

# **Biblical Stewardship Part 1**

There is a lot of information about Biblical stewardship. I would recommend the following two-step approach:

1. Read the Bible verses and explanations in Parts 1 and 2 below thoroughly. Pray about it and let God transform you from the INSIDE-OUT.
2. Once you have a good understanding of Biblical stewardship, read Dave Ramsey's book entitled [The Total Money Makeover](#) to learn how to apply the principles that will get you debt free and able to demonstrate outrageous generosity.

## **1. Is money important to God?**

- **2300** verses in the Bible deal with money.
- Jesus said more about it than **anything else**, including **heaven** and **hell**.
- There are **twice** as many verses about money than **faith** and **prayer** combined.
- A full **15%** of Jesus' recorded words address this subject.
- More than **half** of Jesus' parables deal with stewardship.

## **Why did he do this? Didn't God understand what was really important?**

### **Why is money important to God?**

*"Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing because, when it comes to a man's real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man's true character. All through Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man's character and how he handles his money."*<sup>1</sup>

There is a link between money and **spiritual transformation**.

- Luke 19:1-10. Zacchaeus

- Matthew 19:16-26. Rich Young Ruler. He lost a potential follower. He didn't "close the deal." His followers were astonished. They didn't understand the barrier wealth presents to true spiritual birth and growth.

*"But Jesus knew that money was the rich young man's god. He also knew that no man can enthrone the true God unless in the process he chooses to dethrone other gods. If Christ is not Lord over a person's money and possessions, then he is simply not that person's Lord."*<sup>2</sup>

- **Acts 19:18-20**

<sup>18</sup>Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. <sup>19</sup>A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. <sup>20</sup>In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

- **Acts 2:44-45**

<sup>44</sup>All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup>Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

- **Acts 4:32-35**

<sup>32</sup>All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup>With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup>There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup>and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

● **Matthew 6:19-21, 24.**

<sup>19</sup>"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. <sup>24</sup>"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

● **Luke 12:16-21**

<sup>16</sup>And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. <sup>17</sup>He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' <sup>18</sup>"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." ' <sup>20</sup>"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' <sup>21</sup>"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

A proof of spiritual transformation was a Biblical perspective on **the handling of money and possessions.**

*"The importance of money to God is that for this small sliver of time in which we are living, He wants to use it to help determine our usefulness to Him throughout eternity. Our commitment to God's Word on this earth is proportional to our use of money . . . It becomes clear that money is a training ground for God to develop our trustworthiness . . . We really don't believe that He will only do the best for us. So we have the tendency to want to withhold a part of what we have. But until we have experienced freedom in the area of money, we will never experience God's total plan for our lives."*<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Stewardship

What is a steward? A person entrusted with another's wealth or property and charged with the responsibility of managing it in the owner's best interests.<sup>4</sup>

The *enormous* truth on which stewardship is grounded: God is the owner of all things and we are simply his stewards (managers).

- **Luke 16:10-13**

<sup>10</sup>"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. <sup>11</sup>So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? <sup>12</sup>And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? <sup>13</sup>"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

## **The Two “Biggies” (read each and list the characteristics below):**

- Matthew 25:14-30. Parable of the Talents
- Luke 19:11-27. Parable of the 10 Minas

1 Drachma = 1 day's wage    1 Mina = 100 drachmas    1 talent = 60 minas = 20 year work

### **List the characteristics or qualities of the Master:**

1. *Owner of all assets –Takes his stuff seriously*
2. *Powerful*
3. *Trusts his servants – is discerning*
4. *Takes risks with his servants handling his money and possessions-Not a control freak, lets them fully manage things*
5. *High expectations of the servant*
6. *His absence and return*
7. *Generosity for doing well*
8. *Severity – no excuses accepted*

## List the characteristics or qualities of the Servant:

1. Stewardship (needs to know the realities and responsibilities of his master's ownership)
2. Accountability
3. Faithfulness-Given more responsibility when faithfulness demonstrated
4. Industriousness/Resourcefulness
5. Wisdom in investing
6. Ready when the master returned
7. Fear of his master/obedience
8. Individual standing before the master-\*\*Focus on handling well what God has given you
9. Preoccupation with his responsibilities, not his rights

*“ . . . God is not just the owner of the universe in general, but the owner of me in particular. In fact, I am twice his - first by creation, and second by redemption. Stewardship is living in the light of this overriding truth . . . How we handle our money and possessions will be determined by whom we really believe to be their true owner . . .*

