

A solid black silhouette of a pig, facing left, positioned on the right side of the page. The word "introduction" is printed in white serif font across the middle of the pig's body.

introduction

People are okay
having **faith**, so
long as it doesn't
alter their **life**.

Trouble is, a faith
that **doesn't**
alter your life isn't
real faith.

Greg Boyd

Even though money affects most everything we do on a daily basis, it just isn't one of our favorite discussion topics (unless it's asking that always fun "What would you do with one million dollars?" question or debating a solution to the financial downfall of the United States). We go to coffee shops and talk about God, and we go to church and talk about sports and shopping. But money doesn't really come up much in any discussion.

Maybe that's why so many pastors dread preaching about money. And why an overwhelming number of marriages begin without the individual parties ever discussing how they'll save—and spend—their money after they're married. Money talks make *everyone* uncomfortable. Think about it: if you really want to make a conversation awkward, just ask someone about the details of his or her bank account. Or, next Sunday, try peeking over the shoulder of the woman in front of you while the offering plate passes her by. Chances are, if she catches you looking, you won't find her sitting in front of you again.

Yet, as uncomfortable as talking about money makes us, money (and possessions) is one of the most talked about topics in Scripture. What we do with the resources with which we have been entrusted is inextricably linked to our relationships with God and others. Whether we have little or much, the way we view and spend money directly affects the way we view what God is doing in us and in the world. Our goal should be to spend our resources, both individually and communally, in ways that contribute to God's mission to restore the world to what it was created to be.

I believe that God meant it when he repeatedly saw and proclaimed the goodness of his creation in the first chapter of Genesis (verses 3, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31). I believe that humans once lived as the noble stewards we were created to be. Over time, though, we have chosen our own way. We've decided that we would rather *own* God's creation than lovingly care for it. We sought (and seek)

possessions for ourselves instead of living in God's economy, an economy in which there is enough for everyone. The result is one we know all too well—a broken world, tragic suffering, and torn relationships.

But there is good news! God hasn't given up on his creation and has promised to make all things new. Every person. Every part of creation. God is a missional God and is searching for people to join his mission of restoring the world. All around the world, ordinary people are rising up to re-imagine the way they spend money around the mission of God.

So, with all that in mind, as we begin this journey together, here are a couple things this book is *not*.

There are surely some principles laid out in the book about how Christians are called to view and spend money, but this book is not a quick list of exactly what that looks like. It could be very easy to create tweets out of scriptures about money, trying to capture the significance of a verse or passage in 140 characters or less. Sometimes this approach works, but in using it, we often miss what the rest of the story is really saying.

This book is also not *everything* the Bible says about money. I'd like to think I've covered the most important parts and that these parts give a foundation upon which everything else rests. But chances are there is more (isn't there always more when God is involved?). So I hope you continue to wrestle with Scripture alongside others.

So, what *is* this book?

I love math. I love numbers and details. I have an analytical mind that naturally focuses on facts and evidence. Since I pay more attention to details, I haven't always been a stories guy, but I've come to realize that life is all about story, specifically God's story. It's all about

placing our story into the grand story of God, from beginning to end, creation to restoration. This book is about what Scripture tells us about money and how stories and reflections from Scripture might push us to place our entire lives, our stories, including money, into God's story and mission. Some parts of the book focus on historical stories involving money. Some focus on parables Jesus told about money. And some focus on other scriptural expressions about money. But it all comes back to seeing everything through the lens of the story and mission into which we are called.

Specifically, I hope this book helps create conversations about how we can view and spend money in ways that cause us to participate in God's mission to restore the world to its intended wholeness. If we can't even talk about money, living into God's mission with our money becomes much harder—maybe even impossible. So I hope you'll talk, learn, grow, question, and take chances—all with the purpose of living into God's mission with your money and resources. Some of it may not be easy, and some of it may be uncomfortable. But it just might change your life.



Let's begin here.

We know you hate directions.

But you can always tear this page out and find your own way through the book.

it's plain and simple.

