

## **A Wonder-Full Life Stewardship and Generosity Reflections**



*Our relationship with finances is simply part of everyday life. Sometimes this relationship causes us stress, while other times, we hardly give it a thought.*

*People of faith strive to see all of life, including our use of and relationship with money, through the lens of discipleship. Called to generosity and wisdom, we seek to be mindful, prayerful and discerning about how money can be one more tool for practicing our faith.*

*During this year's emphasis on financial stewardship, our congregation is using the classic movie "It's a Wonderful Life" as a means of reflecting differently and faithfully on our understanding and use of money. Use this guide individually or with others to help you reflect on your relationship and attitude toward finances. Taking some time to consider the topics below may be helpful in our quest to live in a healthy, generous and loving way – with money as one of many tools through which we live our faith!*

*If you have not watched the movie recently, consider taking some time to enjoy it! It is available at the local library, and on Amazon Prime, as well as several other streaming services.*

*Choose to reflect on a few or all of the prompts below, and consider what God is revealing to you about your current relationship with finances. Let us prayerfully consider how we would like to grow in faithful stewardship, including our financial contributions to support the ministry of Christ the Savior Lutheran Church.*

- What are a few of your earliest memories related to money? Why do you think these stand out?
- What were the messages you received about money and finances from your family as you were growing up? How would you describe your family's culture around money?
- How has your relationship with money shifted during different periods in your life? What caused these shifts?

In the book “Integrating Money and Meaning” author Maggie Kulyk speaks about several “money energies” that have influence in our lives. She uses the characters in the movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” to illustrate different money energies. Remember, these are caricatures, often in the extreme, but they illustrate different energies that are worth our attention:

### **The Innocent – Uncle Billy**

Sometimes we choose to ignore or avoid much consideration of our relationship to finances. When Innocent energy is at work in us, we may seem carefree and unconcerned on the outside, but wrestle with some fear and anxiety on the inside. The movie portrays Uncle Billy as scatter-brained, tying string around his finger to remember important things. While he is happy and funny on the outside, he carries turmoil inside...leading him to unhealthy coping mechanisms.

### **The Victim – Ma Bailey**

Stress and challenges sometimes foster a sense of blame in us. When money and finances are the issue, we are sometimes tempted to blame anyone or everyone around us, or find fault in systems that seem to cause our problems. Indeed, sometimes factors outside of us do cause financial challenges...but we can avoid the real issue with blaming and self-pity. Ma Bailey (in dystopian Pottersville) is suspicious, distrustful and bitter...suspecting that George, like others she blames, is trying to take advantage of her.

### **The Warrior – Sam Wainwright**

To be hard working and seek success can be excellent attributes in our relationship with money. However, there is a shadow side to most good things. If the drive to accomplish or earn more causes us to forget the real meaning of life, we might be experiencing Warrior energy. Mary and George’s friend Sam Wainwright embodies some of this, as he does not consider much beyond making lots of money. Although the character is somewhat goofy and overly materialistic, he points us toward the downfalls of unconsidered Warrior energy.

### **The Martyr – George Bailey Jr.**

When Martyr energy takes hold of us, we may be kind and smiling on the outside, even as we practice generosity, but we can harbor resentment and disappointment on the inside. Secretly judging others, a Martyr can elevate oneself and become self-congratulatory for one’s efforts. Martyr energy robs us of the joy of generosity. The key character in the movie, George Bailey Jr. loathes the sacrifices he has made...until he goes on the emotional journey of getting a view of what life would have been like without him. His wrestling with Martyr energy, transformed into gratitude and joy is the very thrust of the story line.

### **The Tyrant – Mr. Potter**

Self-centered and sometimes filled with anger, Tyrant energy seeks to control others and the world around one by using the power associated with money and finance. This energy is not limited to those who have lots of money! Tyrant energy may begin as Warrior energy, but becomes darker and more fear-filled as one seeks power over others. Mr. Potter is certainly a one-dimensional character who exhibits tyrant energy in the extreme, always using the money he has to amass more. He has no family or real friends...and simply seeks control over all of Bedford Falls.

You may see other money energies at work in the characters of the movie – and there are certainly other energies around money in the world around us every day. The truth is, we are rarely influenced by only one of these energies throughout our life – the characters of the movie are, after all, just that...characters!

However, it can serve us well to reflect upon when and how these different energies around money and finance influence us. Honest consideration can help us to develop and maintain healthy, spirit-filled energy around finances that equips us to live faithfully.

- What aspects of yourself do you see in each of these energies? How have these energies had both positive and negative influences on your relationship with finances?
- Have there been periods of your life when one energy was more active than another? Why? What influences contributed to the presence of that particular energy at that time?
- How would you name and describe the kind of money energy that you feel would be most healthy and life giving? How would this money energy reflect your understanding of God's grace and goodness toward you and toward the world?
- Our theme for this Stewardship Series is "A Wonder-Full Life" – recognizing that God provides life that fills us with wonder. What are daily examples for you that illustrate this wonder-filled life? What has God provided to you and others that fills you with wonder on a regular basis?
- As people of faith, we both recognize the Wonder-Full Life God has given us, and seek to respond to God's love and grace by living Wonder-Full lives. What does it mean for you to live a Wonder-Full life? How might your relationship with money and finance, and your practice of generosity, help you to live that Wonder-Full life?

*Members and friends of Christ the Savior Lutheran Church will be receiving a stewardship mailing that includes a letter, brochure and Statement of Intent card for 2022.*

*We invite you to utilize what you have explored on these pages as you prayerfully consider your commitment to the congregation for the year ahead.*

*Your Statement of Intent card can be offered in worship on Sundays, November 21<sup>st</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> or completed online at [christthesavior.org/resources/give](http://christthesavior.org/resources/give)*

*Thank you!*