*“When we come to grasp that we are stewards, not owners of our money, it totally changes our perspective. Suddenly I'm not asking, 'How much of my money shall I, out of the goodness of my heart, give to God?' Rather, I'm asking, 'Since all of 'my' money is really yours, Lord, how would you like me to invest your money today?'*

*“When I truly realize that God has a claim not on a few dollars to throw in an offering plate, not on 10 percent or 50 percent but 100 percent of ‘my’ money, it is revolutionary. Suddenly I am God’s Steward, God’s Money Manager.”<sup>5</sup>*

### **3. Old Testament Stewardship – Before the Law**

- Genesis 14:17-20
- Genesis 28:10-22

*You may have heard it said, "The tithe is an Old Testament law and is not applicable to the Christian." But it's hard to confirm that from Scripture. One of the first standards of giving found in the Bible is the tithe, a word which means 'tenth.' Abraham tithed in Genesis 14 after returning from the daring rescue of his nephew Lot from four enemy kings. He encountered the priest Melchizedek and voluntarily surrendered to him one-tenth of all the spoils. Abraham gave the first tithe in the Bible 430 years before the Mosaic law was revealed. Hebrews 7:1-10 tells us Abraham tithed to acknowledge God's sovereignty. If the tithe were only an Old Testament law, why then did Abraham tithe 430 years before the law? Abraham tithed as a testimony that God owned everything in his life.<sup>6</sup> Abraham is an excellent role model for stewardship. He realized that God owned everything and was willing to even give his most prized earthly possession (Isaac) back to God.*

## 4. Old Testament Stewardship - The Law

Some definitions:

- **First-fruits:** *The first and best of all income in any form*

Expressed “*the nature and the quality*” of the offering.

Who has assumed the place of “first fruits” in America today? Who gets the first portion off the gross amount of your paycheck? The government has replaced God in the place of “first fruits” of our income.

### Proverbs 3:9-10

<sup>9</sup>Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; <sup>10</sup>then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

- **Tithe:** *A tenth part – 10%*

Expressed the “*exact amount*” of the offering.

- **Free will offerings (voluntary offerings):** *Contributions beyond the tithe*

Expressed “*true giving.*” “*Give as you are led.*”

The Israelites tithed out of obedience and duty, whether they wanted to or not. Free will offerings were over and above the tithe.



## Tithes in the Old Testament:

### 1. The Priest's (Levite's) tithe

- Numbers 18:21-29

<sup>21</sup>"I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. <sup>22</sup>From now on the Israelites must not go near the Tent of Meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. <sup>23</sup>It is the Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offenses against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. <sup>24</sup>Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. That is why I said concerning them: 'They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.' " <sup>25</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>26</sup>"Speak to the Levites and say to them: 'When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD's offering. <sup>27</sup>Your offering will be reckoned to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. <sup>28</sup>In this way you also will present an offering to the LORD from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites. From these tithes you must give the LORD's portion to Aaron the priest. <sup>29</sup>You must present as the LORD's portion the best and holiest part of everything given to you.'

- Leviticus 27:30

" 'A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

## 2. The Festival tithe

- Deuteronomy 12:10-11, 17-19

<sup>10</sup>But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. <sup>11</sup>Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>You must not eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and oil, or the firstborn of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. <sup>18</sup>Instead, you are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns—and you are to rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you put your hand to. <sup>19</sup>Be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.

## 3. The Poor tithe

- Deuteronomy 14:28-29

<sup>28</sup>At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, <sup>29</sup>so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

- **Plus** Leviticus 19:9-10

<sup>9</sup>" 'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup>Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

## God's response to people who didn't tithe and his awesome promise to those same people:

- **Malachi 3:6-10**

### **Robbing God**

<sup>6</sup>"I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. <sup>7</sup>Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

<sup>8</sup>"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'

"In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup>You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. <sup>10</sup>Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

## ***5. New Testament Stewardship - Grace Giving***

“When it comes to the Old Testament, we must be careful not to throw out the baby (ongoing principles) with the bathwater (detailed regulations).”<sup>7</sup>

The tithe is not a “ceiling of giving”, but rather is a “floor” or a beginning point of giving.

