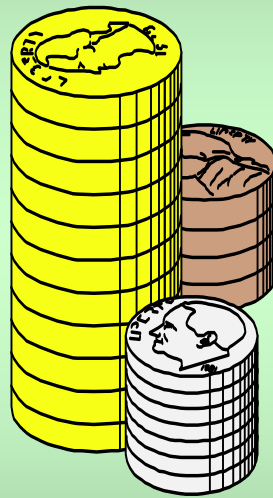


HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Steps to
FINANCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY



1. Proper Attitudes
2. Analysis
3. Financial Goals
4. Spending Wisely
5. Dealing With Debt
6. My Budget

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Lesson One

"Proper Attitudes"

Financial independence is a goal toward which we all will strive! But it is obvious that to achieve such we have to make money. But for the Christian, it is important that we have the right attitudes in regards to money to be acceptable to God (1 Cor. 10:31). To be pleasing to God in all things that we do should be uppermost in our minds (1 Cor. 6:19-20). While most people in the world are emphasizing the need to make a lot of money, the Christian's emphasis should first be on the proper outlook towards money, the securing of money, and then the proper use of money. Certainly, we need to make money to survive, but proper attitudes toward money should be far more important to the Christian as a first consideration.

BUILDING POSITIVE ATTITUDES

Our attitude toward people and things is a way of evaluating the character of a person. If he is negative all the time, we say that that person is a negative person. If we have negative attitudes about money, it will certainly affect the way we act in regards to money. If you feel that having a lot of money is "sinful," you obviously will avoid making a lot of money. If we have negative attitudes toward money, then we may need for someone to say to us:

"You need to change your attitude;" or,

"You have a real attitude problem;" or,

"You need to take a good look at your attitude!"

One of the obvious things that God tries to help us with is to have a "positive attitude"—not only about ourselves, but others as well. (Phil. 4:13; 1 John 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Phil. 2:1-4; etc.). There are also a need to have some very positive attitudes about money. Following are some of the basic facts we need to recognize about money!

Realize that money is only for this life! (1 Tim. 6:7). We can't take it with us at death. Since we will leave it all behind at death, why accumulate and hoard it up? It will be left to another who may not use it wisely (Eccl. 2:18-19). God wants us to enjoy that which He has richly provided (1 Tim. 6:17).

Realize that God blesses us to secure money! (Eccl. 2:24-25). God knows we have needs to be met, and money helps to meet our needs (Matt. 6:31-33). He not only knows, but promises that our needs will be met. It is the wrong attitudes towards money that causes our problems.

Wrong attitudes can cause us to lose our family, our health, and our relationship to God (Eccl. 5:10-11).

Realize that some things are more important than money.

1. A person's reputation. (Prov. 22:1)
2. One's strong faith. (1 Pet. 1:7).
3. Wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and receiving instruction. (Prov. 3:13-15).
4. An excellent wife. (Prov. 31:10).
5. A peaceable life, even though poor. (Prov. 17:1).
6. Truthfulness. (Prov. 19:22).
7. Integrity. (Prov. 28:6).
8. A word fitly spoken. (Prov. 25:11).
9. Being prepared for judgment. (Prov. 11:4).

Realize that money will be our Master or our Servant! (Matt. 6:24). Money can be an end in itself that will curse us; or, a means to a correct and proper end that pleases God and blesses man. God has amply warned us about the dangers of the wrong attitude towards money:

1. About loving money and its dangers (1 Tim. 6:10).
2. About trusting in uncertain riches (1 Tim. 6:17).
3. About the dangers of desiring a lot of money (1 Tim. 6:9).
4. About where to put our emphasis (Matt. 6:19-20).
5. About the choice to be made—God or Mammon (Matt. 6:24).

Realize that we are Stewards, not Owners! (Gen. 1:1). God created all things; therefore, all belongs to Him! But God has no need of these things, obviously; so, they must be for man's benefit (1 Tim. 4:4). A Steward is "*One who manages a household for another.*" We have become stewards under God's Lordship (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 10:31).

Realize that a Steward is expected to be wise and faithful! (Luke 12: 42-43). He carries out His owner's will. He must use properly what has been entrusted to him. Wastefulness will not be tolerated! He is expected to be diligent in his efforts (2 Pet. 1:5, 10; 2 Thess. 3:10; Eph. 4:28). He shows wisdom by:

1. How and what he buys;
2. Avoiding debt as much as possible;
3. Concentrating on needs, not wants;
4. Properly planning the overall use of possessions.

A wise and faithful servant can give a good accounting (Lk. 16:2).

Realize that appreciation needs to be expressed! (1 Tim. 4:4; Isa. 1:2-3). All good things come from God and He doesn't want us to forget it. Ingratitude is a grave evil!

