*The CEB Study Bible* has something interesting to say:

Care for the needy is grounded in the Old Testament (e.g., Exod 22:25, Lev 25:35-37; Deut 14:27-29) and has a strong tradition in Judaism in the time of Jesus. With the use of the word *whenever*, Jesus assumes that his followers will give to the poor. The only question is whether they will do so faithfully.<sup>1</sup>

- Why do think there is a link scripturally between our devotion to God and our care for other people?
- Why did Jesus warn against being religious for the sake of being noticed?

## Video and Discussion

Play DVD Session 3: “Giving Your Treasure Back to God”  
Running Time: 5:23

In the video, Jacob Armstrong tells a story about his friend Nathan and a baseball card.

- What do you think made Nathan give away his most valuable card?

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<sup>1</sup> From *The CEB Study Bible*, edited by Joel B. Green (Nashville: Common English Bible, 2013), page NT15.

- As you reflect upon the sacrificial gifts given to you, why were they given? How does it differ from the desire to be noticed for giving?
- Jesus says there is a reward in giving away what is valuable to us. What do you think is the reward?

Part of the reward, it seems, is getting to join in on the things of God. We don't get the credit—God does—but there is something about joining in with God that is so much better than having our name in lights. Being part of God's work is a unique reward.

- In the video Jacob asked, "What are we holding onto that God might be calling us to give away?"
- How would you answer that today? (Participants may answer out loud or may wish to consider quietly.)
- What simple things could we give away? What treasures?

### Deeper in Devotion

Lift up the following excerpt from "The Blessing of Enough," Day 19 of the Daily Readings. Then use the questions below to discuss as a group.

*Enough*—that is what we really need. Not more, not a lot, but enough.

The way to find enough is not in storing up things for ourselves, but in giving to God first to demonstrate our trust and confidence. When we give to God, we are reminded that God is our source, the one who truly takes care of us. When we hold back, we put the burden and pressure firmly on our own shoulders. This leads to anxiety and unrest.

Is God calling you to give, to tithe, or to give more than a tithe? There is a blessing waiting for you.

- What is "enough"? Is it the same for every person? What might it be for you?
- According to Jacob Armstrong, there is a connection between giving and confidence. What is the connection? Do you agree? Can you add to his observations?
- Do you believe there is a blessing waiting for you? If there is, what form might it take? What does it have to do with treasure?

### Life Application

In most churches, this group study is part of a congregationwide stewardship program. Gather information about the program and discuss it in the group.

- Why is a stewardship program needed? How does regular, faithful giving to the church allow us to invest treasure in heaven?
- What are you being called to give? Are you currently using your treasure only for yourself, or are you investing in heavenly treasure? How might you go about changing where you are investing your treasure?

### Closing Prayer

*God, we don't want to hold back any longer. Help us to trust you as we give you what is yours. This faithful act reminds us that you are in charge and that you desire to bless us. Amen.*

## **Week Four**

### **Don't Worry 'Bout a Thing**

“Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are? Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, won't God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:25-34)

# **Week Four**

## **Don't Worry 'Bout a Thing**

### **Session Goals**

This session is intended to help participants:

- recognize that they are valuable to God and are God's treasure;
- gain a deeper understanding of what it means to seek God's kingdom first;
- acknowledge the worry and anxiety that we hold related to our treasure, and release our worries into God's care.

### **Before the Session**

- Confirm your meeting place and time, and communicate this clearly with all participants.
- Secure a TV and DVD player, and ensure that they are operational.
- Have extra Bibles available for participants to use during the study session.
- Provide participants with paper, pencils, and notecards or small strips of paper.

## Opening Prayer

*O God, it is so easy to worry; we do it all the time. Help us to understand the path to peace and calm that you describe in your Word. Help us to trust you with our hearts, our lives, and our treasure. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Opening Activity

Have participants share things that worried and frightened them when they were children. Then discuss things that worry and frighten them now. Ask:

- How are the things that worry you now connected to your treasure?

