

No STRINGS

*Untangling Your Heart's
Attachment To Money*



GRAFTED LIFE
MINISTRIES

No Strings:
Untangling Your Heart's Attachment to Money

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INTRODUCTION

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

1 Timothy 6:10

Welcome to *No Strings: Untangling Your Heart's Attachment To Money*.

While Jesus was on earth, He often used the subject of money as an illustration to open people's hearts to His instruction about the Kingdom of God. Jesus' teachings point us to this truth: it is easy for us to become attached to our possessions. Money represents a significant temptation in our lives—to depend on it for our survival and success, to use it to promote our comfort or reputation. Money is a powerful adversary to our relationships with God and others, whether we have a little of it or a lot.

Because of money's influence, there are numerous ways that we try to control our attraction to it. We can set up financial structures that put boundaries on the way that we spend, save or give our money away. We can seek the help of financial institutions or advisors to make wise money decisions. But as good as these external options are, unless we are willing to look internally

- » at the way our resources affect our emotions,
- » at what motivates our spending decisions,
- » at the underlying meaning that we attach to the assets that we possess or desire,

then we have not explored all that Jesus wants us to evaluate. If we desire lasting change and true freedom, we need to look at the deeper issues of our hearts.

So, how can we untangle the strings of our hearts that may be attached to our money or possessions? What is the process to becoming someone who is free financially? How can we interact with God and others as we explore the meaning of money in our lives?

In the next few months, *No Strings* will lead you on an interactive journey to explore these questions with God and your Christian community. Alongside the opportunity to learn what Scripture teaches about possessions, you will have the opportunity to evaluate your personal finances and your heart's reaction to your current resources. The exercises and reflections will invite open, honest and real conversations with yourself and God about what really matters to you regarding money.

Sound intriguing? If so, keep reading to learn all you need to know to get the most out of each week. Because this study is likely different from previous ones that you have participated in, the orientation that follows is important. It will help you get your bearings going forward.

Blessings to you as you begin. Our prayers have gone before you and we know that God goes with you. May you feel His loving presence as your companion throughout every step of the journey.

ORIENTATION

In order to get you started on the right foot, we offer these seven concepts to orient you to the type of study you are participating in. Take some time before you begin to reflect on these points. But also keep them in mind as you proceed. It may be helpful to review this page if somewhere along the journey you find yourself wondering about any of the reflective questions or activities in the study.

No Strings focuses on biblical concepts.

This study begins with Scripture. Each week you will find a set of verses that ground the Lesson for that session. All of the remaining activities are meant to guide you to reflect on the meaning of the biblical ideas and to apply them in your daily life.

No Strings is interactive.

This study will involve more than just reading, answering and discussing some questions. You will be asked to engage in a comprehensive process towards personal and spiritual growth. From listening to podcast teachings to interacting with your financial resources, you will be invited to learn and practice core biblical principles in ways that truly impact your heart and your life.

No Strings includes God in the process.

This study emphasizes times of prayer. As you participate in the activities and reflections, you will be asked to talk to God about what you are doing. These conversations are meant to deepen your awareness that God is with you all the time and to strengthen your ability to connect with Him in daily life.

No Strings encourages you to think.

This study includes many opportunities for you to record your thoughts about the biblical concepts, your financial situation and the activities that you engage in. Though sometimes the questions may seem similar to previous ones that you have answered, each one is designed to expand your perspective and reveal your understanding of the weekly ideas.

No Strings asks you to explore your feelings.

This study poses many questions that focus your attention on your emotional responses. This is done very purposefully. Regardless of our gender, our feelings influence the financial decisions that we make and can lead us to understand the motivations of our hearts. Because of their importance, the reflection questions will often ask you to evaluate what you are feeling. This practice helps you to grow in awareness of your emotional responses and gives you an opportunity to talk openly with God about the state of your heart.

No Strings flexes with your schedule.

This study is set up in a 12 week format with an approximate 2 or 3 hour time commitment each week to complete all of the activities. However, you should feel the freedom to alter the pace of how you engage with the materials. Although we do not recommend that you go faster than one lesson per week, you might desire to slow the process down in order to get the most out of the activities and times of reflection. Allow

yourself the time to let the concepts sink in and to participate in the Real Life Practices. This journey is not designed to be a speed race, but rather a leisurely walk with God and some fellow Christians.

No Strings works.

This study includes proven practices that open people's hearts and lives to be changed by the Holy Spirit. But these activities only work if you engage. The practices will require effort on your part. Sustaining that effort may not always be easy. At times, some activities will seem uncomfortable, challenging or maybe even pointless. Some questions might press you, and you may feel resistant to engage fully with what is being suggested to you.

Pay attention when this happens. Rather than force yourself to move on, we suggest that you take some time to talk with God about what you are feeling and to ask for His help in completing what you can. Remember that there is nothing magical about the practices in this study, but there is great potential for change when we turn our hearts toward God. The ultimate work of this study and the point of each activity is growth in our relationship with Him.

THE ACTIVITIES

No Strings includes five different weekly activities.

The Lesson

The audio podcast begins the activities for each session. Each Lesson podcast focuses on the Scripture for the week, offering opportunities to listen to the verses and to consider application of the biblical concepts in your relationship with money, God and others. Each recording is about 15 minutes long and can be accessed on the Grafted Life website.

It is easy to stream or download the podcasts. Just follow these simple steps.

1. Go to www.graftedlife.org on your computer or mobile device and log in with an existing account or register a new account. You can create a free account using the "Member Login" menu on the main navigation bar.
2. From the account dashboard, click to "Add Online Content."

