

Endings: reflections to close a small-group study

Endings matter for small groups. The bible study, talk and prayer should result in some action. Consider using one of the two group commitments in this paper as a way of ending a small-group study around money, generosity and discipleship.



A small-group litany

This Litany is taken from the book, *At ease: discussing money in small groups* by John and Sylvia Ronsvalle (Alban 1998). It has been adapted to a bidding and response format and can be used as a shared group prayer and affirmation. Find out more about the important giving research of John and Sylvia Ronsvalle at www.emptytomb.org.

The Litany

Leader: We acknowledge the abundance of our material resources and express our gratitude to God, on whom we depend for all good things.

All: We understand that, while we have much, many others in our global community are without the very basics needed to sustain the gift of life.

Leader: We confess that our decisions about what we need too often go unexamined, as we give in to the values of the culture around us.

All: Together recalling Jesus' words, 'no one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve both God and money', we acknowledge that money has power today to addict, to corrupt, and to destroy those who use it carelessly.

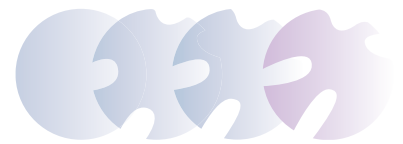
Leader: We resolve, with Christ's help, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with each other's support, to open ourselves to change so that we may work more effectively through our congregation to reach out in love to those who so desperately need our help.

All: To this end, we commit to explore together – in a candid and caring fashion – our relationship to God and to money.

Leader: We rejoice that, with God's help and in Jesus' name, we are able to be part of a movement to end the misery of millions of men, women and children as we seek to be faithful in our witness in both word and deed.

All: We affirm the importance of reaching out in love to those in need close to home, even as we grow in our global vision.

Leader: God, help us, your children, as we now humble ourselves before you and each other so that, renewed and emboldened, we might better serve in Jesus' name. **Amen.**



A steward's commitment to financial freedom

This steward's commitment is found in *Your Money and Your Life* by Keith Tondeur and Steve Pierce (SPCK 2010). It differs from the litany in that it is an individual commitment. It would not be appropriate to invite group members to read this out loud together. Instead, consider copying the text to an A5 sheet for each group member. At the close of the group, allow time for silent, prayerful reflection on the words in the commitment. The leader should then close the reflection time with a short prayer. No further discussion on the content of the commitment is needed.

The Commitment

I acknowledge God's ultimate ownership of all he has entrusted to me. I release my material possessions to God: my home, my car my most treasured possessions, my savings.

I acknowledge God as the Giver of all and that he entrusts his gifts to me as his steward. I receive back with joy and gratitude all I have released to God and pledge myself to an open, generous sharing of God's goodness to me. Therefore I commit myself:

- to practising generosity and to honouring God with the first fruits of all by giving a percentage of my income as an act of worship, gratitude and to the service of the kingdom of God (Deut. 16:17).
- to careful budgeting by giving time and practising the skills of good money management as a steward of all God has entrusted to me (Luke 14:28-29).
- to the discipline of saving by working towards setting aside 10% of my take-home pay (Prov. 21:5).
- to working towards to a debt-free life, as an expression of my freedom in Christ, by steadily paying off debts (including mortgage debt) and borrowing responsibly (Prov. 22:7).

- to resisting judgementalism and being ever aware of both the needs and the pressures on the poor in my community, in my country and in God's world (Deut. 15:4-11; Prov. 21:13).
- to being a responsible consumer by learning contentment, practising fair and ethical trading and showing integrity in my financial dealings.
- to teaching biblical principles of money to any children I may have.
- to enhancing my work and relational skills by attending to personal development and recognising that wealth earned creates obligation to sharing and service.