1 Read and discuss a chapter.

2 Each person chooses one of eight experiments to carry out . . . or make up some of your own.

3 Journal your thoughts on our pages. (Why else would we give you so much white space?)

4 Share your stories with the group next week.



everything

And God
saw that it
was good.¹

Whether you are like me and grew up learning about the story of creation (see Genesis 1-2) on flannelgraph or you are new to all of this, it's easy to overlook these amazing words. Over and over again as God creates day and night, water and sky, plants and animals, men and women (all of it!), he steps back and proclaims how truly *good* it is. If we are honest with ourselves, we are hard-pressed to come up with the same reaction God had as he breathed creation into beautiful existence. When we look around our lives and our world, the brokenness, the ugliness, the pain, and the deep suffering are much more apparent.

The beauty and love that rest in God's creation have become muddled because we have chosen our own ways over God's perfect way. We have become owners instead of stewards, and the result is brokenness throughout creation. But the beauty and love have not been blotted out altogether—we see them all around us, too. We are capable of much harm, but the image of God in each of us, even a distorted image, still produces love and beauty, through the grace of God.

All of creation groans for the day when it will be restored and renewed to how it was created to be in the beginning. As Paul writes in Romans 8:18-25, creation waits in eager expectation for God's people to be revealed so that one day all of creation will be set free from its bondage to decay. There is hope! And it is this story of hope, restoration, and renewal to which God calls each of us to be a part as we work with God in what he's doing in and for our world.

If we are serious about this work—God's work of restoring and renewing each person and each piece of his creation—it becomes easier to see how every area of our lives is affected. From the beginning, Scripture reveals a wholeness in humans. Much differently, we often like to compartmentalize our lives. Physical life, spiritual life, mental life, emotional life. Or church life, work life, family life, school life, play life. It's easy for us to compartmentalize our lives,

but if we look closely, Scripture doesn't make distinctions between physical and spiritual or church and work life. The gospel of Christ is concerned with the whole person, and God's love transforms our whole lives. We are called to (and get to) place ourselves into God's mission of restoration. As Jesus taught us to pray for things on earth to be as they are in heaven, we begin to see a kingdom coming to earth that doesn't change just the "spiritual" state of our hearts but our entire lives.

How we live—specifically, how we view and spend money (that is why you're here, right?)—is directly connected to our capacity to love God and love our neighbor. The fundamental confession that Scripture makes about money and resources is that "the earth is the LORD's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). All throughout God's story, we are reminded that we don't *own* anything (as much as we think we do), that God created it all and therefore owns it all, and that we came into this world with nothing and will take nothing out of it (see 1 Timothy 6:7).

To live by this confession that everything is God's is the beginning of loving God and loving others as we throw ourselves into God's mission with all that we are and have, including money.



talk

**In 1 and 2
Corinthians*, Paul
calls us God's
coworkers in the
world. What does it
mean to be God's
fellow workers?**

(1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:1)

**We live in a society
that thrives on a
mindset of personal
ownership.**

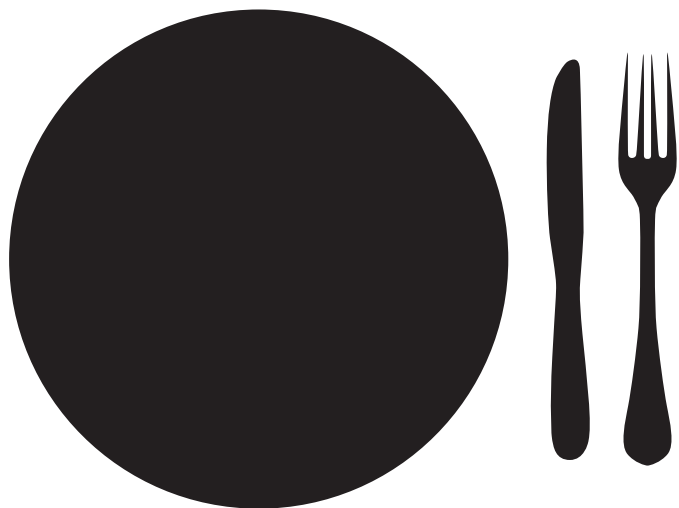
**How does the
confession that
everything is God's
confront and
contradict
this worldview?**

