**SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE**

Message Series: Master Your Money

Message Title: Avoid the Use of Debt

Date:

**Icebreaker:**

Describe the first phone you remember making a call on. What was the first cell phone you ever owned?

**Message Overview:**

Welcome to Week 2 of the Master Your Money series. Our message began with a review of last week’s conversation with Ron Blue, where he described five financial categories in which people can find themselves: Struggling; Surviving; Stable; Secure; Surplus. When Struggling we are not able to make ends meet; when Surviving we are living pay-check to pay-check; when Stable we are able to save some with an emergency fund; when Secure we are able save for long term goals; and with Surplus we have more than enough. Last week we talked about spending less than you earn. This week we are focusing on avoiding debt.

* Spend less than you earn.
* Avoid the use of debt.
* Build margin [save].
* Set long term goals.
* Give generously.

**Discussion:**

(Leaders: The questions that follow are designed to stir reflection and discussion over mastering your money. Please read through them prior to your meeting, so you can be prepared to prayerfully pace your group well. And remember, as leader, your goal is to promote increased biblical awareness, as well as individual self-awareness – a combination that with the help of the Holy Spirit, results in revelation and…transformation!)

* “The problem with greed is that it masks itself as need.” Think of some things that you really wanted to own throughout your life that you no longer own, like a specific brand of jeans in high school, or a tech gadget like a Palm Pilot or VCR that is obsolete. How many of those things did you really need?
* Read Ecclesiastes 5:10 and then consider the following quote from St. Francis of Assisi: “People have confessed to me every known sin except the sin of greed.” Why do you think it is difficult to admit to feeling greed?
* Have you ever felt that someone got something that you deserved? Read Luke 12:13-21. Jesus said, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). Ron Blue explained that we use debt to increase our standard of living, but we have to pay that debt off with after-tax/after-giving dollars, and so we are actually borrowing from our future. Do you feel that our culture encourages people to go into debt, to borrow from their future, in order to accumulate an abundance of possessions? How can we, as Christians, avoid the need to feed our greed?
* You can’t borrow your way to the next step in your financial journey because you will end up with a lower standard of living. Instead of taking us up the steps from struggling to survival to stable, debt keeps us in the struggling. Do you struggle with debt? If not, how have you mastered it?
* Read Proverbs 22:7. How can remembering God’s teaching on debt help you with financial decisions? When determining how we use our finances we must protect from impulse, protect from impatience, and protect our savings. Which of these do you find the most difficult to practice? Which one, if any, is easy for you?

**Wrap-Up/Close:**

What small step can you take toward reducing your debt or committing to being debt-free? What small step can you take toward becoming more stable by building margin (savings)?

**Throughout the Week:**

Read Philippians 4:11-13, memorizing 4:13. Read chapters 9 and 10 in Master Your Money by Ron Blue.