*“Being under grace does not mean living by lower standards than the law. On the contrary, Christ systematically addressed such issues as murder, adultery, and the taking of oaths and made it clear that his standards were much higher than those of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:17-48).”<sup>8</sup>*

Percent of Born Again Christians in 2012 who say they give at least 10%: 12%<sup>9</sup>

- Grace giving is **NOT** *giving what you feel like giving.*
- Absence of the Law does **NOT** mean absence of *responsibility or discipline.*
- The tithe is a *guide* that begins to teach us about giving, not a *legalistic ritual.*

*“[Do we really believe] that New Testament grace is a license that frees us to clutch tighter to material wealth? On the contrary, the New Testament precepts, principles, and examples demonstrate that the very opposite is true. New Testament believers are called upon to be far more sacrificial and generous with their money and possessions than even their Old Testament brethren.”<sup>10</sup>*

## Some of Jesus' Other Stewardship Lessons

- **Mark 12:41-44**

<sup>41</sup>Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. <sup>42</sup>But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. <sup>43</sup>Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup>They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

- **Matthew 23:23**

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

- **Matthew 6:2-4**

<sup>2</sup>"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

- **Luke 6:38**

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

*“Jesus didn’t ever suggest that the ‘floor’ set by the tithe was eliminated, but simply that the ceiling of Christian giving was far above it. When Jesus told the disciples to go the second mile, he assumed they had [already] gone the first.”<sup>11</sup>*

## **More New Testament Examples of Giving**

### **• 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 – The Church at Macedonia**

Severe trial + severe poverty + overflowing joy equals rich generosity.

They pleaded for the privilege of giving. (Verse 4)

They gave themselves first to the Lord. (Verse 5)

Paul urged them to excel in the grace of giving. (Verse 7)

### **• 2 Corinthians 9:6-7**

<sup>6</sup>Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup>Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- **1 Timothy 6:17-18**

<sup>17</sup>Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup>Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

- **1 John 3:17**

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

The fathers of the early church, Irenaeus, Jerome, and Augustine wrote that the early church went well beyond the tithe.

## **Some Benefits**

- *It's a significant factor in spiritual growth.*
- *It increases the believer's sense of commitment and inclusion in God's work.*
- *Provides for the spread of God's love and mercy worldwide.*
- *It becomes easier to give other aspects of your time, talents, and treasures.*
- *Overflowing Joy*

*"In that day I do not want to have to explain why, being indwelt with his Holy Spirit and having lived in the most affluent nation in human history, I failed to give at the very minimal level of those who did not have the indwelling Spirit and owned far less than I." (referring to the people in the Old Testament)<sup>12</sup>*

## ***6. Some warning signs (when it's time for a "heart check")<sup>13</sup>***

- If we treat the tithe as an unwanted tax or bill, and are robbed of joy or thankfulness.
- If it leads to pride and thinking that you are more "holy" than those who don't, it's time to re-examine our motives.
- If it leads to complacency, thinking that the tithe is a high and lofty perch rather than seeing it as a beginning place of giving.
- If it's done to clear our conscience so that we think we can do whatever we want with the remaining 90%.

### ***Other:***

***• Doing it expecting financial rewards***

***• Giving to things to support our own agenda, not the church's***



## 7. Dangers of not practicing Biblical Stewardship

Christians, for the most part, do not handle their money in a way that glorifies God, and in this area they are almost indistinguishable from non-Christians. We have the “inside scoop” so to speak, on the correct way to handle finances. The Bible is full of principles to guide us, and we are without excuse in this area.

- Divorce, family destruction, family strife and dysfunction; 60-70% of all arguments in Christian homes involve money issues.
- Money issues are the number one cause of divorce in America, and about half of marriages end in divorce. You do the math.
- Decreased local and world-wide Kingdom expansion. Remember in His eternal plan, God has decided to use us to supply his work. **You are the answer to someone else’s plea before God!!!**
- Not being used by God and not giving yourself fully to the plans God has for you.

