

Biblical Stewardship

THE KEY TO WISE SPENDING

God expects us to have faith, but also to use common sense and wise planning in allocating the resources He has given us. The best way to manage your money and stay out of debt is to have a strategy in place before the expenses or temptations arise.

- Begin with a budget. A budget is a road map that guides you and tells you when you are on course. Budgeting won't ensure prosperity, but it will keep you from overspending your resources and will help you avoid the debt trap.
- Decide to follow the budget. Most people understand the need for a good budget, but few follow through. Only 25% of American families operate on a budget. Fifty percent say they want to budget but never get around to it. Make your plan and stick to it.
- Prioritize your expenditures. Make a list of what is most important to you. Start with the necessities (housing, food, car, utilities, insurance, and taxes). Then list what you "should have" (clothing, furniture, etc.). Finally, list the things you'd like to have.
- Involve your family. When you create a list of priorities, it's important to involve your whole family so everyone understands the priorities and is focused on the goals.
- Pay the Lord first. If you get this first priority right, each step thereafter is easier. God makes it clear He is to receive the first fruits of your income, not the leftovers. The key to honoring God with your finances is remembering that your money is not your money. God owns it all and gives to us as He pleases.
- Pay bills on time. Establish a budget that allows you to pay all your bills in full and on time each

month. If you can't pay them all, pay something on all of them and communicate your intentions of paying everything to those you owe. If you can't pay your regular bills, it's time to move to a smaller house, drive an older model car, or make drastic cuts until your outgo matches your income.

- Assign the job of paying the bills. This isn't about control, since both should fully understand the financial situation and goals, but about the most capable person taking on the job.
- Get out of debt as soon as possible. Debt carries with it heavy responsibilities. Don't allow yourself to become a slave to creditors. Don't take on debt unless you have a clear plan for repaying it. Certainly stay away from debt if it is a habit out of control.
- Plan for emergencies. Small emergencies can eat at your budget every month unless you begin to set aside funds as part of your budget. (E.g. the dog gets sick, your car radiator dies, time for back-to-school clothes, etc.)
- Have some fun. Use some resources for personal enjoyment. After you have managed your money wisely and given generously, there comes a time for you to enjoy the fruits of your labor.
- Invest the remainder wisely. Make wise, long-term investments that could substantially increase your money in a few years.

Taken from Money: A User's Manual by Bob Russell with Rusty Russell. Copyright (c) 1997 by Bob Russell. Used by permission of Bob Russell, Louisville, Ky. Available only through The Living Word, 1-800-366-9673, \$7.79 plus shipping (tax where applicable). LIVE IT!

UNDERSTANDING WHERE WE STAND REGARDING FINANCIAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

1. Does God own everything? (Psm. 24:1)
2. Is the Lord a generous God? (Matt. 7:11)
3. Does every good thing come from our Heavenly Father? (James 1:17)
4. Do you and your possessions glorify the Lord? (I Cor. 6:19-20)
5. Do you honestly glorify the Lord in your attitude and behavior in the area of buying? (Psm. 139:23-24)
6. Why is it good to avoid debt? (Prov. 22:7b)
7. What should be our priority in life? (Matt. 6:33)
8. Where should we lay up treasures? (Matt. 6:19-21)
9. Why is it important not to make mammon / money our God? (Luke 16:13)
10. What are the dangers of having the attitudes and behaviors of the rich? (I Tim. 6:9-10)
11. Do you make it a habit to pray before shopping -- especially in the area of large purchases? (I Thess. 5:17, Matt. 26:41, I Chron. 16:11)
12. Have you allowed high pressure salesmen, solicitors or others convince you to purchase something you later regretted buying? (Prov. 1:10)
13. Are you an impulse buyer? (I John 2:15-17)
14. Do you honestly have Godly contentment? (I Tim. 6:6-8)
15. Do you currently have a workable budget? (I Cor. 14:40)
16. Do you have a good name with your creditors? (Prov. 22:1)
17. Does a good Christian testimony include not paying back your creditors? (Psm. 37:21)
18. How are we to honor the Lord with our substance that He has given us? (Prov. 3:9)
19. What should your attitude and behavior be in giving to the Lord? (II Cor. 9:7)
20. What are we in God's eyes when we hold back our tithes and offering? (Malachi 3:8)
21. Is it a priority to give God the first part of every day in your devotional life? (Psm. 5:3)
22. Is it your priority to give God the first day of the week (Sunday)? (Heb. 10:25)
23. Is it a priority to give God the first part of every dollar? (Malachi 3:10)
24. Is it a priority to give God the first place in your home? (Psm. 101:2-3)
25. Is it a priority to give God first place totally in your thinking life, behavior, and the financial realm? (Psm. 19:13-14, Prov. 23)

TRUE SUCCESS COMES FROM PUTTING GOD FIRST IN OUR LIFE.

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| 1. Matt. 6:33 | 6. Psm. 100:3 |
| 2. Hab. 2:8 | 7. Prov. 28:22 |
| 3. Psm. 50:10-12 | 8. Rom. 13:8 |
| 4. I Chron. 29:11-12 | 9. Matt. 25:14, 30 |
| 5. Deut. 8:17-18 | 10. Phil. 4:11-12 |

THE LAW OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT: TO MANAGE YOUR MONEY PROPERLY,
YOU DON'T ASK WHERE IT WENT. YOU TELL IT WHERE TO GO.

