



Series

All In!

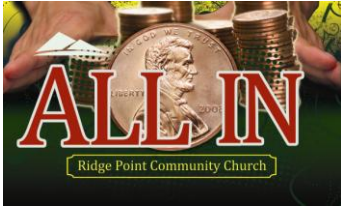
November 6 – November 28, 2010



Small Group Discussion Guide

All In!

How You Think About It - November 6/7



Text: 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; Matthew 6:19-24; Luke 12:13-21

Gather: Enjoy this time of talking and catching up. Help everyone to relax as you enter into this new topic.

Pray: Pray that God would open hearts to His teaching on this topic.

Acknowledge that it is a difficult topic to discuss.

Icebreaker: When was the first time that you gave away money of your own?

Study

Getting Started

2 Corinthians 8 and 9 - The background of this passage is the financial need of the church in Jerusalem. The Corinthian followers of Jesus had already heard about this need and had committed to helping with it. Here, Paul tells the Corinthian followers of Jesus to “finish the work” which they had begun. At this point in history, Corinth was a wealthy city. It was a sea port and a center of commerce. Because of Paul’s previous visits to the city and his launch of the church there, Paul knew many of these believers personally. Presumably he knew their financial situation as well. From the beginning of chapter 8, he holds up the Macedonian church as an example for the Corinthians.

The people in Macedonia were much less wealthy, and Paul points to their commitment to Jesus shown by their generous giving. He calls for the Corinthians to take action – to give. It seems that the Corinthians were giving out of their “extra,” not from their commitment to the kingdom of Christ. They gave begrudgingly and without cheerfulness. Paul’s message to them has far more to do with attitude and continued blessing than it does with the immediate need in Jerusalem. Paul encourages the followers of Jesus in Corinth to be used to build God’s kingdom and to see money as a resource God will renew as the Corinthians use it for His glory.

1. Read **1 Corinthians 8 and 9** aloud, asking people to take a few verses at a time. What messages is Paul delivering to the Christians in Corinth? Remember that you may see messages that others don’t and trust the Holy Spirit to guide you. How would you as a group summarize the main message?

Focusing in

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 - Here, Paul is addressing issues with which the Corinthians are struggling. Verses one to seven seem to focus on the separation the Corinthians are making between the giving of money and the giving of their hearts to Jesus. They were not equating giving with speech, knowledge, earnestness and love. So Paul points to the Macedonian church, a much less wealthy group, as an example. The issue is not how much one can afford but how much of one’s heart has been given to Jesus. Paul compliments them on the strength of their attributes and calls on them to place giving alongside of love, knowledge and sincerity. He instructs them to excel in giving.

2. Do you ever feel as though you are always being asked to give and that you are the only one that is helping others? Give an example. How does Paul address that in verses 13-15?

Small Group Discussion Guide

3. When, if ever, do you feel as though the gift God calls you to give is insignificant? What does Paul say about that in verse 12?

Matthew 6:19-24 - Jesus calls money a possible master. He teaches that money has power only when we assign it power. In this part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches his listeners that money and possessions will not last and that a commitment to amassing them is a commitment to a temporary cause. Jesus presents a key truth: what we treasure or collect and protect will be the center of our attention. In verse 22 Jesus expands this truth: what we spend our time gazing at will determine our well-being. When we focus on Him and His life-giving guidelines, we will have a healthy soul and life. Jesus gives a clear explanation of reality. A person can only have one master – either God or money. He describes the two as opposing and contradictory. They cannot be co-masters: one will be loved and one hated. Jesus leads us to love God and let money serve us. We begin with focusing on Him.

4. If someone looked at your bank account to see where your money is spent, what would they identify as your treasure (and thus the focus of your heart)?

Luke 12:13-21 - Jesus teaches his listeners about the folly of storing up more than we need and the division we cause when we do. A man calls on Jesus to settle a dispute with his brother about an inheritance. Jesus refuses, then strongly cautions him to guard himself against greed and to see life as more than a sum total of what we have owned. Jesus wants him to place family above money and to discover a greater heart's desire. To underscore his point, Jesus tells the story of a man who gathered great wealth and stored up great quantities only to be reminded that wealth cannot elongate our life.

We can work hard and long in order to leave wealth to those after us, who may only be divided as they fight to possess it. Understand his point: Jesus is NOT teaching against hard work, great planning, leaving our children an inheritance, or that money is evil. Jesus is teaching us to mind our motives and short-sightedness. Instead of calling on Jesus to intervene, the man should have been content with what he had been given and focused on resolving the conflict with his brother. When the rich man reaped a great harvest and was forced to ask himself "What shall I do?" he should have taken what he didn't need and given it to those who did need it. Healthy hearts, families, and communities would be the end result.

