



GRACE GROUPS

Living by God's grace is a paradigm shift for all of us and as a big shift, it involves study, practice, community, and the work of the Holy Spirit within each of us. All Grace Groups will share this common thread: learning to live by grace instead of proving ourselves all the time, or thinking we can do life alone. They are all focused on this, but allow for a wide variety of groups.



RESOURCES

[*The Life We're Looking For: Reclaiming Relationship in a Technological World*](#)
by Andy Crouch

[*You Need a Budget*](#)
A good budgeting app that can be used for adjusting to a tithing lifestyle.

[*Economics of Grace*](#)
Sermon on Mark 12:35-44.

PRACTICE TITHING

The best way to practice the firstfruits tithe nowadays in such a way that eliminates fees is to set up an automatic bill pay check. To give to All Souls this way, set up the check come to:

All Souls PO Box 16613
Seattle, WA 98116

To give online, visit
allsoulsseattle.org/give

Welcome + Opening Prayer

Grace Group: Finance is an exploration of Biblical words like "tithe" and "mammon" in search of how God's grace transforms the way we hold our finances towards freedom and generosity.

Begin Again: Why Discuss Finances in Advent?

While we are now at the *end* of the calendar year (fiscal year too, so says the IRS)... we also find ourselves at the *beginning* of the church year. This is a helpful reminder:

When we are at our end, God's grace is just beginning. However you are coming into this discussion about money, know that God in his graciousness is here to meet you where you are.

What is Mammon?

See back page.

Mammon in real life.

What is an area of your life in which you feel anxiety?

What is a way in which you are trying to get it to magically go away?

What is another way to navigate this area of anxiety in your life?

How do you sense God is inviting you to generosity in an area of your life where you are experiencing scarcity?

Homework: An invitation to live more wild-ly.

Give yourself time to make a prayer that will become the prayer of your soul. Listen to the voices of longing in your soul. Listen to your hungers. Give attention to the unexpected that lives around the rim of your life. Listen to your memory and to the inrush of your future, to the voices of those near you and those you have lost. Out of all of that attention to your soul, make a prayer that is big enough for your wild soul, yet tender enough for your shy and awkward vulnerability; that has enough healing to gain the ointment of divine forgiveness for your wounds; enough truth and vigour to challenge your blindness and complacency; enough graciousness and vision to mirror your immortal beauty. Write a prayer that is worthy of the destiny to which you have been called. (John O'Donahue *A Prayer for Your Wild Soul*)

What is Mammon?

ממון (pronounced *ma-muhn*) is a Hebrew composite word made up of *mi* (meaning “from”) and *hamon* (meaning “accumulation”). The word refers typically to money or capital in the scriptures, but notably features in:

Matthew 6:19-24—

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23 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!

24 “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**.

25 “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? 26 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? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

28 “And why do you worry about clothes? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

What is this teaching of Jesus about?

v. 20 storehouses *But store up for yourselves... Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.*

v. 22 a way of seeing *If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light.*

v. 24 the correlation between worth and worry. Xavier Léon-Dufour says suggestively: The word *mammon* should be seen in relation to its correlated Aramaic root “*Amen!*” A word we use to say what is certain, can be counted on, endures. In seeking to control the unknown in life, we give ourselves to a god (we think) we can control: Mammon, which becomes a WHO to us. A personalized god of our making. What technology in the social media, behavioral analytical age promises to us. This is sold to us as a joy but it unfolds like a horror movie in God’s sight chiefly because the precious emotions of the human heart are bestowed on something which will in the end: disappoint, use, and abuse us... to death.

v. 28 an invitation to a wilder way *consider the lilies or Luke 12:27 consider how the wild flowers grow.*

Mammon vs. Manna

Reading Exodus 16.

What was manna?

What do you think God was teaching this people through Manna?

How does Manna differ from Mammon?

A prayer for Manna: Proverbs 30:7-9

Two things I ask of you, Lord;
do not refuse me before I die:
Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.

Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you
and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’
Or I may become poor and steal,
and so dishonor the name of my God.