Be content with what God entrusts to us! (1 Tim. 6:6, 8). Much is said about being content as a Christian. Our security and contentment is not found in possessions, but in God. God intended for money to be our servant, not our master! Contentment is something we learn (Phil. 4:11).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God created man to be a responsible being, a creature of choice! He calls upon us to put our first emphasis on His righteousness and His kingdom (Matt. 6:33). How well do we meet the challenge of having proper attitudes toward money? Am I willing to trade my soul, like Judas, for 30 pieces of silver? (Matt. 26:15). Evaluate these attitudes about money:

1. "Money does not grow on trees."
2. "You have to pay your dues."
3. "Wealth corrupts."
4. "It takes a lot of money to make money."
5. "Wealthy people never enjoy happy relationships."
6. "You have to be born into money."

It should be obvious that negative and wrong attitudes about money can not only be discouraging, but harmful....and yet a challenge to comes to grip with them.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is a common goal concerning finances?

2. Why does the Christian have to be concerned with his attitudes concerning finances?

3. How does God help us to have a positive attitude about ourselves?

4. How do you feel about leaving money to someone who would not take care of it properly?

5. In what sense does God promise to provide for us?

6. What can wrong attitudes cause us to lose?

7. Name two things that are more important than money.

8. What does it mean that we are stewards?

9. How do we show wisdom in the use of money?

10. Why be concerned about contentment?

Lesson Two

"Analysis"

We use to hear of children putting their money into a "piggy bank." After a while, they get curious about how much money they have. Unfortunately, some banks had to be broken in order to count the money. So, they had to want to know pretty bad before they would break up their piggy bank.

"How curious are we as to how much we have?" Do we know? Do we take the time to analyze to see how much we are worth? Just how important is such an analysis? The Lord suggested two things to illustrate the importance of an analysis:

1. A builder (Luke 14:26-30). This man needed to sit down and to see if he has enough money to finish the house. Otherwise, if he is not able to finish it, he becomes the laughing stock of the community.
2. A King (Luke 14:31-33). An enemy king was coming against him with his army. Jesus suggested that it would be smart of the king to analyze to see if he had enough forces to go out to do battle with this coming invader. If not, then, he had better sue for peace.

We believe there is wisdom in seeing where we are financially before making plans about spending money. It is rare for couples to sit down and analyze their net worth. Many do not even keep up with their weekly cash flow. Successful money management is a planned process. A financial analysis is not only a good beginning point, but a necessary one. This is a process of listing all assets, liabilities, incomes, and expenses in order to see where you stand financially.

ASSETS and LIABILITIES

The reason why most do not analyze is...IT TAKES TIME! Also, some of the terms that are used to arrive at the needed information may not be easily understood at first. Terms like "liquid" or "non-liquid" are used to identify whether an asset can be turned into cash quickly or if it would be hard to turn it into cash at the present market value. Also, some assets have the potential to generate income or to increase in value, while some do not or may even lose in value. The IDEAL is to have as many productive assets as possible that keep growing in value over the years. Liabilities are what one may owe on what assets that he is still paying monthly payments. Upon subtracting the liabilities from your assets, you can have an idea of your net worth.

CASH FLOW MARGIN

This is an effort to add up all of your forms of income and then to add up all of your expenses. Then, to subtract the expenses from the income to see if you have any money left over or if you are going into the "hole."

WHY ANALYZE?

With these forms being filled out and completed, the reasons should be more obvious as to the value of an analysis.

1. In order to successfully manage money. How can you manage what you do not know you have? A Steward is charged with proper use of money (Matt. 25:14-15, 21, 26, 30). After an analysis, it is then possible to make some wise decisions.

2. In order to cut down overspending. Without a knowledge gained from an analysis, most people will overspend their income. In particular, a young couple can easily get into deep debt from (a) college debts; (b) getting married; (c) setting up housekeeping; etc. They can easily spend that they do not have and cannot repay. We are warned against such: (Rom. 13:8; Prov. 21:17, 20, 5; 26:11). We need to use wisdom by analyzing and then decide! Here is a good question to ponder—"*What is the difference between stealing and buying on credit and not paying your debt?*"

3. In order to be able to establish proper goals for the future. Goals need to be based on factual possibilities, not "pipe dreams." With an analysis, we can see what it will take to get the job done in the future. God wants us to be diligent in our efforts to serve him (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

4. In order to have peace of mind. Uncertainty usually comes because we have not done our "homework." An analysis can let us know where we are and what it will take for future goals. Once we have established a plan of action, our minds can be at rest about the matter (Matt. 6:31-33). We need to place our trust in God, but we also need to do our part. Laziness and indifference to our financial responsibilities is not "doing our part!" Peace of mind comes from a faith that is active (James 2:24).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We would like to strongly encourage you to fill out the following information and keep it on file for future use—updating it occasionally. Faithful stewards deal wisely with their finances!

