

WHAT IS YOUR MONEY STORY? WHAT IS GOD'S MONEY STORY?

SETTING

Look to the past: Growing up, how would you describe your socioeconomic status or position?¹ What was the economic environment of your neighborhood, your school, your local community (*city, town, region*)? How did this economic setting shape your perceptions and beliefs about money?

Reflect on the present: What words would you use to describe your socioeconomic status or position now? How would you describe the economic environment of your current neighborhood and local community (*city, town, region*)? How does your current economic setting inform your money story now?

CHARACTERS

Look to the past: Throughout your childhood and formative years, who were the leading characters of your money story? Who taught you—directly or indirectly—about finances and practices of giving? What did you learn or absorb from them? Who are the protagonists and antagonists of your money story—who gave you positive and healthy perceptions of money and who negatively impacted your money narrative?

Reflect on the present: Who are the leading characters of your money story now? Who do you look to as models, guides, or experts? Who in your community or in your faith tradition inspires you to give of your gifts and resources?



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Look to the past: What are the key events or major turning points in your money story? How would you trace the narrative arc of your relationship with money throughout your life?

Reflect on the present: Name any recent events that are impacting your money story now. What events, challenges, or changes are impacting your financial behaviors and giving practices right now?



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Look to the past: What financial challenges or limitations have you faced? Where is there tension or wrestling in your money story? Where has there been conflict between characters?

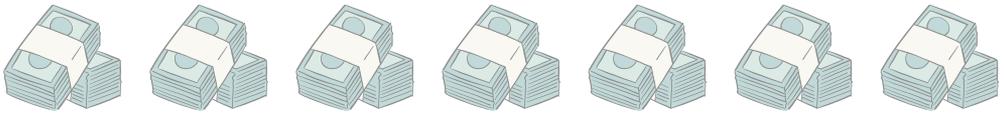
Reflect on the present: What money challenges do you wish to overcome and heal from? What habits do you want to retrain? Name any fears, baggage, scars, limiting beliefs, or shame that would be helpful to include.



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Look to the past: Throughout your childhood and formative years, describe the emotional tone of your perceptions of money. Perhaps your attitude toward money has changed throughout your life. Trace how the tone has fluctuated or shifted with the major turning points of your money story.

Reflect on the present: How would you describe the overall tone of your money story now? How would you describe your current attitude toward money?



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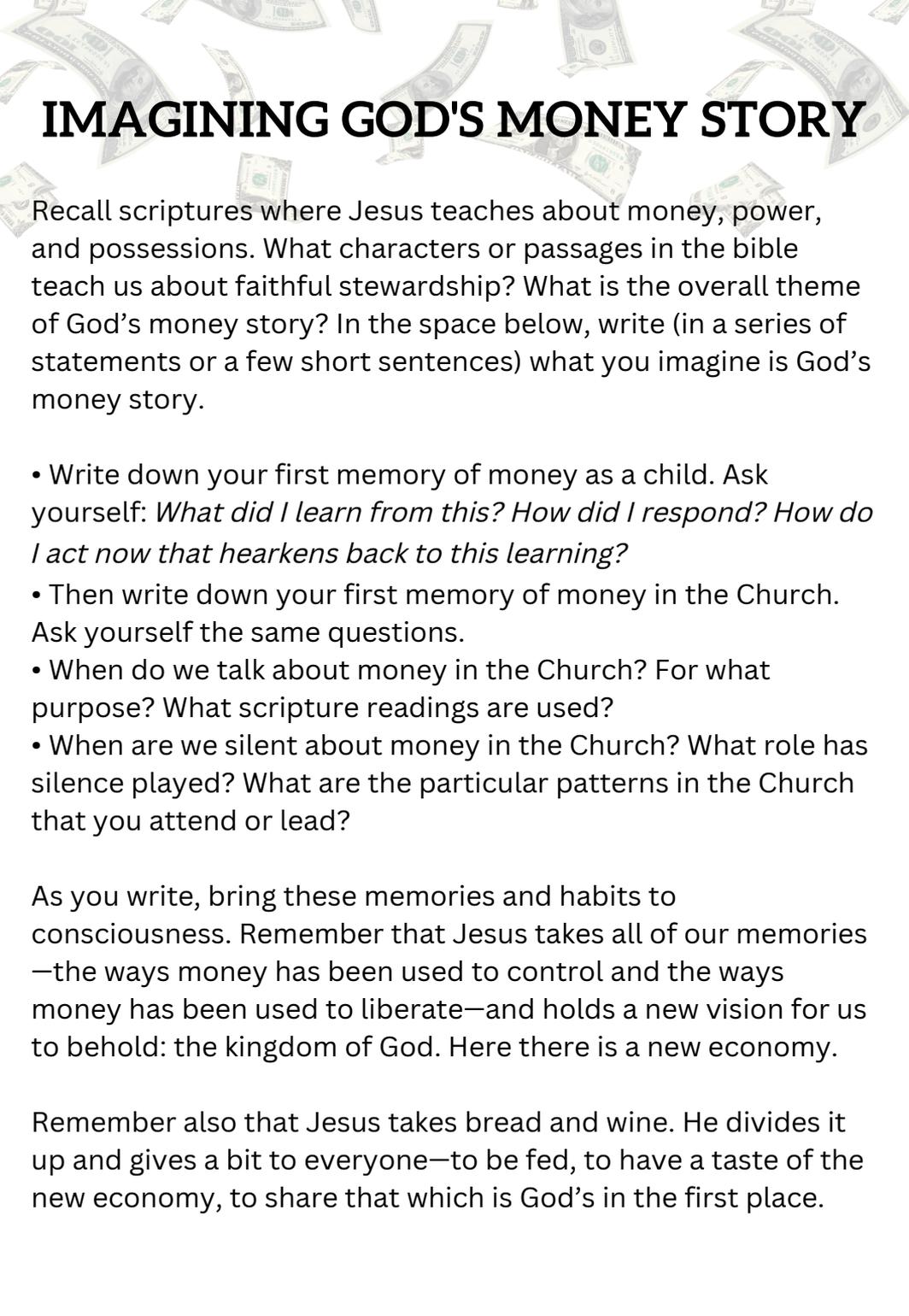
Like a thesis statement, this tries to summarize the overriding philosophy or belief within your money story. If you want structure for your theme statement, you might begin your sentences with the following phrases, filling in the blanks however you see fit:

“I believe money _____”

“I use money _____”

“I give money _____”

Is this the money story you want to embody moving forward? What is missing that you wish to include in your story as it continues to unfold? What would you add or rewrite in your money story so that it's more of what you want to live into.



IMAGINING GOD'S MONEY STORY

Recall scriptures where Jesus teaches about money, power, and possessions. What characters or passages in the bible teach us about faithful stewardship? What is the overall theme of God's money story? In the space below, write (in a series of statements or a few short sentences) what you imagine is God's money story.

- Write down your first memory of money as a child. Ask yourself: *What did I learn from this? How did I respond? How do I act now that hearkens back to this learning?*
- Then write down your first memory of money in the Church. Ask yourself the same questions.
- When do we talk about money in the Church? For what purpose? What scripture readings are used?
- When are we silent about money in the Church? What role has silence played? What are the particular patterns in the Church that you attend or lead?

As you write, bring these memories and habits to consciousness. Remember that Jesus takes all of our memories—the ways money has been used to control and the ways money has been used to liberate—and holds a new vision for us to behold: the kingdom of God. Here there is a new economy.

Remember also that Jesus takes bread and wine. He divides it up and gives a bit to everyone—to be fed, to have a taste of the new economy, to share that which is God's in the first place.