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Introduction to the *Margins* Sermon Series

In the month of September, we will take a look at margins. Margins has been defined by some as “the difference between our current pace and our limits.” Imagine working 30 minutes from your house and you have a meeting at 9am. You leave at 8:15am, so you have 15 minutes of ‘margin’ to get there on time. When that margin narrows (because of traffic, a late school bus, or hitting the Snooze button too many times), you feel anxious or angry. You get distracted from things that are important because you’re focused on the narrowing margin. Sometimes we cram so much into our days that our margin is automatically narrowed. Over the next weeks, we’ll take an in-depth look at margins, worry, and how we can reorganize our lives so we can focus on Christ and His Kingdom.

Each week, we’ll look at a passage from the Bible related to the topic of the weekend sermon. Our goal in reading the Bible is not only to know more about God, but also to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and do what He teaches in His Word.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text’s theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That’s okay! You don’t have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God’s Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, “That’s a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we’re studying?”
5. **Encourage participation, but don’t let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don’t allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, “What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?”

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.

Main Bible Passage: Luke 12:15-21
Sermon Date: September 21-22, 2019

Theme: The kingdom of God, not money or possessions, should be the most important thing in our lives.

- **Are you naturally a spender or a saver? Explain.**
- **Complete the following sentence: “If I had more money, I would ...”**
Leader’s Note: Why does God care about money? Money matters to God because our money often reveals what has first place in our hearts. All too often, money gets in the way of keeping our focus on God. Unfortunately, many people view money and success as security or happiness, when really only God can bring those things.
- **What do you think it means to have margin with our money or resources? Why might**
Leader’s Note: People give priority to whatever they think is most important. Often their priorities are unselfish and include a variety of good causes. Other people are so selfish that they give priority to what will best serve them, such as possessions or personal pleasure. The only true unselfish priority is doing as Jesus taught. God wants people to give priority to His kingdom. Beginning with a warning Jesus gave about worrying over things that don’t matter, Luke 12 centers on the basic issue of the kingdom of God—commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 12:15-21.

Leader’s Note: If any of us were called to choose between the kingdom of God and possessions, we would choose the kingdom of God. But sometimes figuring how to live that out in our day-to-day lives is hard. Jesus warned all the people listening to Him that they shouldn’t be greedy because there is more to life than gaining possessions. Jesus focused the crowd’s attention on a rich man. Most likely, no one in the crowd was wealthy. However, the point clearly applied to these listeners, and it applies to us too.

- **Have you ever received extra money that you didn’t expect? What did you do with the extra money?**
- **Why do you think Jesus pictured greed as something for us to guard against? Has greediness ever sneaked up on you without you realizing it?**
- **What can we do to guard against greed? What does greed reveal about a person’s heart and mind?**
- **How would you answer the question of the rich man in verse 17?**
- **Why does working for God’s kingdom actually benefit us better than a selfish plan?**
Leader’s Note: A key way to keep possessions from sneaking up on us and controlling us is to recognize that God expects each Christian to give His kingdom priority. The rich man’s goal exposed the selfishness of his choices. While nothing is improper about saving enough for retirement, this man’s boast emphasized how he could enjoy himself. He made a false presupposition that he would have plenty of years to get pleasure from his good fortune, but the parable climaxes with the prophecy of the man’s imminent death. The moral of the story is that the same result; judgment will be the lot of everyone whose value system focuses on personal possessions rather than spiritual riches. Since possessions are not permanent, giving them priority is foolish.



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Leader's Note: In His parable, Jesus reveals four important characteristics of this man as warnings for how followers of Christ should not live: 1) He was focused this world; 2) He believed in materialism; 3) He lived for the present; and 4) He had no thoughts about God or eternity.

- **What happens when we flip-flop our priority and give it to possessions instead of to God's kingdom?**
- **Why do possessions sometimes seem to be more important than they are?**
- **How can we make sure that the money we manage doesn't own us?**
- **What is wrong with thinking that money provides a way to live a lavish lifestyle?**

Leader's Note: We can make sure the money we manage doesn't own us by trusting God to meet our needs. That may be easier to say than do when money is tight and we can foresee needs we are not sure we can afford. If you keep reading in Luke 12, you'll see that Jesus reminds us that worrying is not worthwhile, because it doesn't accomplish anything.

Leader's Note: Rejecting the pressures around us and serving only God is no small task. Everything in our culture encourages us to pursue our own selfish desires. But God's plan for His children is radically different, as Jesus taught in Luke 12. Ask God to help you set your priorities straight. Instead of following the world's ways, like the Pharisees or the rich man, pursue the kingdom of God by trusting in Him.

- **In what ways does your checkbook, bank account, or schedule reveal your priorities? Are these things good examples of showing a person's real priorities? Why or why not?**
- **What does your life say about the priorities and values of your heart? Is the kingdom of God first priority in your life? Are you focused on the temporary or the eternal?**
- **Name some personal adjustments or sacrifices that you might need to make in order to put God's kingdom first in your life. Is there an adjustment you need to make now? If so, how can you start?**

Close in prayer, thanking God for offering us so much more than anything the world offers. Pray over your group this week, specifically that they would depend completely on God and trust Him this week, that they would see ways to create margin in their financial lives.