HOW AMERICA SPENDS ITS MONEY

FOOD 54 BILLION

CAR AND USE 61 BILLION

HOME OPERATION 50 BILLION

CLOTHING 35 BILLION

RECREATION 21 BILLION

GAMBLING 47 BILLION

ALCOHOL 11 BILLION

TOBACCO 8 BILLION

VACATIONS 9 BILLION

PET FOOD 500 MILLION

TOYS 341 MILLION

GREETING CARDS 304 MILLION

CHEWING GUM 190 MILLION

ALL HOME AND FOREIGN

MISSIONS GIFTS 144 MILLION

NO WONDER 2 PEOPLE DIE AND GO TO HELL EVERY SECOND!!

HOW WILL YOU SPEND YOURS ???

Partnerships

In the past 150 years man has decided that an equal partnership would be superior to doing things God's way. It sounds very rational. After all, we must admit that many wives are as intelligent (or more so) than their husbands. Why shouldn't they have an equal voice in the affairs of their home?

The fallacy of this reasoning is so clearly evident in the fact that 50% of even professing Christian marriages end in divorce. But why should that surprise us? Have we not seen many business partnerships end in frustration? Most counselors will advise against an equal partnership of two people. Often they result not only in the failure of the business venture but also terminate the friendship of the people involved. Why is this? Well, any competent manager will tell us that when two people work together, even if they are equally qualified, one of them must be in charge. If not, one of two alternatives will usually happen. Either one person will assert himself and assume command and will be resented by the other, or no one will take charge and the results are chaos and disorganization. Partnerships in marriages usually have the same results. An old Turkish proverb; Two captains sink the ship.

Male Domineering

In the minds of many men the call to "headship" gives them the right to rule over their wives in an arrogant and overbearing manner. If that is our attitude we need to take another look at the instruction manual. It tells us to; "love our wives", not "boss our wives." We are instructed to "... *dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*" 1 Peter 3:7. If we are wise and follow Biblical principles we will greatly value the counsel of our wives. We will also use their many gifts and abilities to the benefit of our homes.

If we tend to be domineering we will lend truth to the statement overheard when children were re-enacting a wedding. The young preacher asked; "Rosemary, do you take this man for your awful wedded husband?"

Male Abdication

To abdicate is to "give up" our authority as the head of our homes. This usually happens when a husband is insecure or unsure of himself. Past failures can have a very negative impact. When this happens aggressive women will often "take up the slack" and take over functions that God intends to be the duties of their husbands. Their outlook is generally; "someone has to do these things and if he doesn't, I will!" This often intimidates the husband and contributes to even greater weaknesses. In these situations there is often a lot of hidden resentment welling up in the heart of the husband. How much better it would be for the wife to help her husband conquer his flaws and then exhort and encourage him onward to ever higher and more lofty goals. "*It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.*" Pro. 21:9.

Can we see the error of our own reasoning in light of the wisdom and majesty of God?! "...*Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar,*"... Rom.3:4.

Marriage and Finances

Why is it important to work together with our finances and to learn how to handle differences?

Marriage counselors tell us that financial difficulties are the leading cause of marital problems.

Ninety percent of all marriages experience financial difficulties.

Many couples continually spend more than they earn. According to Lester Miller in "Biblical Financial Guidelines," The average American couple from 1985-1991 annually spent 10% more than their income.

Available loans and credit cards present an unparalleled temptation to spend beyond our means. So, how do we combat these problems?

#1 We must realize that poverty that is self inflicted by sloppy management is not spiritual.

#2 Husbands and wives should plan their spending and then hold each other accountable. Spending should be divided into categories of needs, wants, and desires. (Men; workshop tools should not be considered needs

if kitchen utensils are listed as desires.) Planning should include a budget. With the possible exception of a home mortgage or business loan we should plan to stay out of debt. Let's remember that debt and misery live on the same road and avoid going that way.

#3 Constantly keep an open dialog with each other. Seek the counsel of each other. How can I improve in the area of money management? Do you have needs that aren't being met? Etc. etc.....

#4 One person should be responsible for keeping records, writing checks, etc. It can be husband or wife, depending on individual gifts or talents. But records should then be open for the appraisal of the other party.

#5 Remember to keep finances in their proper place. That is not the most important part of our marriage. All the very best things in life are free; salvation, love, joy, peace, etc.

Recently we visited friends who have gone through some real financial difficulty. He was involved in a business failure and was working very hard to pay all his debtors. He expects to have everything paid off next year! He told me that one thing that is very precious to him during these hard times was the support he has from his wife.

In observing their relation with each other and their children, it was obvious; this guy is a very rich man! It is very likely that in the future they will look back and consider these lean years a tremendous benefit and blessing to their marriage.

"The highest happiness on earth is marriage. Every man who is happily married is a successful

man even if he has failed in everything else."
William Lyon Phillips

Danger Signs

Reading Larry Burkett's "The Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples" could eliminate many financial marriage problems if we apply what we learn. Chapter 13 of that book is called "The money barometer: Economic danger signs in a marriage." They are:

- An independent spirit
- Lack of communication
- Unexplained fatigue
- Irresponsibility
- The ostrich technique, (ignoring problems)
- Religious Escape, (Just trusting God to provide)
Read Luke 16:12
- Overcommitment
- Indulgence
- Parent Loans
- A working wife.
- No tithe
- "Income" is less than "outgo"

Conclusion

If any or all of these danger signs are evident in our marriage we must not despair, we simply recognize that we are going in a direction we don't want to go. We turn and go a different way and thank God for showing us the error of our ways. He truly is a God of second chances, isn't He?

"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord." Psalms 128:3-4 □



*There is just one way to bring up a child
in the way that he should go, and that is
to travel that way yourself.*

—Abraham Lincoln