



ABOUT THE THEME

We all have a money story, whether we recognize it or not. Perhaps we are living from a story of fear or shame. Or a story that the church is dying and no longer relevant. Or a story that our actions won't have an impact. Or a story that we don't have enough. Where might God be speaking a new narrative into the limited ones we have told ourselves? This theme invites us to discover and tell our money stories in light of God's money story of liberation and justice. This series encourages us to transform our stewardship practices into more full expressions of who we are and what we believe.

This theme is intentionally direct—it invites us to name exactly what we're talking about and not skirt around it. To speak of money is to invite tension into the room. We so quickly want to avoid it. But it's time we reframe this. Money and possessions are one of the most common topics in scripture, and Jesus talked about money more than faith and prayer. Our money story, therefore, is a spiritual story. Thinking about God's money story should be liberating, inviting, and transformative.

This stewardship season, we invite you to **remember**, **release**, **reimagine**, and **restore** your money stories so that we can write the one God is begging us to live into.

CREATIVE WORSHIP & PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR A SEASON OF STEWARDSHIP

ABOUT THE CREATORS

As artists in ministry, we at *A Sanctified Art* have partnered with two consultants from *Vandersall Collective* to bring this series to life. Mieke Vandersall and Erin Weber-Johnson, both experts in consulting nonprofits and churches in fundraising and stewardship, have been our guides in our planning process, sparking our creative fire. By partnering with *Vandersall Collective*, we aim to provide you with practical and liturgical resources that are creative, theologically-sound, and informed by experts in stewardship.

The *Vandersall Collective* serves churches and faith-based organizations as they imagine, identify, and implement their call for the 21st century. Learn more by visiting vandersallcollective.com



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RESOURCES INCLUDED IN THE BUNDLE

1. **OUR MONEY STORY STUDY JOURNAL**— A printable study journal for members to explore the focal scriptures through art, reflections, and writing prompts.
2. **SERMON PLANNING GUIDE**— Offering commentary, theme connections, and links to further reading for each of the focal scriptures in the series.
3. **WORDS FOR WORSHIP**— Written liturgy inspired by the theme and scriptures for each week in the series.
4. **OUR MONEY STORY ART PROJECT**— An accessible and intergenerational art project to bring the theme to life.
5. **8 NEW VISUALS WITH ARTIST STATEMENTS**— Illuminating each of the focal scriptures.
6. **OUR MONEY STORY BRANDING BUNDLE**— Logo files and graphic templates to help you share this theme in your print and online communications.
7. **POETRY PRAYERS**— Poems inspired by the theme and sub-themes.
8. **PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR STEWARDSHIP**— A collection of practical guides and workbooks to equip pastors and committees in leading a successful campaign.

FOCAL SCRIPTURES

Instead of following the Revised Common Lectionary for a particular season and cycle, we have selected scriptures to explore the “Our Money Story” theme. We hope these texts make for a meaningful, accessible, 4-weeks-long series any worshiping community can follow during any time of the year.

WEEK ONE

REMEMBER

LUKE 22:1-23 (*The Last Supper & Judas’ betrayal*)
EXODUS 16:1-18 (*Manna in the desert*)

We begin our series by looking back at what our spoken and unspoken money stories have been and how those stories have impacted our practices of stewardship. In these texts, we remember God’s steadfast relationship with us throughout time and trials. We remember that Judas betrayed Jesus in exchange for money but was still invited to the table. We remember that the Israelites complained in the wilderness but were met with manna. Even in stories of desperation and deep betrayal, we are gifted with God’s provision—of the feast of enough, and the holy meal of remembrance.

WEEK TWO

RELEASE

MATTHEW 19:16-22 (*A wealthy man seeks eternal life*)
DEUTERONOMY 15:1-11 (*The year of cancelled debts*)

This week we practice releasing shame, anxiety, guilt, greed or anything that keeps us from freedom and wholeness. We release the elements of our money story that prevent us from fully living into God’s story. In Matthew, we see a man grieved to let go of his wealth. In Deuteronomy, we find the radical social mandate of cancelled debts, a communal release that is practiced for the good of all. Releasing is a spiritual practice that frees us from ourselves and liberates others.