In the passage where the New Testament says that everyone must work (Eph 4:28), it gives as a reason "in order that he may have something to give to those in need." Charity-giving to the poor-is an essential part of Christian morality: in the frightening parable of the sheep and the goats it seems to be the point on which everything turns. Some people nowadays say that charity ought to be unnecessary and that instead of giving to the poor we ought to be producing a society in which there were no poor to give to. They may be quite right in saying that we ought to produce that kind of society. But if anyone thinks that, as a consequence, you can stop giving in the meantime, then he has parted company with all Christian morality. I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. **I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc, is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.** I am speaking now of "charities" in the common way. Particular cases of distress among your own relatives, friends, neighbours or employees, which God, as it were, forces upon your notice, may demand much more: even to the crippling and endangering of your own position. For many of us the great obstacle to charity lies not in our luxurious living or desire for more money, but in our fear-fear of insecurity. This must often be recognised as a temptation. Sometimes our pride also hinders our charity; we are tempted to spend more than we ought on the showy forms of generosity (tipping, hospitality) and less than we ought on those who really need our help. -C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*

## 8. Summary *(from Willow Creek Community Church's Participating Membership Manual)*

### **Mature Christians give:**

- *Generously...*They know Christ has given all to them, and they know Christ owns all they have anyway.
- *Proportionally.* . .They try to give as high a percentage of their income as possible, recognizing the tithe (10%) as a long-established benchmark which may well be exceeded as they prosper.
- *Regularly...*As resources flow in, they offer the “first-fruits” back to God, honoring Him before any others. ***On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 1 Corinthians 16:2***
- *Locally...*Knowing that they claim this church as their spiritual home, they support the ministries from which they derive benefit.
- *Liberally...*As they are able, they go beyond giving to their own church and contribute to the cause of Christ globally.
- *Cheerfully...*Knowing that God sees the heart, they don't just give begrudgingly to an organization - they give their offering as unto God Himself; they do so willingly, and not under compulsion, but with joyful worship as their resources flow out to serve others.
- *Anonymously...*They don't call attention to themselves when they give or expect their offering to produce an advantage in the church.
- *Expectantly...*Counting on God's promise of provision, they anticipate seeing God use their gift and know He'll work in their own life - including financially - as they give.

## ***Biblical Stewardship - Part 2***

**Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won't be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?**

– Jesus (Luke 16:10-11)

### **A. An Overview of God's Perspective on Money Management**

*(adapted from More Than Finances Participants Workbook, Crown Financial Ministries)*

- God owns **everything**.

- Everything created
- Your ability to make wealth

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

<sup>17</sup>You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." <sup>18</sup>But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

- Your future

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

- We are His **stewards** or managers.
  - Faithful
  - Accountable
  - Responsible
  - Wise
  - Resourceful
  - Obedient
  
- God wants us to have **financial peace**.
  
- We can't have peace with **divided hearts**.
  - **Matthew 6:24**  
 No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.
  
- Money management reveals the **priority** of our hearts and our **spiritual maturity**.
  - This is a true litmus test of our spiritual life.
  - "Your checkbook is your greatest spiritual document . . ." -Billy Graham
  - "Would your checkbook convict you of being a Christian?" -Larry Burkett
  - If you really want true spiritual riches, you must first faithfully manage your money.  
 -Luke 16:10-11
  - **Matthew 6:21**  
 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
  
- Jesus calls us to be free from all **bondage**.
  - Love of money
    - **1 Timothy 6:10**  
 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
  - Debt – the borrower becomes the lender's slave
    - **Proverbs 22:7**  
 The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.  
 (other translations such as NASB replace "servant" with "slave")

- Practice **saving** for the future.
  - Set a goal of 3 months of Net Spendable Income (NSI) in an emergency fund.
    - **Proverbs 21:20**  
In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.
    - **Proverbs 6:6-8**  
<sup>6</sup>Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! <sup>7</sup>It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, <sup>8</sup>yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.
- Learn the four principles of **borrowing**:
  - Borrowing is not normal – it is never spoken of positively and always spoken of negatively in Scripture (but in and of itself, it is not a sin)
  - Avoid long-term debt
  - Avoid surety (co-signing loans for others, even family members)
  - Accept the absolute commitment to repay

## B. Symptoms of financial bondage

(adapted from *More Than Finances Participants Workbook*, Crown Financial Ministries)

1. Get rich quick attitude.

### Proverbs 28:20-22

<sup>20</sup>A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished. <sup>21</sup>To show partiality is not good— yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread. <sup>22</sup>A stingy man is eager to get rich and is unaware that poverty awaits him.

2. Overdue bills.

### Proverbs 3:27-28

<sup>27</sup>Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. <sup>28</sup>Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"—when you now have it with you.

3. Making minimum payments on bills.

4. Covetousness – Looking at what others have and desiring it (and then getting into a bad financial situation by purchasing it!) P.S. It's one of the Ten Commandments!