Net Worth Analysis Sheet

I – ASSETS

1) Cash in checking account	\$	
2) Money Market funds	\$	
3) CD's	\$	
4) Marketable Securities	\$	
5) Life Insurance cash value	\$	
6) Home (Market value)	\$	
7) Land (Market value)	\$	
8) Business evaluation	\$	
9) Real Estate Investments	\$	
10) Limited Partnerships	\$	
11) Boat, Camper, Tractor, etc.	\$	
12) Car(s) (Market value)	\$	
13) Furniture & Personal Property	\$	
14) Coin & Stamp collections, Antiques	\$	
15) IRA's and Keogh	\$	
16) Pension and Profit sharing	\$	
17) Receivables from others	\$	
18) _____	\$	
19) _____	\$	
Total Assets.....		\$

II – LIABILITIES

1) Charge cards	\$	
2) Auto loan(s)	\$	
3) Parent's loan	\$	
4) Bank loan(s)	\$	
5) Life Insurance Loan(s)	\$	
6) Home Mortgage loan	\$	
7) Home Equity loan	\$	
8) _____	\$	
9) _____	\$	
Total Liabilities.....		\$

III – NET WORTH

1) Total Assets	\$	
2) Total Liabilities	\$	
Net Worth.....		\$

Cash Flow Analysis

All Sources of Income:

(1) Wages (Husband)	\$
(2) Wages (Wife)	\$
(3) Interest Received	\$
(4) Dividend Received	\$
(5) Rent Received	\$
(6) Business Income	\$
(7) _____	\$
(8) _____	\$
(9) _____	\$ _____
Total Income for the Year.....\$	

All Forms of Expenses:

I -- Special Expenses:

Giving: (1) Church	\$
(2) Widows & Orphans	\$
(3) Mission Work	\$
(4) _____	\$
(5) _____	\$
(6) _____	\$ _____
Total Giving.....\$	

Taxes: (1) Federal Income Taxes	\$
(2) State & City Income Taxes	\$
(3) Social Security Taxes	\$
(4) _____	\$
(5) _____	\$
(6) _____	\$ _____
Total Taxes.....\$	

Debts: (1) Charge cards	\$
(2) Car(s) Loans	\$
(3) Parent's Loan	\$
(4) Bank Loan(s)	\$
(5) Life Insurance Loan	\$
(6) Home Equity Loan	\$
(7) _____	\$
(8) _____	\$
(9) _____	\$
(10) _____	\$ _____
Total Debts.....\$	

Living Expenses:

Housing:	1) Mortgage/Rent	\$
	2) Insurance	\$
	3) Property Tax	\$
	4) Electricity	\$
	5) Heating	\$
	6) Water	\$
	7) Sanitation	\$
	8) Telephone	\$
	9) Cleaning	\$
	10) Upkeep	\$
	11) Improvements	\$
	12) Furnishings	\$
	13) Supplies	\$
	14) _____	\$
	15) _____	\$ _____
	Total Housing for the Year.....	\$

Food: Total Food for the Year..... \$

Clothing:	1) Husband	\$
	2) Wife	\$
	3) Children	\$
	4) _____	\$
	5) _____	\$ _____
	Total Clothing for the Year.....	\$

Transportation:	1) Car Insurance	\$
	2) Gas & Oil	\$
	3) Upkeep on Vehicle(s)	\$
	4) Parking	\$
	5) Mass Transit	\$
	6) _____	\$
	7) _____	\$ _____
	Total Transportation for the Year.....	\$

Medical:	1) Insurance	\$
	2) Doctors	\$
	3) Dentists	\$
	4) Medicines	\$
	5) _____	\$
	6) _____	\$ _____
	Total Medical for the Year.....	\$

Insurance: 1) Life \$
2) Disability \$
3) Mortgage Insurance \$
4) _____ \$ _____
Total Insurance for the Year..... \$

Children: 1) School Lunches \$
2) Allowances \$
3) Tuition \$
4) Lessons \$
5) _____ \$
6) _____ \$
7) _____ \$ _____
Total Children's Expense for Year..... \$

Recreation: 1) Eating out \$
2) Babysitters \$
3) Magazines/Newspapers/Cable \$
4) Vacation \$
5) Special Activities \$
6) _____ \$
7) _____ \$
8) _____ \$ _____
Total Recreation for the Year..... \$

Special: 1) Christmas \$
2) Birthdays \$
3) Anniversaries \$
4) _____ \$
5) _____ \$
6) _____ \$
7) _____ \$ _____
Total Special Expenses for the Year..... \$

Miscellan: 1) Toiletries \$
2) Husband: Lunches \$
3) Wife: Miscellaneous \$
4) Dry Cleaning \$
5) Animal Care \$
6) Beauty/Barber \$
7) _____ \$
8) _____ \$
9) _____ \$
10) _____ \$ _____
Total Misc. Expenses for the Year..... \$