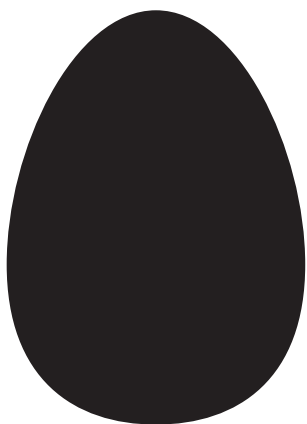
Family dinner.

(It doesn't have to be so old school.)

We get it. Families are pulled in every direction—work, school, sports, recitals. The list goes on. This week, make an effort to eat several meals together (or with friends if you don't live near your family). Pray before each meal, giving thanks for food and time together. As you pray and eat, remember those without food and without family.

Journal your thoughts here.





That chicken wasn't made at the grocery store.

You may have bought your food at the grocery store, but where was it before that? This week, keep a list of all the food you eat. Then, reflect on where it originally came from. Were the animals raised well? Were the workers who harvested it and delivered it paid fair wages? Was God's earth cared for? Research local food stores that honor God's creation—and shop there.

Push a pencil.

Not financial-advisor-recommended.

It's a good thing to have a budget, but some of us need to think deeper about what God wants our budget to look like rather than what we or even a "financial expert" thinks it should look like.

Create a monthly budget or take a hard look at your existing budget. Add, adjust, or delete altogether the items or categories that don't help you live by the confession that everything is God's or lead you into God's mission.

Tell the page what you think.



A loose grip.

The next time someone asks to borrow something, give it. Know someone who needs something that you have? Provide it. No questions asked.

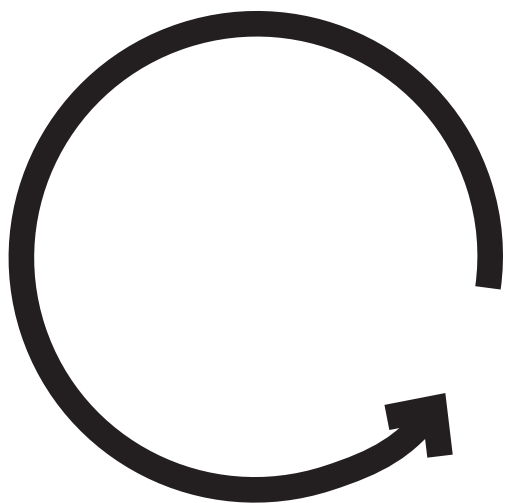
Do tell.

Creation restoration.

Scripture promises that all things are being made new. One day, every person and every piece of God's beautiful and broken creation will be restored and created new! Every act of creativity, compassion, justice, and love will be part of the new world.

Find something in your garage, yard, or neighborhood that could use some tender loving care. Maybe an old chair, a flower bed, or a piece of equipment. Imagine how you could restore the item to be beautiful and valuable again. Then do it. As you work, contemplate how God is restoring you today.

Artists welcome here. Doodle away.



One step at a time.

As the hands and feet of Jesus, we play a fundamental role in God's mission in and for the world. Even small acts can make a difference in our world being restored to its intended wholeness.

Visit www.mynextstepis.org, a place where people share what they want to do to help change the world, and submit your "next step." Involve money in your next step, whether it's simple or difficult.

Drop a line. Or two.



It is the Lord's, after all.

Read and pray the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) each day this week. Try reading with fresh eyes, dreaming how you can work for God's coming kingdom as God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

White spaces are meant to be filled.

It's not all about the Benjamins.

Yes, this book is about money. But *everything*, not just money, is from God. Life itself is a gift from God. Choose a person in your community who just needs to be with somebody. Give him or her the resource of your friendship. Meet this person for coffee. Deliver some cookies. Whatever you do, intentionally be *with* him or her.

The greatest resource you can give is yourself.

Save the ink industry. Put your pen to work.