



FINANCES
PAYING FOR THE HOLIDAYS
How To Avoid Financial Collapse
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Intro: Money! We go to school for years to learn how to earn it. We spend 40 to 60 hours a week, working for it. Then we spend countless hours thinking how we're going to spend it. And then it takes only a minute to blow it!

Arguments over it are among the leading causes of marital disintegration, business partnership breakups and government shutdowns. Despair over losing it has led many to suicide. The obsession with getting it causes many of society's crimes. The absence of it causes many of societies nightmares. Some call it the root of all evils; some call it the means for great good. But one thing we can all agree upon this morning -- *we cannot afford to ignore the reality or the importance of money!*

And the Bible speaks to the subject matter head on, eyes open, no holds barred. In fact, I truly believe The Bible is the single best guidebook on money management ever written. Some 2,000 passages refer to the use of money in the Bible. Approximately two-thirds of Jesus' parables make some reference to the use of money.

For many of us it's not that we necessarily want to be mega-rich; we'd just like to be released from the chains of debt, and the worry and frustration that come from a lack of finances. I want you to know that's what God wants for you too. His plan is a plan for freedom, not bondage.

It is within the heart of God for every single one of us to experience liberation in the area of money management so our lives can be about things that are more important than money -- like people! And so God says, *"I'll help you become financially free if you listen to my counsel, if you trust me and do it."*

In fact The Bible says that God uses money to test you. **God uses money to see how spiritually mature you really are. He uses the issue of money management as the acid test of whether He can trust you with genuine spiritual blessings.** Jesus said this in **Luke 16:11, “If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches.”**

He’s saying if you are not wise in managing your money, why should He trust you with genuine riches – spiritual wealth? In other words, the amount God is able to bless your life is, to a large degree, dependent and determined by the way you handle the material blessings of life. If you’re not a very good money manager, God is saying you’re not very responsible and I don’t think that’s the way any of us want God to feel about us.

The wisest man who ever lived was King Solomon. He wrote a book called Proverbs and he wrote down the wisdom of God. Solomon was not only the wisest man who ever lived, but the Bible tells us he was also the wealthiest man who ever lived.

The Bible says that he drank his drinks out of gold goblets and he ate on gold and silver plates. Could you imagine being the person who washed his dishes...not only did they have to wash them, they had to polish them too. You know you’re rich when you eat off of pure gold plates.

Here is the wisest man who ever lived and who also knows more about wealth than anybody else. He wrote it down in **Proverbs**. So today I want us to look and listen as Solomon gives us God’s financial principles for financial stability. I won’t be able to finish the message this morning, so today is part one of how to avoid financial collapse. The first principle is...

1. KEEP GOOD RECORDS

This is the **Principle of Accounting**. **Proverbs 27:23-24, “Riches can disappear fast so watch your business interests closely. Know the state of your flocks and herds.”** Obviously in those days most people were ranchers or shepherds. Their assets were tied up in sheep. God says, **“Know the condition of your flocks.”** Today, God would say, **“Know the condition of your stocks.”**

Do you ever find yourself saying, ***“I just don’t know where all my money goes!”*** That is a giant warning sign that you are in trouble with your finances if you don’t know where all your money goes. You are not keeping good records. People say money talks. It doesn’t talk, it just sneaks away quietly. It doesn’t tell you it’s leaving either!

Proverbs 23:23, “Get the facts at any price.” In other words, be realistic. If you are married you have to ask the question: How are we really doing financially, as a couple? If you are single you have to ask the question: How am I doing financially? If you don’t know where your money is going, if you don’t keep good records, you’re in trouble.

Here’s a formula for financial failure: **Ignorance + Easy Credit = Disaster.**

If you’re not keeping good records then you are going to end up spending more than you make, getting further and further in debt and one day you’ll wake up and it’s a major problem in your life.

So here are four facts that you need to know.

- 1. You need to know what you own.**
- 2. You need to know what you owe.**
- 3. You need to know what you earn.**
- 4. You need to know where it goes.**

I’ve been a pastor for many years and I have found in talking with couples that so many major problems occur when one partner is keeping the other partner in the dark about their finances. Neither the husband nor the wife knows totally what they owe, what they own, what they earn, and where it’s going. I’m telling you that is a recipe for financial and marital disaster.

A lot of you are probably thinking, ***“I just don’t have time to keep up with everything”***. Do you have time to worry? If you have time to worry about your finances, you have time to write it down. In fact, if you wrote it down, if you kept better records, you’d have a lot less to worry about. The Bible says riches

disappear fast. Know the condition of your flocks. Know the state of your finances...it's the principle of accounting.