5. Worry, envy, resentment and bitterness.

**Hebrews 12:15**

<sup>15</sup>See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

6. Lack of sharing or inconsistent giving.

**Ecclesiastes 5:13**

I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner,

7. Pride and rebellion.

**Proverbs 16:18-19**

<sup>18</sup>Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. <sup>19</sup>Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

8. Hasty decisions.

**Proverbs 21:5**

The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.

The Result: Unmet needs in the family.

Over-commitment to work.

Unplanned emergencies.

### ***News Flash!***

## **The American Dream is funded by one of the Biggest Scams in American History!**

A little bit about credit cards

- Average US household credit card debt *for those who carry credit card debt* in 2015: \$16,140
- Average interest charged on credit cards with a balance on it in 2015: 15.75%
- If that credit card was no longer used and only the minimum payment (assume 3% of balance) was made each month, how long would it take to completely pay off that money? 18.25 years
- How much interest will the household pay for the card over that period? \$12,175

**A grace period** is the time you accrue no interest on your credit cards after you make a purchase. However, if you don't COMPLETELY pay off the credit card each month (every penny!), the grace period does not apply. Then you are charged interest from the date of purchase on all your subsequent purchases. (example of zero interest for 18 months at Wettsteins)

Bottom line – If you don't pay it all off each month, there is not a grace period. If you can't pay the card(s) off every month, you should destroy the credit card. You're putting yourself into a big hole unnecessarily. Then treat it as a short term, high interest loan that you'll pay off ASAP.

## C. Contentment

### Hebrews 13:5

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'

### Luke 12:15

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

### Exodus 20:17

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." The Tenth Commandment

**cov-et:** To desire wrongfully; as in another's property.

**con-tent-ment:** The state of being satisfied with what a person has.



A large part of American advertising today draws upon our tendency to covet in order to sell products. Most of these things we don't need and can't afford. Society calls this acceptable, but clearly God does not!

"Keeping up with the Jones'" is a common path to financial bondage and dishonoring God. People simply follow the examples of their peers and borrow to get what their peers have; often without thinking about the consequences.

Set your goals, standards and quality of life based on your conviction from God, not on what others have or think you should have.

God promises to satisfy every need that we have, not every desire. To continually satisfy every desire moves us outside of God's will. A self-indulger can be identified by one or more of the following signs:

1. Purchasing without regard for utility.
2. Purchasing without regard for budget.
3. Consistently trading cars and appliances for new models.
4. Having closets full of clothes or houses and garages full of stuff that are seldom used.
5. Spending money frivolously on sale items.

*(Adapted from Larry Burkett, Your Finances in Changing Times, 1993, p.59)*

Most Americans are self-indulgents, and our Christian duty is to prayerfully assess our standards of living in light of what God wants for us. Don't be resentful toward God because you aren't living in lavishness. Remember that even someone making minimum wage in America is wealthier than 98% of the current world's population!

## D. Financial Freedom God's Way

(adapted from *More Than Finances Participants Workbook*, Crown Financial Ministries)

What is God's idea of Financial Freedom???

- Freedom from the **bondage** of debts, oppression of others, envy, greed, or resentment.
- Freedom to **respond** without hesitation to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the purpose for which God has you here on earth.

### What will following the principles of financial freedom do?

1. Demonstrate God's **faithfulness** toward us.
2. Stimulate our **prayer lives** (by seeking His wisdom and asking for His provision).
3. Cultivate **self-control**.
4. Reveal our **need** for Jesus.
5. Clarify our **life values**.
6. Teach **cooperation** in marriage.
7. Provide **direction** in our life.

## E. All About Budgeting

The purpose of all planning is to meet specific goals. Short-term financial goals are met by setting up and following a written budget. **Anyone who does not live on a written budget is not handling his or her finances efficiently.**

**If you leave Biblical Stewardship Part 2 with nothing else, remember this:**

***YOU MUST MAKE AND FOLLOW A WRITTEN BUDGET!***

### **Proverbs 27:23-24**

<sup>23</sup>Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; <sup>24</sup>for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations.

### **Luke 14:28-30**

<sup>28</sup>"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup>For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, <sup>30</sup>saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

A good budget doesn't restrict your freedom, but tells you when you have spent what you have agreed you can spend. It's a guide to measure whether or not you're spending your money the way you have agreed you would.