WEEK THREE

REIMAGINE

MARK 12:38-44 (*The widow’s mite*)
LEVITICUS 19:9-10; 25:8-12 (*The year of Jubilee*)

Scripture calls us to reimagine a world where our social and economic systems are not built to disparage or impoverish, but instead to provide for and benefit all. This week we revisit the story of the widow’s mite, a scripture that begs for reimagination and reinterpretation from the harmful ways it has been used. Instead of commending the widow’s giving practices, perhaps Jesus is condemning the economic system that created her poverty. The Jewish practice of the Jubilee year invites us to imagine leaving the edge of the harvest for the poor and immigrant to reap; in the fiftieth year, the harvest is shared and disparities are rebalanced. In light of these stories in scripture, we are called to reimagine our own money stories.

WEEK FOUR

RESTORE

JOHN 21:1-14 (*Jesus appears to the disciples*)
GENESIS 33:1-17 (*Esau forgives Jacob*)

As we have practiced remembering, releasing, and reimagining, we conclude the series by focusing on restoration. Ultimately, practicing faithful stewardship heals us as individuals and helps us restore right relationship with one another. In Genesis 33, Jacob and Esau experience a surprising reconciliation after years of strife and estrangement. In the final chapter of John’s gospel, Jesus appears to the disciples and fills their empty fishing nets. Even after death, Jesus restores our hope and provides an abundant feast.



ABOUT THE LOGO

In researching the theme, I became fascinated by money design. I examined currency from around the world and was drawn to the variety of gradients and hues, the etched images of notable figures, architecture, and historic events. But most of all, I was captured by the delicate, lace-like lines that swooped around the edges of all the currency I studied. I discovered this intricate patterning is called guilloche. Guilloche is used on money as well as certificates, awards, and travel documents because it is difficult to replicate. The guilloche led me to think about how each of us has a unique money story that is intimately woven and layered with the stories of others. Not only will you find guilloche throughout the branding, there are also etched illustrations of olive and fig branches, which reference the theme's stories of growth, harvest, and cultivation. As I stacked the words "Our," "Money," and "Story," I found the phrase, "Our one story." Though we each have our own money story, our stories are so interconnected that they ultimately create one story. The work at hand is the process of releasing, reclaiming, restoring, and renewing our stories so they take on the contours of God's story.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman, *Director of Branding, Founding Creative Partner of A Sanctified Art*



IDEAS FOR PROGRAMMING

- Use our study journal in small groups for members to discuss the focal scriptures together and share vulnerably about their personal money stories. Consider forming a group on Facebook for members to discuss the stories and prompts online.
- Use our intergenerational art project to bring the *Our Money Story* theme to life throughout the series.
- Use our practical tools for stewardship to guide your committees in writing your church's money story. Then dream of ways to tell the money and giving story of your congregation. Get creative—tell this story through a visual display or through a series of videos.
- Host a "story slam," inviting members to share their money stories. We encourage you to select members who are willing to share openly and vulnerably. The stories might be sad, playful, heavy, or light—as long as they are true. At the end of the event, break members into groups and invite them to write God's money story.

IDEAS FOR MUSIC

- "You Are Called to Tell the Story," Ruth Duck, 1992.
- "Tell Me the Old, Old Story," Kate Hankey, 1960.
- "Guard the Good Treasure God Entrusts to You," Stephen M. Fearing, 2018.
- "God Has Work for Us to Do," Mark A. Miller, 2012.

REFLECTION ON THE THEME

"So much of our beliefs and behaviors are rooted in stories—narratives that are personal, familial, societal, cultural, and religious. We have subconsciously absorbed and actively constructed many money stories. This stewardship series invites us to tease apart these overlapping narratives, to claim and recreate our stories in light of the stories we find in scripture. Throughout our theme and resource creation, I've experienced a shift in my own personal narrative around money. I've found clarity regarding the areas of my money story that hold tension or heaviness. I've experienced a release that has sparked in me a renewed desire to let my life truly reflect my theological beliefs about giving and justice. Behaviors change when the stories we tell ourselves are transformed."