Cash Flow Margin

GROSS INCOME.....\$ _____

LESS SPECIAL EXPENSES:

- (1) Giving \$ _____
- (2) Taxes \$ _____
- (3) Debts \$ _____
- Total Special Expenses---\$ _____**

NET SPENDABLE INCOME---\$ _____

LESS LIVING EXPENSES:

- (1) Housing \$ _____
- (2) Food \$ _____
- (3) Clothing \$ _____
- (4) Transportation \$ _____
- (5) Entertainment \$ _____
- (6) Medical \$ _____
- (7) Insurance \$ _____
- (8) Children \$ _____
- (9) Special \$ _____
- (10) Miscellaneous \$ _____

Total Living Expenses-----\$ _____

CASH FLOW MARGIN.....\$ _____ *

**Please note that this balance may be a plus or a minus!*

What Can You Do With a Negative Cash Flow?

1. Find a way to increase your income.
2. Find a way to reduce your expenses.
3. Dip into savings (if you have such).
4. Borrow to have a positive cash flow.
5. Go into bankruptcy.
6. Go to a company that helps you get out of debt.
7. Ignore the problem—thinking God will take care of you.

Which of these choices make good sense to you?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. Have you ever worked up an analysis of all your possessions?**
- 2. What two examples did Jesus use to encourage analyzing your situation?**
- 3. What are Assets?**
- 4. What are Liabilities?**
- 5. What is a Cash Flow Margin?**
- 6. Give two good reasons for making an analysis.**
- 7. How do young families get themselves into deep debt?**
- 8. What can you do when you have a minus cash flow?**
- 9. Why do people get themselves into a minus cash flow?**
- 10. Am I really concerned about being a good steward?**

Lesson Three

"Financial Goals"

Is it wrong to plan for the future? Is James condemning planning for the future in James 4:13-16? Is it showing a lack of trust in God's care to plan for the future? We believe the last part of these verses make it clear what God was talking about. The sin is not in planning, but in planning without God! What is condemned is their arrogance and boasting as though they were in charge of the future. The setting of financial goals should be with the concept: ***"If God wills."***

Why has God given me my job, money, possessions, and opportunities? Is it merely for my own selfish indulgence? Or, should I be concerned about how I use all of these blessings? How should I manage what God has entrusted to me? Should I plan and set goals for how to use what God has given me? Setting financial and spiritual goals for our lives is a great challenge!

Can we trust God to care for us and not plan for the future? We know that God has promised us His care (Matt. 6:33). But do we just sit back and expect God to bring everything us us? Obviously not! We get jobs and work! We try to plan and manage what we have well! And then, we depend upon God's care! Financial responsibility should not be scorned (Prov. 22:13) Fearfulness is not an excuse with God. Financial responsibility is what God rightfully expect of us. Should the aimless, shiftless person be praised?

MOVING MOUNTAINS

How does faith remove mountains? (Matt. 17:20). We know that mountains are not moved by "wishful thinking!" Neither are they moved by a "dead faith" either. Mountains are moved by a living, working, active, trusting faith in God. Let's put our trust in God and get busy being faithful stewards! Let's make our plans to wisely use our possessions.

THE VALUE OF GOALS

They can serve as guidelines! We need to have a direction to put our efforts toward. Goals can give direction that makes life meaningful (Rom. 8:24). We know where we are going—we are not just drifting in life. Goals are not absolutes because we are not perfect planners like God! Circumstances, better insights, maturity, better discipline, etc., all may affect our beginning Goals.

They Help to Crystallize our Thinking. Why do I want to make money; or, even more money? When I determine proper goals, they give me purpose for

making money (1 Tim. 6:18); 1 Cor. 10:31).

They help us to Focus on the Future, not the Past! (Phil. 3:13-14). We can profit from the past, but we should not dwell on the past. Goals help us to envision what the future can possibly hold for us (Col. 3:2). Our ultimate future goal should obviously be heaven!

They encourage us to forego present desires for Future Hopes! (Heb. 11:26-27). We deny things here in order to enjoy heaven after awhile. The same should be true financially. We deny spending now in order to have something for the future.

Goals become a way of life! I know where I am going and why. Proper goals are approved by God. They become the way God wants me to walk. It is not a selfish or worldly walk, but a spiritual walk with God (1 Tim. 6:10-11). Our way of life leads to heaven!

Goals are a means of getting the job done! We are not floundering here and there. Goals suggest that I have intelligently figure out what I should work towards. Goals help me to know what needs to be done. They can also motivate me to get the job done. Money, time, and talent are a means to an end of serving others (Matt. 20:28).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

"People don't plan to fail, they fail to plan." No one really wants to fail! But, can we really be a faithful steward without financial goals? God is our example—He is the great planner! He planned the creation of our universe. He also planned for man's redemption before he ever created us (Eph. 1:3-4). If God sees the value of planning, shouldn't we?