5. Where are you "storing things up?" How are you doing that?

Call to Action

1. **THINK** - This week, read **Proverbs 30: 7-9** every morning and pray it as a prayer.
2. **LOVE** - Observe your heart. If you sense anything you own is more important than the people around you, sell it or give it away.
3. **SERVE** - As you go through each day, seek to "invest" in eternity by meeting a need (provide a winter coat for someone without one, take some groceries to a family who need it, etc.).
4. **LIVE** - As you come into contact with people, pay close attention to those who are stressed about finances. Pray for their mind and heart and seek an opportunity to share the peace you have knowing that God provides—which in turn allows you to provide. Don't forget to tell them it is a struggle for you too.

Small Group Discussion Guide



Sharing and Prayer: Share prayer requests, both from this discussion and from other areas of life.

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Group Prayer: Ask God to help each person follow through on the applications. Share other requests and leave ample time for praying as a group.

Small Group Discussion Guide

All In!

How You Feel About it - November 13/14



Text: 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:7; 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19; Proverbs 30:7-9

Gather: Laugh together, catch up and enjoy some food!

Pray: Pray for God's truth to be made evident.

Icebreaker: If you had a few hours to enjoy a favorite hobby, what would you do?

Study

Getting Started

2 Corinthians 8:16-9:7 – Some question seems to have arisen about the security of the money being given and whether it was reaching those in Jerusalem who needed it. This concern may have been used as an excuse for not giving. Paul responds by sharing exactly who would take care of the funds and how they would do it. His response suggests that he may even have been accused of mishandling the money. He assures the Corinthians that the men carrying the money were chosen by the whole church, not just by him. Paul is also very clear about his expectation that the Corinthians would help, even as he shares how he has safeguarded their reputation. He sends these men to ensure that the Corinthians are well-prepared.

Verses 6 and 7 deliver a clear understanding of stewardship. Paul uses an agricultural illustration to show how God provides for everyone. God supplies the seed. God's people decide how much of what they have been given to plant. Each will then harvest in direct proportion to the seed that is sown. It is a simple principle. Based on this truth, Paul tells the Corinthians they should be cheerful givers and that God loves it when His kids see His generosity and respond joyfully in kind.

1. Read **2 Corinthians 8:16-9:7**. Paul connects sowing with generously giving money. When we sow, will we reap money, something else or some combination? When have you sown generously and reaped generously? Why is it hard to be cheerful when we give?

Focusing In

1 Timothy 6:6-10 - Following God's guidelines and being thrilled with what we have is the apex of what we can gain, Paul writes to Timothy. Timothy is in Ephesus, the Wall Street of the first century world. In this banking center, the Ephesians aimed solely for wealth. Paul tells Timothy that wealth is a dangerous goal. He encourages Timothy to rest in the assurance that food, shelter, and clothing are enough –and that pursuit of wealth is dangerous. This passage is often misquoted. Notice it says, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." It does not say "Money is evil." Money is an inanimate object without life or power. Humanity assigns these attributes to it, and then the power given to it becomes dangerous. Paul urges Timothy to pursue contentment and to teach others to do the same.

2. What does contentment look or feel like? How do I gain contentment?
3. How have you seen an attraction to money be (or begin to be) a root for evil in your life?

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1 Timothy 6:17-19 - Paul continues his teaching to Timothy, exhorting him to teach those with wealth some specific truths. Living as humble servants, placing their hope in Jesus and not money, being generous, and sharing will keep them from the danger mentioned in verses six to ten. Timothy is to teach those with the means to invest to invest in people and in the Kingdom of heaven and to watch their eternal investments grow. The last sentence is a wonderful play on words. There is life and then there is true life. Many people think that they have life – this life here and now. Paul tells Timothy to teach those with means that the life they are experiencing - even though it is wonderful and full because of their wealth - is still short of the life that is experienced when they partner with God, Jesus and the Spirit, investing in people and in the eternal growth of the Kingdom of Jesus.

4. What does “rich” mean in today’s world? How can you be “rich in good deeds?” How much is “generous?”

Proverbs 30:7-9 Solomon has a very simple prayer. He asks God for two very specific things. First, Solomon wants to know the truth and live according to reality. He does not want to fall prey to the lie of materialism nor to laziness, and he wants the wisdom to know the difference between truth and error. Second, he wants the right amount of material possessions. He does not want too little because he might be tempted to break the law and dishonor God. However, neither does he want too much; then he would not need faith and trust and would be tempted to ignore God. He asks for just the right amount and he is willing to let God decide how much that is.