A budget is a yearly plan divided by 12. It must account for ALL spending, including the non-monthly items such as clothing, insurance, Christmas presents, vacation, etc, so that when things come due, the money is already put aside to pay for them. Once it is set up and "tweaked", most families will report that it only takes about 30 minutes a week to maintain.

If used properly, a budget will help to determine what kind of home you can afford, what kind of car you can drive, what kind of clothes you wear, etc. If you don't use one, you could easily buy more home, car, etc than you can truly afford and get into a huge mess!!! (See Luke 14:28-30)

## **Five Steps to Budgeting** *(adapted from More Than Finances Participants Workbook, Crown Financial Ministries)*

### **1. Accurately record all expenses**

- a. Use a **Monthly Income and Expenses Form** to establish categories.
- b. Track every penny you spend and every penny you receive **for an entire calendar month** in each category in a notebook.
- c. Make sure to take into account all non-monthly expenses (auto insurance, Christmas gifts, etc.) and divide these over each month.

### **2. Use the guideline budgets**

- a. Go to [www.crown.org](http://www.crown.org) and click "Financial and Career Tools", then "Calculators", then "Spending Plan Calculator" and calculate your budget, or use the **Percentage Guide for Family Income** forms. This uses examples of families that successfully use balanced budgets.
- b. Understand the concept of Net Spendable Income (NSI). This is your gross income minus your tithe, minus your taxes. All percentages under NSI must total 100%.

### **3. Complete the budget analysis**

- a. Use the **Budget Analysis Sheet** to compare where you are overspending and under-spending according to the guideline budget (remember, each family's goals are different-some may spend more certain things than others – just so it all adds up).
- b. Enter the amounts you actually spent the last month (in step #1) in the first column.
- c. Enter the monthly guideline budget amounts in the second column.
- d. Subtract the columns and enter the difference.
- e. Use this to create a realistic budget, taking time to prayerfully let God guide you through the process, defining needs, wants and desires.

#### **4. Balance the budget**

- a. Prayerfully decrease spending or increase income so the budget balances.
- b. Seek counsel from your volunteer budget counselor (781-2231; teamzlabek@yahoo.com) as you go through the process for tips and help.
- c. Understand that your budget will frequently be modified as you become a better steward and understand your spending patterns, wants, and needs, and as life circumstances change.
- d. Budgeting is a skill to be learned and improved; like golf, bowling, tennis, etc. With practice and dedication, you'll be a pro!

#### **5. Commit to maintaining accurate records**

- a. Keep excellent financial records. (Luke 14:28-30)
- b. Balance the checkbook each month.
- c. Establish a system to track every penny that comes in and every penny that goes out. Use an easy computer program or ledger system. Every Dollar or Quicken.
- d. Use the envelope system

### **Budget Principles/Tips**

- The only way for a budget to be useful is to USE IT!!!
- Give God's part first, at least tithing off your gross income

#### **Proverbs 3:9-10**

<sup>9</sup>Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; <sup>10</sup>then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

#### **Malachi 3:10**

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

- Everyone in the family must understand the difference between needs, wants, and desires
- Stop any unnecessary expenses until you are completely out of financial trouble.

- **BUDGET BUSTERS:** Too big of a house, too expensive of a car, and clothes that are too expensive. Once you get into trouble with these it is very hard to break free. With a budget that is current and good short and long range plans, you won't be in the horrible situation of having to sell your house/car, or use credit for day-to-day expenses.
- Ask for receipts wherever you go (McDonald's, gas station, etc.) and write down other expenses when a receipt is not possible (pay phone, parking meter, etc). As you collect receipts, it's often handy to get the checks that have a carbon-copy duplicate. After you write a check, then just put this in the central area for recording that week.
- Use the envelope system to control your spending in each category every month. That way it is nearly impossible to overspend in the areas of you budget that you have control over (food, clothing, personal items, entertainment, etc)
- Buy an easy-to-use, inexpensive computer program to track your budget. You can also use Mint, Every Dollar, or other free programs. With a click of the mouse, you can see how you are currently doing, as well as picking up good and bad trends in your budget and spending. If you make a budget, but then don't use it on a day-to-day basis, it is USELESS!
- Make a commitment to **Stop Borrowing!** Make it a point to pay with cash for day-to-day expenses and other wants/desires. Work toward paying cash or at least a large down payment for homes and cars, provided they fit comfortably in your budget. Day-to-day expenses (groceries and personal items) and desires (new bedroom set or nice furniture, etc) should never be purchased with credit.
- Avoid Financial Bondage. When you are in debt, you are the slave to the lender (Proverbs 22:7). The average credit card company will allow people to borrow 250% more than they can conceivably repay. Rates are sky-high, and if you don't repay it all each month, they have the right to charge incredibly high fees.
- When you or your family cannot pay bills or are in a lot of debt, the first reaction is "I need more income!" Then the spouse starts working, people get a second job or works overtime. Before this is done, you must prayerfully ask if you are living outside of God's will for your finances. Is the problem a lack of income or a wrong attitude toward spending? Seek more income only after correcting bad buying habits and living on a God-centered budget. Remember the tank analogy! It doesn't matter how much water you put into the tank if the spout at the bottom is wide open!
- If you or your spouse gets paid every 2 weeks (26 times a year) instead of twice a month (24 times a year), plan to live on 2 paychecks a month. When the 2 months a year you get paid 3 times a month come, after your tithe put it all toward debt payment and/or savings.