Financial Planning is the pre-determined use of resources in order to accomplish certain goals and objectives. Let's be sure our goals are worthy goals that bring glory to God; but also to have goals big enough to allow God to help us. Most of all, let's have great spiritual goals for our lives! Our potential for serving God and man is limited by only our poor planning. All of us have great potential if we would just envision such. We have access to the greatest power on earth—God's power. Becoming a follower of Christ opens up that door of spiritual potential.

Be sure to fill out your Financial Goals!

Developing Financial Goals

I – SHORT-TERM GOALS:

A. General Giving:

- 1) We want to be giving this amount for year \$
- 2) Give additional gifts each year of \$

B. Small Lifestyle desires:

- 1) We want to make the following small purchases:
_____ \$
_____ \$
_____ \$
- 2) We want our type of lifestyle to:
____ Increase
____ Decrease
____ Maintain present level

C. Pay off Minor Debts:

- _____ \$
- _____ \$
- _____ \$
- _____ \$

D. Short-Term Savings:

- _____ \$
- _____ \$

II – LONG-TERM GOALS:

A. Major Gifts:

- _____ \$
- _____ \$

B. Major Lifestyle Changes:

- _____ \$
- _____ \$
- _____ \$

C. Major Debt Retirement:

- _____ \$
- _____ \$
- _____ \$

D. College Fund for Children

E. Financial Independence

\$
\$
\$
\$
\$
\$
\$
\$
\$

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If James is not condemning planning, then what is he condemning?

2. What does it mean to trust in God's care?

3. What does the wise man say about the lazy man?

4. How does faith remove mountains?

5. Can you give three good reasons for developing Goals?

6. Who is the great example of planning?

7. Can we be faithful stewards without financial goals?

8. Please give a list of worthwhile goals:

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)

9. What is financial Planning?

10. Our potential is basically limited by what?

Lesson Four

"Spending Wisely"

Jesus told a story about a father who had two sons (Luke 15). The younger son was not content to remain at home like his older brother. He wanted to go out on his own. So, he requested his inheritance and left to see the world. After many days, all his money was gone and he had wasted it on prodigal living. The results was not very pleasant—(a) He came to be in want; (b) All his so-called friends forsook him; (c) He was forced to do the dirtiest job just to survive; and (d) He lost his self-respect. This young man could have greatly profited by a good session on proper money management!

But, in reality, don't we all feel the need for God's counsel on how to spend wisely? Don't we all fall short of what we ought to do? Can't we all look back with some or much regret? Thankfully, as God's people, we can be forgiven! And we need to be encouraged to do better in the future!

WHY FINANCIAL PROBLEMS?

In spite of prosperous times, the problem of finance is the #1 or #2 problem in the home! Bankruptcies are on the increase, savings have been on the decline, and debt has been at an all-time high. I am sure that many good reasons could be give as to why we have such problems. The following are suggested as possibilities:

1. A lack of proper teaching on the subject.
2. An unwillingness to be taught on the subject.
3. With some Christians, it may be a misunderstanding of Bible teaching.
4. It could also be a lack of faith in God and His promises.
5. Misuse of what money we do have access to (unwise spending).
6. Wrong outlook about paying bills, saving, or planning.
7. A lack of being responsible.

There are consequences to financial difficulties! Our families can suffer, the church will suffer, the lost will suffer because they will not be reached with the Gospel. God will not be glorified by His people as He should be. We could be in danger of losing our soul over such. And sadly enough—Satan wins the battle, not God!

EMPHASIS ON DISCIPLINE

To control spending or to spend wisely requires discipline or self-control. Various terms have been used to indicate this concept. The idea is to bring self

into control to a standard or way of acting. For the Christian, it means that he has come under the control and direction of Christ—that is, he has died to self in order to live for Him; or, he has died to his own will to live by His will (Matt. 16:24-26). It stresses that we can and must have power over ourselves. The Bible's emphasis upon such:

1. It is listed as a part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).
2. It is one of the virtues of the Christian life (2 Pet. 1:4-8).
3. Every exhortation that calls upon us to abstain from sinful activity is calling for self-control (1 Thess. 4:3-4; 5:22; 1 Pet. 2:11).
4. There is a strong emphasis upon the control of one's tongue (Jas. 1:26)—without such, a person's religion is worthless.

A wise use of money definitely requires self-control! It requires the control of one's emotions and desires. It means that we must not be unduly influenced by others; like: *"Keeping up with the Joneses,"* or, *"Being one of the crowd."* It calls for a right view toward "things!" It means that we have a built-in resistance to unwise spending. We watch and compare prices before buying. We avoid unwise debt and its dangers. We use the *"Pay as you go"* principle. It means that we take care of what we buy and make it last. We definitely concentrate on needs and not wants.