5. Have you ever experienced being poor or being wealthy? What was it like? How was your attitude toward God?

Call to Action

1. **THINK** - Read **Proverbs 30:7-9** every day this week and pray it as a prayer.
2. **LOVE** - Work one hour this week for someone else and give away the money that you earned.
3. **SERVE** - As a small group, choose a person or family who needs a hand up and plan to serve them and support them in the coming week.
4. **LIVE** - Sit and take inventory of all you have and take time to thank God for it. Consider integrating thankfulness into your regular prayer life by thanking God for three things each day.

Sharing and Prayer: Share prayer requests, both from this discussion and from other areas of life.

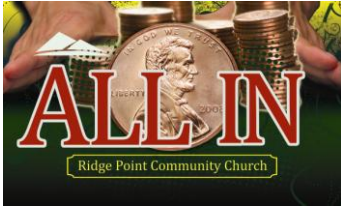
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Group Prayer: Ask God to help each person follow through on the applications. Share other requests and leave ample time for praying as a group.

Small Group Discussion Guide

All In!

How You Serve With It - November 20/21



Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Exodus 35-36; 1 Chronicles 29:1-30

Gather: Enjoy this time of food and fellowship as people arrive.

Pray: Pray that people would share as the Spirit leads and that people's ears would be open to the truths expressed, both through the Word and through each other.

Icebreaker: What is your favorite Thanksgiving food?

Study

Getting Started

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 - Paul quotes **Psalm 112:9** in **2 Corinthians 9:9**. In **Psalm 112**, King David draws a picture of a person who has lived a "right" life. Seeing this righteous life, the wicked person is vexed and gnashes his (or her) teeth. The righteous life is noticeable and unusual; those not living this life feel angry and confused as they see it. What is this unusual behavior? Generous giving to the poor – care for those who need it. This righteous behavior lives on; their reputation for doing the right thing will endure forever. The result of generous giving is eternal change, both for those who give and those who watch. Think about that: all it takes to change eternity is generosity.

According to **2 Corinthians 9:7**, God loves a cheerful giver. Verse 9, showing the effect of this giving, reveals one reason why He does. Verse 9 also explains verse 8 to us. In verse 8 we discover that we will have all the seed we need to scatter; God will provide all the resources we need to care for those around us. Thus, moving backwards from verse 9, we realize why we need to learn verse 6 very well. Indeed, how much we care for those in need will have a direct bearing on our ability to continue to care for those in need.

1. Read **2 Corinthians 9:6-9**. How does the apostle Paul define the blessings we receive when we give cheerfully? What will be the result of that blessing? How has that happened in your life?

Focusing In

Exodus 35-36 - God tells Moses to build a tabernacle, a large tent that will serve as a portable temple for the Israelites. The tabernacle will be the place for the Israelites to worship and sacrifice as they journey to the Promised Land. God's instructions are very specific, and the need for resources to build it are very great. Moses calls on the people to obey God and build this place so that God could dwell among them. The Israelites give gold, silver, fine jewels and stones and cloth. They also gave their abilities – their creativity, carpentry, metal work and seamstress ability. They gave so much so willingly that Moses asks them not to give any more (Exodus 36:6). Responding to God's call, the people were so thrilled to have a place to meet God that they gave even more than was needed. The Tabernacle was built.

2. What skills can you use to assist people far from God to find Him? If you have not yet given them, do you know how? How may this group support you? If you have given them, how did you do it and what impact for Jesus did you see?

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1 Chronicles 29:1-30 - This chapter provides the transition between King David’s reign over God’s people and the reign of his son Solomon. God told David that he was not permitted to build God’s temple in Jerusalem because he was a king with blood on his hands. The task of building the temple came to Solomon. Before he died, David used his leadership to raise the resources needed for the temple. He gave first, then called on the leaders to give. The people rejoiced as they saw the generous and willing giving of their leaders. All the resources needed were raised. Beginning in verse 10, David reflects on God’s generosity and greatness as he expresses praise and thanksgiving. David ends his reign by praising God for the way He provided for the people and for the manner in which the people responded. He then hands over the kingdom of God’s people to Solomon.

3. How important is it that leaders give resources to God’s work and what impact does that have on you?

Acts 4:32-37 (Acts 2:44-47) - The first church practiced generosity and simplicity of lifestyle. At this time, many people would have become unemployed and displaced because of their choice to follow Jesus. At the same time, the indwelling Holy Spirit gave believers a very new spiritual awareness of the needs of people. Their perspectives were supernaturally changed. Believers responded generously and empowered their leaders to meet the needs of the community. They sold what they didn’t need, and gave the money to the apostles as an offering to God, and in this way supported the needs. In Acts 2:47 we find that this was one of the actions that caused God to be able to “add to their number daily those who were being saved.”

4. **Acts 4:32-37** - If you were able, would you be willing to sell something you enjoyed or counted on for financial stability to provide food and shelter for someone you didn’t know? Why or why not?
5. **Acts 2:44-45** - How is giving worship? Why is it important to give in such a way that you are unable to take credit or to control how the money is used for Jesus’ ministry? If you can control it, is it still a gift? Why or why not?