## Bible Background

In this week's Scripture from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compares our needs to those of birds and lilies.

"Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are? Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these." (Matthew 6:26-29)

- Why does Jesus compare us to birds and lilies? What is the connection? How does it make you feel?

Most of us believe that food, clothing, and other necessities result from our work. What might Jesus say about that? What do you think was Jesus' view of work, and how does it compare with ours?

Read Matthew 6:33 again: "Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

- How do you think seeking God's kingdom "first and foremost" relates to how you view your treasure (that is, how you spend your time, energy, and money)?

## Video and Discussion

Play DVD Session 4: "Don't Worry 'Bout a Thing"

Running Time: 5:57

In this week's video, Matthew 6:25-34 is described by Jacob Armstrong as Jesus' "don't worry song."

- When have you experienced someone singing or speaking "don't worry" to you? How did it make you feel?
- When have you sung or spoken "don't worry" to someone else? How did that make you feel?

Most of us, of course, are inevitably going to think about things such as what we will eat and wear.

- How do we allow ourselves to think about and work for these things without having them consume us with anxiety? What do you think Jesus is suggesting here?

Finances, family, health, and other challenges make it hard not to worry. When Jesus—someone we can trust, someone who has more power than we do—speaks his simple words over us, we are reminded of some things we already know but often forget: We are not in control. The world is not spinning by our command. We cannot determine the future.

- What are some of Jesus' simple words? How do they make you feel? Why are they so difficult to put into practice?

### Deeper in Devotion

Lift up the following excerpt from “A Different Perspective,” Day 25 of the Daily Readings. Then use the questions below to discuss as a group.

Jesus is saying that we are God's treasure. . . . Does this mean that those who trust in God don't have to work? I don't think so. Jesus is saying that we are valuable to God. He knows there will inevitably be times when we worry about what we will eat and what we will wear. He is reminding us that we are God's creation and that God cares for us and will take care of us. Jesus' images of birds and lilies give us perspective on how God looks at us.

We do a daily devotional. We join a faith community for worship. We make prayer a pattern of life because we need God's perspective. Jesus sang a “don't worry song” over those gathered on the hillside to remind them that God wants to give all that we need and to be all that we need. We are God's treasure, and we find our treasure in Jesus.

- Do you feel valuable to God? If so, what is your value? If not, why do you feel you fall short?

- What are some ways that Jacob Armstrong suggests we gain perspective on God's view of us? What other ways can you think of? Which is the most reassuring to you?
- How do you respond to the idea that parts of the Sermon on the Mount are Jesus' “don't worry song”? What other don't worry songs have you heard, and how did you respond?

### Life Application

Have participants write on notecards the things that cause them to worry. Ask them to share these worries if they feel comfortable doing so. (Allow participants to keep the worries confidential if they prefer.) Then lead a prayer in which people can wordlessly bring their worries before the God who cares about their every care. You can use the following prayer or say one of your own.

*God, we are grateful that you care for the birds and the lilies of the field. We are reminded that we also are valuable to you, and yet even with that knowledge we find ourselves filled with worry and concerns. We bring those concerns before you now. As we hold these cards in our hands, we slowly release them. As we loosen our grip on the cards, we pray we can loosen our grip on these worries. Now, as we hold the worries in our open palms, we lift them up to you and offer them into your love and care. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

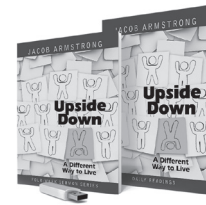
### Closing Prayer

*So often, God, we see what we want to see. Give us your perspective to recognize the beautiful things you have created and be reminded that we are a part of them. When we feel unworthy, remind us that we are your treasure. When we seek the things of this world, remind us that you are our treasure. Amen.*

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Jacob Armstrong is the founding pastor of Providence Church, a vibrant young United Methodist congregation in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, reaching 1,000 people each week. Providence's vision is to help those who are disconnected from God and the church feel hope, healing, and wholeness in Jesus Christ.

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