*(Partially adapted from The Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples and Your Finances in Changing Times by Larry Burkett)*

## F. Saving, Debt, and Long Range Planning

### • Saving

#### Proverbs 21:20

<sup>20</sup>In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.

#### Why?

Unexpected expenses or crises can cause family turmoil. If there is no savings from which to offset the expenses, the result can be disaster. Without savings, when an unexpected expense occurs (broken furnace in the winter, sickness in the family, etc), the only option is borrowing, which leads to the cycle of increased debt and more financial bondage.

Savings is looking toward a future need and putting away what will be required, so that future borrowing is not necessary. You will save countless thousands of dollars if you manage your money this way instead of “reacting to life” by borrowing and paying interest on the borrowed money.

A savings plan should also be used to pay for expenses that are not in the regular monthly budget, for whatever reason. Things like replacing a worn-out car, replacing appliances or furniture, or remodeling. It shouldn't be a surprise when your 15-year-old car dies! Plan for it! Then you'll be able to purchase these items with cash, and not have to pay high interest rates, saving thousands of dollars.

#### How Much?

Most Christian financial planners recommend at least 3 months, and some as much as 6 months of Net Spendable Income (NSI = Gross monthly income minus tithe minus taxes) in an “**Emergency Fund**”. It should be remembered that when this money has to be used for emergencies, it should be replaced as soon as possible.

As you complete the Dave Ramsey Baby Steps in order (see below under section G), you should eventually have separate savings for these purposes:

1. **Emergency Fund** (3-6 months of NSI) – place in money market accounts or CD's
2. **Planned future major purchases or events** – place in savings account, money market or CD's
3. **Vacation** – place in savings account, money market or CD's
4. **College** – place in tax-deferred education savings account
5. **Retirement** – place in a mix of stock and bond mutual funds in line with your risk tolerance

## • Debt

### Top reasons to get debt-free *(Adapted from Wilson J. Humber Sound Mind Investing January, page 6, 1996.)*

1. Debt presumes on the future.
  - When you commit to payments in the future you are assuming you won't lose your job, that your salary stays the same, that your spouse will continue working, and that you won't have a family disaster or unexpected expenses. At least one of these happens fairly frequently.
2. Debt lowers your standard of living in the future.
  - Money you borrow now will have to be paid back with interest in the future, not allowing you to have control of your future earnings for other things that you want
3. Debt avoids facing lifestyle decisions.
  - It avoids the decision of "want" versus "need". You make decisions based on the monthly credit payment instead of the total cost of the item.
  - You will spend 25-35% more if you buy with credit instead of cash or check.
4. Debt places the awesome power of compound interest at work against you.
  - Items charged on a credit card can take decades to pay off when making the minimum monthly payment.
  - You will spend several times the purchase price if you handle money this way.
  - If you pay with cash, you pay the purchase price only!
5. Debt evades the necessity of distinguishing wants & desires from real needs.
  - You pull the trigger and buy on credit on impulse, when in reality it is almost never a "need". Try the thirty-day rule combined with a solid budget instead.
6. Debt encourages impulse buying and overspending.
  - Stores and credit card companies know the consumers will spend between 25% and 35% more with credit cards than with cash. That's why stores pay a fee of 1-7% on every purchase made with credit cards.
  - Use cash!
7. Debt and credit cards stifle creativity and resourcefulness.