3. Input the case-sensitive code included with your book.
4. Select the podcasts for *No Strings*. You can stream the podcasts online or download the podcasts for listening on the audio player of your choice.
5. Bookmark www.graftedlife.org/podcasts for quick access.

Note: For those who have difficulty hearing or prefer to read along, we have PDF transcripts of the Lessons available on our website on the podcast page at no additional charge. Follow the instructions above to access the transcripts.

The Real Life Practice

After you have listened to the Lesson, you will be invited to practice the scriptural concepts in your life. These activities are designed to help you engage with and process your current financial realities. This book guides you through the process of completing each exercise.

Participating in these practices allows you to experience how your heart is potentially attached to money or possessions rather than to God. They help you to see where growth is needed and where small changes can make a big difference in the way you relate to your resources.

If you experience any thoughts or feelings during a Real Life Practice that you find concerning or overwhelming, we recommend that you talk about it with a pastor, counselor, spiritual director, or trusted friend.

Observation Notes

After you have completed the Real Life Practice, you will be led through a short series of questions that help you observe what happened in the practice. These opportunities for evaluation are needed because while we are engaging in exercises, our minds are occupied in the task. When we take time later to turn our full attention to what happened, we have an increased ability to see the whole picture, evaluate our emotional responses, and expand our perspective. This also gives us an opportunity to include God in the process, asking that His perspective be added to our own insight about the experience.

Reflection

To complete your personal exercises for the session, you will answer a series of reflective questions designed to integrate the components of the study for that week. These questions give you an opportunity to revisit the Scripture verses and the Lesson in light of the Real Life Practice, and to consider your own thoughts and feeling about the material. This ending evaluation allows you to think about what has been beneficial and what you would like to apply going forward.

This time of reflection is also a time of prayer—a time to talk over your thoughts and feelings with God. He will be there to direct your thoughts as you open your heart and mind to what He wants to communicate.

The Group Discussion

At the end of each session, you will find questions for group discussion. These conversation starters are designed to help a group share their experiences with each other. Having the opportunity to verbally process what happened in your personal reflection and to synthesize the activities can bring clarity to what God is doing in our hearts and lives. Participating in the group discussion also gives you an opportunity to learn from other people's stories and perspectives.

If you are not participating in *No Strings* as a part of a small group, we recommend that you invite one or two other people to do the study with you. Going through the process with others adds a helpful dimension to the study experience.

REFLECTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS IN LEADERSHIP

If you hold a position of leadership within a church, non-profit, or business, we have provided additional thought-provoking questions for you in the Appendix of this book. These opportunities for reflection guide you to consider and converse with God about your responsibilities as a steward of others' resources.

As you go through the weeks of this study, pondering your personal attachment to money, the leadership questions correlate with and supplement the themes of each session helping you to prayerfully consider how your attachments influence your organizational decisions as well. We recommend that you use them for personal edification

and as possible group discussion opportunities with others on your leadership team.

To help you get started with these questions, listen to the podcast “A Message for Leaders” on our website.

WEEK 1

Getting Started

And [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 22:37-40

THE LESSON

15 MINUTES

Listen to the podcast for Week 1, accessible at graftedlife.org. You will find instructions on how to access the podcasts on page 8 of the introduction.

This Lesson introduces you to the context of *No Strings* and gives you an idea of what to expect as you participate. Each weekly activity is outlined and described, and helpful tips are offered for getting the most out of this unique study.

REFLECTION

15-20 MINUTES

Find a quiet place to consider the questions below. Begin by reading the Scripture verses for this week.

And [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 22:37-40

✍ What thoughts and feelings do you experience as you read these commandments of Jesus, particularly in light of beginning this course?

✍ What brought you to this study? What are you hoping to get out of it?

Participation in *No Strings* will require a time commitment each week:

- *Listening to the Lesson podcast – 15 minutes*
- *Doing the Real Life Practice – 20 to 40 minutes*
- *Writing Observation Notes – 5 to 10 minutes*
- *Answering Reflection questions – 15 to 30 minutes*
- *Sharing in the Group Discussion – 30 to 60 minutes*

✍ Are you willing and able to set aside time for these activities for each week of the study? What practical changes to your schedule might you need to make in order to fully participate?

✍ As noted in the Lesson, God might use this study to reveal things about yourself and your attachments to money that you did not know. What's your reaction to this thought?

✍ Our relationship to money can also affect our relationships with others, including God. How do you feel about that idea? Does it discourage you or encourage you as you begin this study?

✍ What do you anticipate will be your greatest obstacle to engaging fully in *No Strings*?

✍ What do you hope could be the greatest benefit of your participation?

✍ In light of your answers above, can you offer yourself to God and accept whatever experience He may choose to give you through this study? What would you like to say to Him?

✍ How has listening to the Lesson and working through the Reflection deepened your understanding of this week's Scripture passage?

GROUP DISCUSSION

30-60 MINUTES

Use the questions below to guide your group discussion. This week, we focused on preparing for this study. We also considered Jesus' commandments in Matthew 22:37-40. Refer to your experience with the Lesson and Reflection as you share together.

Read Matthew 22:37-40 aloud.

- » From the Scripture passage, what did you discover about your current relationships with God, others and yourself?
- » What did you discover about yourself as you considered what it will mean to begin this study?
- » How would you like this course to affect your relationship to money? What do you hope to learn?
- » What are you expecting or hoping to get out of the group discussions?
- » What are you anticipating will be most difficult for you as you engage in the activities and exercises?
- » What would you like to ask God for as you commit yourself and your time to *No Strings*?

End the discussion with prayer.