The second principle that we can learn from Solomon is...

2. PLAN YOUR SPENDING

This is the **Principle of Budgeting**. So you have to know the state of your finances and then you have to set some financial goals and stick with them. I would encourage many of you to not go through 2010 like you did in 2009...just drifting along, paying this bill, then spending more money, and not having any clear goals, not having any clear record, not having any boundaries. In other words don't just kind of muddle through the year. This is not the time to be drifting. This is the year for you to get your financial house in order!

Proverbs 1:5, “Plan carefully and you'll have plenty. But if you act too quickly you will never have enough.” If you don't get anything else I say, get this: **Financial freedom is not based on how much you earn. It's based on how you spend it. Your financial freedom is not based on your income.** Even if you make three times what you make today, if you're spending more than you make you're still going to go in the hole. If you don't know how to live on less than you're making now, what makes you think you're going to live on less when your income goes up. **It won't because you're developing the habit that you'll always spend more than you make.**

Freedom comes not by making more. It comes from spending less. It comes from learning how to live on less so that God will be able to trust you with more. So plan your spending!

Notice it says **“Plan carefully and you'll have plenty. If you act too quickly, you'll never have enough.”** Let's talk about impulse buying. Impulse buying is unplanned buying. It's based on emotions. It's spending without thinking. You see it, you smell it, you hear it, you taste it, you feel it, and you buy it. You see something in a store window and you've got to have it!

Have you ever bought something without thinking and then later regretted it? Have you ever gotten home and thought, ***“What was I thinking? Where am I going to get the money to pay for this? Where am I going to store it? How am I going to insure it? How am I going to maintain it?”*** It’s called ***“buyers remorse”***.

You need to understand that our society – capitalism – is geared around advertising. And advertising is geared around getting you to buy impulsively. They don’t want you to think about it, they want you to buy based on emotion, not based on your budget. So they create the sizzle in the steak and they create the perfect body and tell you that you can have it for only three easy payments of...

There is a thing they do to get you to buy impulsively. They use a word. This word for some of you is almost irresistible. When you hear this word, you immediately get in your car, and almost in a trance like state, back out of the driveway, and head for that store. It’s the word **“sale”**.

You say, ***“But look how much I saved!”*** You don’t need it. You can’t afford it. You don’t have the money to buy it. But you think, ***“Look how much I saved!”***

Have you ever used this excuse, ***“If I don’t buy it now, the price is just going to go up later.”*** **Proverbs 21:20, “Stupid people spend their money as fast as they get it.”** This is God’s IQ test. How smart, how intelligent are you? If you are spending everything you’ve got on stuff you can’t afford and don’t need, the Bible says you are **“stupid”**. Wow that will hit you right between the eyes won’t it?

Spending can be just like any other addiction. You say you can handle it. That’s what an alcoholic says. They say I can handle one drink...one can of beer. For some people shopping is no different. In fact shopping has become such a prevalent addiction in our society that there are organizations that deal specifically with the addiction of spending too much. They create all kinds of creative ways to help you break the impulse of the buying habit.

I read that one lady keeps her credit cards in a bowl of water in the freezer. She said that if she gets the urge to spend, she has to wait for the credit cards to thaw

and usually as she waits a cooler head prevails...get it...a cooler head? Sorry that was really corny wasn't it?

So how do you break the habit of impulsive buying? Of spending more than you've got? How do you spell relief? You spell relief, **BUDGET**. Are you familiar with this word? What is a budget? A budget is simply planned spending. A budget is telling your money where you want it to go, rather than wondering where it all went. Everybody needs a budget. If you want to break this habit of spending more than you've got, if you want to build resistance to sales and resistance to impulsive buying, you've got to "*nip it in the budget*"...if you're not a fan of the old TV show Andy Griffin then you missed what I just said!

Only the government can do deficit spending. Wow! I probably shouldn't have said that. But I doubt president Obama listens to my podcast!

Getting out of debt takes discipline, effort, sacrifice and time. These principles work, but you must work them.

It starts with committing to God's financial principles. Many of you made that commitment last week. You don't have to make that again if you made it last week and you're serious about following God's financial plan. Some of you need to make that commitment this morning.

Now here's the deal: For some of you the first commitment you need to make is to Christ. Even if you apply all of these financial principles to your life and become debt free, you still won't be happy. The reason why is simple. The hole in your heart can't be filled with money. Believe it or not financial stability won't secure you for eternity. Jesus is still the only answer to all your hurts and pains. So this morning why not settle that issue by committing your life to Christ!