

2. What soul-training exercises have helped you develop the inner reality of contentment and simplicity?

3. Make a list of 30 items you possess, then work through these questions from the chapter (p. 166).

- a. Do I really need this?
- b. Does this item give me Kingdom joy or merely temporary happiness?
- c. How much of the money I would spend on this item can I invest in heavenly treasures?

4. Regroup and discuss what you discovered. Identify any measurable steps that you could take to develop inner contentment and outer simplicity.

Go in peace [15-20 minutes]

Close your time together by having a volunteer in the group read these valuable words:

Treasures in heaven relate to the things God is doing. And we know that God is helping people. Thus, the best way to lay up treasures in heaven is to live out Matthew 6:33: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"

For the Coming week

Read chapter 10, "Learning to Live Without Worry."

The soul-training exercise is a specific form of prayer, which you will want to experience for as many days as possible before our next session.

The Good and Beautiful LIFE

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Learning to live without greed

WELCOME – Breaking the ice

OPENING TO GOD – Opening to God (5 minutes)

Read *Colossians 3:1-17* together

5 minutes of silence

Prayer to end the silence

Generous God, everything belongs to you and is given by you to establish your kingdom on earth. Enliven our conversation throughout this meeting with your very Spirit, so that we might be set free to live in harmony with your will for all creation. Amen.

Soul training [15 minutes]

If you are in a group of six or more people, divide into groups of three or four. Use the questions below to discuss your experience of de-cluttering.

1. What challenges did you encounter as you gave away some of your possessions?
2. How did it feel after you gave the items away?
3. What did you learn about God or yourself from the exercise?

Engaging the Chapter [25-45 minutes]

The main idea of this chapter is that we are all stewards of the money we earn or are given, and we can invest them either in earthly or heavenly treasures.

Read through the following questions before you begin discussion. Note any questions you especially want to discuss. Depending on your group size and the conversation, you may not have time to discuss all of these questions.

1. At the beginning of the chapter the author shares his story of buying a pair of Adidas Americanas. With your group recount a possession you desperately wanted and eventually bought. How did you feel once you owned it? What finally happened to the item?
2. We hear Suze Orman's story of watching her father save the cash register from a burning building and how it formed an important narrative for her (p. 156). With one or two people from your group, tell a story from your childhood that explains your view of money.
3. Have someone in the group read the following summary of Matthew 6:19-24 on page 161:
There are two types of treasures that we can invest in (heavenly or earthly), two kinds of eyes (generous or stingy) and two deities we can serve (God or mammon). Earthly treasures are temporal; heavenly treasures are eternal. The wise choice is obvious. Stingy people are inwardly focused and do not experience joy; generous people are outwardly focused, give freely, and experience joy. Finally, mammon says it can produce peace and happiness, but it fails. God promises peace and happiness, and always delivers. Who will we give our allegiance to? Our loving, giving, endlessly able Father. Jesus is not trying to shame us, but is offering good investment advice. And that is because he understands the nature of the kingdom of God. What insights and questions do you have about this quote and Matthew 6:19-24?
4. The author recounts a story about a time when he loaned money to an acquaintance, and from that loan he learned an important lesson about kingdom economics (p. 162). If kingdom economics are real, how will you live differently after reading this chapter? As a group brainstorm ways you can put into practice Kingdom economics. Let it be a joyful experiment and see what God does!

Experiencing transformation [10 minutes]

This simple activity is meant to increase the group's understanding of what we treasure and how those treasures can be both good and bad. Say: *It is possible that our deepest, most reinforced narratives revolve around our money, possessions and the happiness that comes from consumerism. To experience transformation we must begin by taking an honest evaluation of what we "treasure."* For a definition of what we "treasure," we will look at a quote on page 159, which you will want to find and follow along with as we work through a few questions.

This simple activity is meant to increase the group's understanding of what we treasure and how those treasures can be both good and bad. What exactly is a "treasure"? Dallas Willard explains, "We reveal what our treasures are by what we try to protect, secure, keep." Humans are designed to treasure things. Jesus isn't telling us to not treasure things, he is telling us which kinds of things to treasure. We shouldn't treasure a car because it will not be around forever and cannot love back. Treasuring our spouse is a very good investment. He or she is an eternal spiritual being who can in return love us back and can bless the world.

On a blank sheet of paper, write a list of things you treasure based on Willard's definition, and then explore the following questions. (You may want to write these two questions on a white board, or on a sheet of paper for all to see.)
As you look at these "investments," which ones are earthly and which ones are eternal?
In what ways would you like to change your list of "treasures"?

Engaging the word [20 minutes]

To cultivate the inner reality of simplicity the author tells us that I Timothy 6:6-10 is a great passage to reflect upon. He writes, "Paul advocates contentment with adequate provision. Beyond that we are tempted to serve mammon and not God" (p. 167). Have a volunteer read I Timothy 6:6-10 out loud.

1. What strikes you about this Scripture passage?