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity, *Founder, Creative Director of A Sanctified Art*

REFLECTIONS ON THE THEME

"While brainstorming about stewardship, the theme, *Our Money Story*, unexpectedly emerged. Honestly, at first, I didn't jive with it. I'd never thought about my relationship with money as a narrative, and if I did have a money story, it certainly wasn't one I wanted to examine or share. Money feels tangled in my self-worth, anxiety, and shame. However, as I spent time with the theme, I began to realize that it doesn't have to be this way. Being vulnerable about money is hard, but I think recognizing you have a money story is the first step toward desperately-needed growth. I realize I have work to do. The church has work to do too. I hope to approach this work with an open heart, a curious mind, and a kind spirit. I hope to find healing and to uncover ways to be part of an interconnected money story that aligns more closely with God's story."

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman, Director of Branding, Founding Creative Partner of *A Sanctified Art*

"When I first heard the theme, *Our Money Story*, I worried that the title was too forward. I thought to myself, 'No one will want to put "our" and "money" in the same title—it's too personal of a conversation.' However, over time the Spirit does what the Spirit does, and I began to see this phrase in a new light. So often, we in the church talk about money in abstract themes of scarcity, generosity, and faithfulness, but at the end of the day, money is far from abstract. Therefore, we as a team landed on the name, *Our Money Story*, as an invitation to explore stewardship not in the abstract, but in concrete and personal contexts. My hope is that churches and individuals alike will begin exploring their own money stories—reckoning with the money messages we hold in addition to the shame, privilege, and fear that shapes our decisions. I pray that communities will find liberation in honesty and restoration in biblical study. For whether we realize it or not, we all have money stories, so why not invite God into those conversations and learn what God has to say to us through them?"

—Rev. Sarah Are, Founding Creative Partner of *A Sanctified Art*

"Money, what an awkward subject to broach from the pulpit. As a teenager and young adult, I had a visceral reaction to the stewardship season and the offering. I felt that money was completely unrelated to the purpose of church. Stewardship season felt like a trap; it added to a sense of hypocrisy that, for me, permeated the church. I was missing the message. Why was that? As an adult, I understand that the real work of the church is grounded in the biblical text and funded by the real dollars that we give. When I have asked church groups in my workshops to choose a season for which they would like to make art, I have been repeatedly directed to stewardship. Abundance is hard to imagine for a person who lives paycheck to paycheck. Churchgoers yearn for a new way to deliver the money message. How can we clarify the stewardship story to free our parishioners? I am inspired by the fresh biblical vision of *Vandersall Collective*! I am looking forward to providing resources that help churches reimagine how they communicate around the subject of money."

—Hannah Garrity, Founding Creative Partner of *A Sanctified Art*

"Somehow, while growing up I got these ideas that wealthy people are bad and middle-class and poor people are good and closer to God. There was a fine, unwritten line and goal to be achieved where I had enough to survive, but no more. People with greater wealth than myself were to be judged harshly. As long as there was struggle, it was all good. Imagine my surprise when these scripts, so tightly wound in my head, began to fall apart as I began to explore what my money story was and what it had to do with my family of origin and my liberal Presbyterian upbringing . . . and I began to realize that the unwinding was necessary to live deeper into my faith—my faith in Christ who breaks down false dichotomies and lives instead in spaces of gray. I very much look forward to hearing about your own process: what money stories have you been given and chosen? What do they have to do with God?"

—Rev. Mieke Vandersall, Owner & Principal Consultant of *Vandersall Collective*

"I didn't know it could be like this.' A few years ago, I was leading a training on stewardship at a church. A woman called me two weeks later in tears, explaining that the work of stewardship had meant exploring her own relationship with money and then having conversations with fellow members in her church. Those conversations led to tears of joy when sharing memories together and prayers of concern for those in unexpected hardship. She told me these were moments that she would always treasure. In thinking about stewardship, I often hear people frame it as what needs to be done for a balanced budget so that ministry can take place. The theme, *Our Money Story*, is not one of easy relationships or of simple formulas for success. Rather, money stories are often complicated and nuanced—both within the bible and in our lives. By owning our narratives and our relationship to money, I've seen in my own life how stewardship itself is a vital pastoral ministry."

—Erin Weber-Johnson, Senior Consultant at *Vandersall Collective*