THE REWARDS OF WISE SPENDING

1. We will not be a waster or squander money (Prov. 21:20; 18:9).
2. It helps to rid my life of worrying over money and things (Matt. 6:25).
3. It will bring financial and spiritual success (Lk. 12:21). We will use what we have to be rich towards God.
4. We can give a good accounting to God (Lk. 16:2; Matt. 25:21).
5. It will bring glory and praise to God (1 Cor. 10:31). God is not glorified by man's foolish use of possessions.
6. It will keep me out of unwise debt!

4 HELPS TO CONTROL SPENDING

- 1. Learning to be content!** (Phil. 4:11). Money cannot give true happiness nor contentment. Contentment rids our lives of worry over money or the lack of it. We can then enjoy what we do have and use it to the glory of God.
- 2. Put God, His Kingdom, and His Righteousness first in our lives!** (Matt. 6:33). Such will make our lives count for righteousness. We do this by reaching out and serving others (Matt. 25:35-40). We serve God by serving others. (verse 40).
- 3. Make Money my Servant!** (Matt. 6:24). Jesus calls for a choice between God and Mammon. He also warns us of the dangers of letting Mammon be our

master:

- a) The dangers of wealth are real (1 Tim. 6:9-10).
- b) Covetousness, Greed, Hoarding is evil—idolatry (Col. 3:5).
- c) Wrong outlook about money can lead to arrogance and a false independence (1 Tim. 6:17).
- d) Become insensitive to the needs of others (Matt. 25:41-46).
- e) Make us unfruitful and spiritually dead (Matt. 13:22).

4. Learn to make use of a Budget! It is a must if we are to be effective in the best use of our possessions.

- a) It can give guidance to our spending for the needed things.
- b) It will help us to attain correct financial goals.
- c) It can be our servant, not a monster to be detested.
- d) It can serve as a road map for my life before God.
- e) It can help me curb my spending and keep it within bounds.
- f) It can help me deal with "consumptive living."
 - ◇ Spending more than I can afford.
 - ◇ Loose spending adds debt and greater burdens.
 - ◇ Every dollar saved helps me accomplish my proper goals.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We firmly believe that successful money management can only come through controlled spending. Becoming a Christian and living for God has a high price that we must pay, but the cost is worth it! To go to heaven, I must give up my will to do God's will. How well are we meeting the challenge?

Lesson Five

"Dealing With Debt"

The Apostle begins his letter to the Philippian church talking about his joy over them. He mentions joy or rejoicing some 15 times in four chapters. In Phil. 4:4, he says: "**Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, rejoice!**" But how can a person or a family rejoice when they are deep in debt; unable to pay their bills; feel that they are in total bondage to creditors; and frustrated, discouraged, or maybe even depressed? But....the Lord still says: "**Rejoice always!**" And, it is not just when things are going good, but rejoice under any and all circumstances of life. We hope that this lesson will lend encouragement to help us rejoice always—even when things are not so well.

WHY REJOICE?

1. Because God is offering to help us deal with debt! He has filled His Word with wisdom and instruction on the use of money. He also offers to help us become disciplined and self-controlled people, so we can deal properly with money. Jesus offers strength of mind and heart to face up to these challenges (Phil. 4:13; Heb. 13:5-6; Prov. 3:5-6). We must want and seek God's help because He will not force it on us.

2. Because our brothers and sisters in Christ are willing to help! We share a common Father—we are family! (Gal. 6:2, 5, 10). While others are willing to help, it is necessary that I also help myself as well. They will be there for us, with us, along side of us in order to urge us on.

3. Because there is also help from the Financial World about us! Have you seen this ad—"*Looking for solutions to get out of debt?*" Or, maybe this one—"*The Credit Counseling Foundation will show you how to get out of debt.*" They claim that their Debt Management Service will: (a) Drastically reduce total debt; (b) Save thousands of dollars in interest; (c) Reduce or eliminate interest and late charges; (d) Restore a positive relationship with your creditors; (e) Pay off your debt faster; (f) Combine your bills into one low monthly payment; (g) Avoid bankruptcy; (h) Stop harassing calls; (i) Receive free debt counseling from certified professionals; and (j) Enjoy peace of mind! Wow!

4. Because who wouldn't want their debt lowered! We all want to have the joy of debt-free living and to be free from the strangle-hold of deep debt. Even common sense and good stewardship suggest that we should be debt-free as much as possible.

THE A, B, C's OF DEBT-FREE LIVING

Avoid common credit mistakes! Value your credit rating! The time will come when you will need it. Pay your debts (Rom. 13:8). Do not raise credit card limits and use them for credit. They serve as a temptation to borrow more. Don't let "status" over-rule common sense (Phil. 2:3). Do not stretch out a loan to get lower payments. You will pay more interest. Pay it off as soon as possible. Christians need to be honest and diligent in their dealings with others. Be sure you know your interest rate and fees with "cards" and "banks." Strive to get the best deal possible.