- If we don't buy on impulse or with credit, we find other ways around the situation or we decide to "do without" . . . without going into debt.

8. Debt and credit cards eliminate margin in our lives.

- Instead of planning for future purchases and for unplanned expenses or emergencies by "saving ahead", we charge. This cyclical practice becomes a major problem in our lives.

9. Debt teaches your children bad habits.

- Seeing the practice of debt in your life will teach them casual regard for credit and the dangers that accompany it. You will perpetuate another generation of poor money management.

## • Long range planning

You should have a long-range plan for the following items to ensure good stewardship:

1. Life insurance - Buy term life, not whole or universal. Buy 8-10 times your current income.

2. Wills/Trusts - You must have one even if you're not rich or don't have kids!

3. Home ownership

4. Retirement planning

5. Children's education - Wisconsin's 529 plan is EdVest ([www.edvest.com](http://www.edvest.com))

6. Giving over and above the tithe

7. If you are over 55 years old, consider Long Term Care Insurance particularly if there is a family history of early onset health issues

8. Endowment or creation of a foundation so you giving lasts forever. A one-time endowment of \$100,000 can sponsor 100 underprivileged children from Compassion International forever, with a 100 year cumulative payout of over \$1 million!

## **G. The Building Blocks of Managing Finances God's Way**

1. Understand Biblical Stewardship
2. Create a God-Honoring Written Budget
3. Develop a Financial Plan

### **To develop a financial plan**

#### **A. Know what you OWN**

-Fill out the Total Assets Worksheet

#### **B. Know what you OWE**

-Fill out the Total Debt Worksheet

**C. Develop a written budget – categorize every penny in and every penny out.**

## **D. Go through the Baby Steps** (from Financial Peace Revisited by Dave Ramsey)

(Don't skip steps or go onto the next one until the previous one is complete.)

**Step 1:** Stop everything and get \$1000 in a mini-emergency fund (put in savings or money market account).

**Step 2:** Use the debt snowball to pay off all of your debt except your mortgage. Start with the smallest debt first, regardless of interest rate, to get early wins to drive momentum. Put every penny toward the debt snowball. After you have a solid budget, consider working more to pay your debt off faster.

**Step 3:** Save the remainder of your emergency fund: 3-6 months worth of Net Spendable Income (Gross income minus tithe/offerings minus taxes) – put in money market account or CD's

**Step 4:** Save 15% of your gross income for retirement

**Step 5:** Save for college for your kids

**Step 6:** Pay off your mortgage early (or pay for your first home with cash!)

**Step 7:** Build wealth and give it away

### **Matthew 25:23**

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master’s happiness!’”

## References:

1. Randy Alcorn, "Money, Possessions, and Eternity," Tyndale House Publishers, 1989, p.15.
2. Alcorn, p. 18.
3. Larry Burkett, "Your Finances in Changing Times", p. 38.
4. Ben Patterson, "The Grand Essentials", (Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), p. 17.
5. Alcorn, p. 184-5.
6. <http://72.14.205.104/custom?q=cache:TglATLuXVIYJ:www.crown.org/pamphlets/pdfs/Giving%2520and%2520Tithing.pdf+abraham&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=4&gl=us&client=google-coop-np>. Crown.org. Accessed September 27, 2007.
7. Alcorn, p. 212-3.
8. Alcorn, p. 213.
9. <http://churchexecutive.com/archives/barna-poll-tithing-stable-in-2012-evangelicals-content-with-their-personal-financial-status>. Accessed September 28, 2013
10. Alcorn, p. 214.
11. Alcorn, p. 216.
12. Alcorn, p. 223.
13. Alcorn, p. 218-19.

Good stewardship website: [www.crown.org/Articles](http://www.crown.org/Articles)

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**Barna definitions:** "Evangelicals" meet the born again criteria (described below) plus seven other conditions. Those include saying their faith is very important in their life today; believing they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians; believing that Satan exists; believing that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works; believing that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; asserting that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches; and describing God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today. Being classified as an evangelical is not dependent upon church attendance or the denominational affiliation of the church attended. Respondents were not asked to describe themselves as "evangelical." "Non-evangelical born again Christians" are defined as people who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. These adults are born again, but do not meet the additional evangelical criteria.