Call to Action

1. **THINK** - Read **Proverbs 30:7-9** each morning and pray it as a prayer.
2. **LOVE** - Give something away this week that you like but someone else needs.
3. **SERVE** - Use a talent you have for someone else this week and try to do so without them knowing.
4. **LIVE** - As you go about each day, attempt to be in constant prayer, asking God to show you which people to interact with and be Jesus to. Take joy in hearing the Spirit and following His leadership.

Sharing and Prayer: Share prayer requests, both from this discussion and from other areas of life.

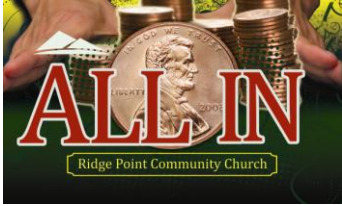
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Group Prayer: Ask God to help each person follow through on the applications. Share other requests and leave ample time for praying as a group.

Small Group Discussion Guide

All In!

How You Worship With It - November 28/29



Text: Malachi 3:6-12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1Corinthians 16:2; Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13

Gather: Share some food and laughter as you gather.

Pray: Ask God to bring the truths from this series together and to help each of you know how to apply what you have learned.

Icebreaker: We have now entered into Christmas preparations. When do you put up your Christmas tree? Real or artificial? If you have a special tradition for putting up your tree, tell your group about it.

Study

Getting Started

Malachi 3:6-12 - The prophet Malachi is delivering God's message of judgment to the nation of Israel. In addition to the judgment, the message includes explanation and instructions for renewal and blessing. In this section, Malachi speaks of God's instructions to tithe – to bring the first ten percent of any crop or income to the Temple as a first fruits offering to God. This offering was part of the discipline of faith to which God called the Israelites. This discipline taught the Israelites to trust God. They would bring the first ten percent to the temple, leave it with the priests so that the priests could care for the widows, orphans, and needy, doing the work of the temple. The people would then return to their fields, trusting that God would provide for all their needs with the ninety percent of the property remaining.

Malachi's message informs them that not giving the tithe is the equivalent to stealing it from God. The tithe is God's, and not giving it is the same as taking it away. We live in the New Testament era and are not bound by the law. The principle, however, still applies. Jesus came to make it possible for us to not violate the law. We demonstrate our faith in God to provide by giving the first ten percent of our income to God in worship so that the church we choose to attend can do the work it is called to do in the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. Read **Malachi 3:6-12**: How do you feel about the thought of stealing from God? What does Malachi mean when he writes that God will "open the floodgates of Heaven" and bless us?

Focusing In

2 Corinthians 8-9 - Review the notes from previous weeks.

2. Is it hard to give an offering to God cheerfully every weekend or every other weekend? If so, why? How do you feel about giving the first ten percent of your income cheerfully when you know others are not? How can we become more cheerful and generous?

Small Group Discussion Guide

1 Corinthians 16:2 - Here, Paul first mentions the need of the people in Jerusalem. He calls on the Corinthian Christians to begin a discipline of weekly generous giving. Paul asks them to decide what to give according to their income, a reference to the Old Testament practice of the first fruits offering. This sum would then be set aside on the first day of the week. The Old Testament Sabbath was on the seventh day of the week, reflecting the fact that God rested on the seventh day when He created the Heavens and the Earth. The New Testament church moved their day of worship to the first day of the week because Jesus rose on the first day of the week. Paul tells the Corinthians to give as a part of their worship of Christ and to make it a percentage of their income, most likely a tithe. By doing so, they will be able to assist the church in Jerusalem generously. This giving will allow the church to be able to do its work, just as was true for the temple in Malachi 3.

3. Read **1 Corinthians 16:2**. Why is regular giving a good thing? Why is giving worship? Why is it important to give according to your income?

Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13 - The act of tithing defeats the “god of money” because we worship the true God with it. We make money subject to God.

4. How would you describe your relationship to money? Are you devoted to it? Do you despise it? How are you trying to serve two masters? What have you done to promote your love of God and decrease your attraction to money?

Call to Action

1. **THINK** - Read **Proverbs 30:7-9** each morning and pray it.
2. **LOVE** - Every time you think about your finances this week, pray and thank God for all He has given you. Ask Him to raise up more generosity in your heart.
3. **SERVE** - Give ten dollars to someone you trust and ask them to help someone else with it, but not to tell you what they did.
4. **LIVE** - Live out **1 Corinthians 16:2** this week and make it a weekly activity.

Sharing and Prayer: Share prayer requests, both from this discussion and from other areas of life.

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Group Prayer: Ask God to help each person follow through on the applications. Share other requests and leave ample time for praying as a group.