Budget—Work out a detailed one. Offer no excuses, no rationalizations. One needs to get control of his finances and a budget is one way to plan better how to manage money. It will give indications as to what we need to trim back on in my spending.

Commitment—I must commit to get out of debt! One of the great joys in life is the feeling of having myself under control; to have a sense of self-discipline; and that I am on my way to debt-free living!

Drastic measures may have to be used! If I cannot get out of debt for a long time under my present spending patterns then:

- a) Drastic action is called for!
- b) I must cut my spending to the "bone!"
- c) I must lower my standard of living to emergency levels.
- d) It is important to realize that the greater the sacrifice, the sooner I can be debt free.
- e) I must evaluate everything and cut all unnecessary things.

These drastic means may be harsh, but when the debt is being cut away quickly, it will be worth it. For an example:

- a) Save \$2.74 per day that was spent on non-necessary things.
- b) Such will result into \$1,000 a year in savings.

God encourages His people to be patient as well as persistent in our lives (1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Pet. 1:6; James 1:2-4).

Escape the credit card trap! Stop using credit cards in making new debts, if at all possible. Operate on a cash basis or do without. If you cannot control the cards, then cut them up (Matt. 5:29).

Further use of all possessions! Make them last—oil them, clean them, polish them, etc. Get all the life out of them possible. Don't be a waster! (Prov. 21:20).

Garage sales! Sell what you do not use or can afford to get rid of. Use the money to pay off debts quicker. Things are not sacred—they are a means to an end (Lk. 12:15).

Habits—Change them for the better and save! Tobacco, soda pops, candies, frills, the unnecessary things in life can all "go" if necessary. One couple said they saved over \$30.00 a week when they quit smoking. Imagine how much we could save by stopping these unnecessary things. We will be healthier if we will in most cases!

Interest—Consolidate with lower interest! Consolidate, but do not make new debts. Pay off the smaller debts first so that more can go to pay off higher debts. It may be wise to pay off the higher interest first, depending on which of the two approaches saves more.

DEBT-FREE LIVING IS DESIRABLE AND POSSIBLE

1. If we will accept responsibility for our decisions! We made the debt; therefore we are responsible before God and man (Jas. 4:6). We need to humbly, penitently seek God's forgiveness, help, wisdom and strength.

2. Learn to live within a financial plan! Sit down and count the cost and then make a decision to do it! Be sure your plan is workable and stick with it.

3. Learn to make good decisions! None of us are perfect decision-makers. But we all can learn by experience and profit by our mistakes (Prov. 3:7, 13). Learning from bad decisions should help us to make better ones.

4. Learn what it means to be content! Paul said that he learned how to be content in any circumstance in life (1 Tim. 6:6). We need to learn this lesson well also. Until we do, we will probably continue to struggle with unwise debt in our lives.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We must continue to remember—keep our priorities straight (Matt. 6:33). The Christian should be able to rejoice always—even in the worse of conditions. We rejoice because we are in Christ and have a hope of heaven. Let's get our outlook straight, so that we can be content; then set our minds and hearts on becoming free of unwise debt with God's blessing. Financial success can only come by dealing properly with debt. Wishing and hoping is worthless and doing nothing is a grave mistake!

The Greatest debt we owe is to God!

Lesson Six

"My Budget"

The Lord condemned the “one talent man” for not using what he had (Matt. 25:26, 30). But the same condemnation would seem to apply also in the **misuse** of what one has been given. When we do not use wisely what we have been given, are we not just as unfaithful and unprofitable as the one talent man who didn't use what he had. Again, the emphasis needs to be placed on what our attitude should be! We are not owners, but managers of God's money! (Psalms 24:1; 50:10-11). We need to be good managers. We just have title to it for the brief time we are here on earth. Then, in the Day of Judgment we will give an accounting for how we have managed God's resources! But...isn't it amazing that God trusts us with His goods and puts us on our honor to use it wisely!

The writer of Proverbs portrays Wisdom as one crying in the streets for people to listen to what she has to say (Proverbs 1:20-21), and reminds her listeners that only fools hate knowledge (Proverbs 1:22). Thus, with a proper outlook towards possessions:

- (1) It will help us not to be a waster.(Proverbs 18:9)
- (2) It will help us to be free of greed and stinginess. Giving will be looked upon as a privilege, not a duty. (Colossians 3:5)
- (3) It will rid us of a dependence on money for happiness. Nothing is sure in this life! If we lose all, life will not fall apart. (Job 1:21)
- (4) It will change our value system--we will trust in God, not in possessions. (Matthew 6:19-20).
- (5) It will rid our life of worry over money—having it or the lack of it! (Matthew 6:33).
- (6) It will give us a sense of accomplishment for good. And will be put in charge of more when we use what we have been given, wisely! (Matthew 25:23, 29).
- (7) We will truly learn the law of sowing and reaping....that we usually reap more than we sow. (Galatians 6:7-8; Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 9:6-10).
- (8) We will truly learn the law of sharing....that a gift to others is a gift to God. (2 Corinthians 8:14-15; Proverbs 19:7; Matthew 25:35-40).

It would seem that all of the above are made invalid if we do not learn to control spending and keep our debt down.

THE VALUE AND PROPER USE OF A BUDGET

A BUDGET helps to control our spending and enables us to have a positive cash flow at the end of the month! A budget is a means to an end! It is not an end in itself. It will help us to accomplish our financial goals if we will let it. It can help assure wise use of the money entrusted to us. A budget is a means of helping to make money my servant to accomplish what I believe God expects of me. It must not be looked upon as a “monster” to be detested, but as an “effective tool” to help me be a wise and faithful steward (1 Corinthians 4:2). It should be looked upon as a road map that helps me to get where I need to go. It can help supply the discipline over my spending to keep it within the correct bounds. A properly prepared budget will serve as a motivation to control my spending, and thereby make money my servant! One of the big mistakes of our time is a “consumptive lifestyle.” It is spending more than I can afford, or spending more than I should. Debt and loose spending feed on each other to add greater burdens in our lives. A budget is designed to curb and control such. And every dollar saved, can be used to accomplish the financial goals that I have made. If we do not control our spending, we cannot accumulate money. Without this accumulation, we cannot reach our short-term nor long-term goals.

WORKING UP A BUDGET

From lesson two, you have already been encouraged to do an Analysis of your financial position in order to get started on getting your finances in a controlled situation. From that information, you should be able to easily work up a budget that will serve your financial purposes well. Budget forms have been provided with this lesson to help you. It is wise also to evaluate your budget every six months to see how well things are going. If there are changes in your financial situation, your budget will need revising.

Additional forms can be obtained from two other study books prepared by this writer: **Successful Money Management for Christians** and **The Challenge to Become Free of Unwise Debt**. The Budget layout on the next two pages is the minimum needed to prepare your budget.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Year _____

I. WEEKLY.....	\$
1. Contribution	\$
2. Food & Household items.....	\$
3. Gasoline.....	\$
4. Children's School Lunches.....	\$
5. Children's Allowances.....	\$
6. Husband's lunches.....	\$
7. Wife's lunches.....	\$
8. Miscellaneous.....	\$
II. MONTHLY.....	\$
1. House Mortgage or Rent.....	\$
2. Utilities: Electricity.....	\$
Heating.....	\$
Telephone.....	\$
Water.....	\$
3. Cable.....	\$
4. Hospital Insurance.....	\$
5. Car Loan.....	\$
6. Charge Cards.....	\$
7. Parent's Loan.....	\$
8. Bank Loan.....	\$
9. Life Insurance Loan.....	\$
10. Home Equity Loan.....	\$
11. Mortgage Insurance.....	\$
12. Disability Insurance.....	\$
13. Life Insurance.....	\$
14.....	\$
III. QUARTERLY.....	\$
1. Sewer.....	\$
2. Garbage.....	\$
3. Soc. Security & Federal Income Taxes...	\$
4. State, City, Other Taxes.....	\$
5.....	\$
IV. SEMI-ANNUAL.....	\$
1. Car Insurance.....	\$
2. House Taxes.....	\$
3.....	\$
4.....	\$

(Budget Breakdown.....Continued)

V. ANNUAL.....	\$
1. Lectures.....	\$
2. Subdivision Fee.....	\$
3. House Insurance.....	\$
4. Vacation.....	\$
5. Vitamins, etc.....	\$
6. Christmas Gifts.....	\$
7.....	\$
8.....	\$
9.....	\$

VI. MISCELLANEOUS.....	\$
1. Once a year gift.....	\$
2. Property Taxes.....	\$
3. Upkeep on House.....	\$
4. Improvements on House.....	\$
5. Furnishings in House.....	\$
6. Clothing.....	\$
7. Upkeep on Car.....	\$
8. Other transportation.....	\$
9. Doctors.....	\$
10. Medicines.....	\$
11. General School items.....	\$
12. Eating out.....	\$
13. Baby sitting.....	\$
14. Magazines/Newspapers.....	\$
15. Special Activities.....	\$
16. Birthday Gifts.....	\$
17. Anniversary Gifts.....	\$
18. Other Gifts.....	\$
19. Toiletries.....	\$
20. Dry Cleaning.....	\$
21. Animal Care.....	\$
22. Beauty/Barber.....	\$
23.....	\$
24.....	\$
25.....	\$
26.....	\$

PLEASE NOTE: Any item that is paid in one or more payments and you know the month(s), be sure to place by that item those month(s). This will be needful if you use the additional Forms provided in the additional study books.

