

We are managers.

There are financial principles in the God's Word that instruct us in conducting our financial affairs. One of the major themes of the Bible is obedience to the Lord. Practicing these financial principles demonstrates that Christians are trusting God in this important area of their lives.

Principle #1 – God Owns It All.

This foundational principle is that God is the source of everything. He owns it all. We are just managers! Everything we have, and everything we are, represent His gifts entrusted to us.

This concept is so foreign to our normal thinking that it may seem limiting, but it is really liberating. The minute we begin to own it, it begins to own us. Our possessions tend to possess us! We lose our joy and a sense of freedom if we take on a responsibility that God never intended for us to take. He owns, we manage.

My life is not my own; it is a gift entrusted to me by God Himself! I don't really need to worry about when it will end because that is in His hands. I can relax and enjoy it. The food I need will be provided. So will the shelter.

God says, "I promise you that if you will seek first my kingdom and my righteousness that, and all else will be provided for you." We need to recognize that all we are and all we have, God has given to us.

All that we are and all the we have belongs to God.

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Relying on God

Understanding that God owns everything and we are managers of the gifts He gives is a foundational principal in understanding our relationship to God and how we should respond to Him. If we don't get this one right, the rest won't make sense!

Principle #2 – GIVING IS ESSENTIAL

Giving is the result of understanding what it means to live a life of stewardship. It is essential because it involves putting God first in our lives.

In what ways can we put God first? One way is to spend time with God – to have a daily quiet time with Him. If that is not happening in our lives, it means that someone or something else is more important than the Lord.

Another way to put God first is to trust Him to take care of us. Trusting comes before giving. Sometimes it is easier to trust God for our eternal salvation than it is to trust Him to “give us this day our daily bread”. However, Christians know that if we trust in God and live according to His will, He will take care of all our needs

If we trust in God, we can never say “I can't afford to give.” According to Deuteronomy 14:23 one purpose of tithing was to teach the people of Israel to put God first in their lives. Tithing teaches a reliance on God that is fundamental to our relationship with Him.

RUSHING THROUGH LIFE

It seems as if we are always trying to find a better way to organize our time. Time flies! It escapes us and passes us by. How true for all of us.

Before we know it, it is the end of a day, a season, or a year and we are still planning to get organized and learn better time management. The real question is are we filling our days with things that are important? When was the last time you took inventory of the things that take up your time?

Principle #3 – ALLOW FOR MARGIN

When we live in a world where the phone is always ringing, the cell phone is always with us, email needs to be answered, a myriad of duties at home need to be handled and school and church related activities need to be attended, it becomes harder to set aside time to renew and recharge ourselves.

Unfortunately, most of us take few precautions to our lives to protect against our own hectic schedules.

It's the internal resources we have that run out first when it comes to marriage, child rearing, decision making and life priorities. It's very difficult to be a person who is inwardly peaceful if we do not carve out for ourselves at least a little quiet time everyday.

The starting point during that "quiet time" is God. He is the One who gives our directions. We need to take time to listen to God's voice. Then we need to sort out the meaningless and less important things that are cluttering our lives and stealing our time. We need to re-prioritize. Does your schedule for last month reflect the priorities you feel are most valuable?

The secret to time management is not learning how to save time or get more of it – the secret is knowing how to use it.

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SAVING PREVENTS PITFALLS

Did you know that the average person in our country is three weeks away from bankruptcy? He/she has little or no money saved, regular fixed obligations to support a relatively “high” lifestyle, significant monthly credit obligations and a total dependence on next week’s paycheck to keep the budget afloat.

Principle #4 – BIBLE BACKS SAVINGS

The major reason most people are poor savers is because we live in a culture that does not practice self denial. When we want something, we want it now!

However, Scripture encourages us to save. “The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets.” (Prov. 21:20 LB) By contrast, society says, “Spend all you make.”

Regular saving makes provision for tomorrow. It builds a financial safety cushion for emergencies. A good rule of thumb is to save the equivalent of two to three months’ salary, in case you are unable to work due to illness or injury.

When saving, we must also keep balance in mind. If we concentrate solely on saving, our focus and affection will gravitate there. We must be careful to balance our saving and investing by giving generously to the Lord. When we receive income, the check we write should be to the Lord, the second check for our savings.

Remember, the most effective way to save is to start early and be consistent.

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THE BLACK HOLE OF DEBT

The dictionary describes debt as “money or property which one person is obligated to pay to another.”

Scripture’s perspective on debt is clear. “Just as the rich rule the poor, so the borrower is servant to the lender.” (Prov. 22:7)

Principle #5 - KEEP OUT OF DEBT

Debt imposes both a financial and physical cost.

The average family is spending more than it earns each year, most of which ends up in choking credit card debt. By the end of 2000, the average card holder had \$8,123 in credit card debt. (Newsweek, Aug 27, 2001).

Debt has negative impact on relationships. It increases stress, which contributed to mental, physical, and emotional fatigue. In a recent survey of divorced persons, 80% stated that finances were the main contributing factor. Many people raise their lifestyle through debt, only to discover that the burden of debt then controls their lives. The high cost of debt often requires additional jobs, thus more time “at work” and less time with family.

If borrowing has put you into bondage, there is a way to get out: Decide today that you will not go one more dollar into debt. Then look at cutting some expense in every area of your life.

Just as God uses money to enhance and direct our lives, Satan will use it to shackle us. Christians should learn to recognize the dangers of financial bondage.

Statistics show that people spend nearly one-third more when they use credit cards rather than cash.

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Want What You Have

One of our most pervasive and destructive mental tendencies is that of focusing on “what we want” instead of “what we have”. A person who thinks they will be happier with more, finds that once they have more, it doesn’t satisfy. Wanting what we don’t have produces an endless cycle of undue stress in our lives.

Principle #6 – Secret of Contentment

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.” 1Timothy 6:6-7

How do we achieve contentment when our culture and everything around us tends to focus on immediate fulfillment? Advertisers usually stress the importance of how good you will feel rather than function of the product or service. That emotional appeal is tempting. We have to remind ourselves that great gain does not necessarily come from material things.

As George Fooshee so aptly states in his book, [You Can Beat the Money Squeeze](#), “People buy things they do not need with money they do not have to impress people they do not even like.”

Recognize the enemy. The devil’s mission is to divert us from serving Christ, and that may mean by planting seeds of discontent.

A worthwhile saying on contentment: Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.”

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The “B” Word

To budget or not to budget? The “B” word often conjures up thoughts of financial pressure, but a budget is actually a spending plan which provides a foundation for other types of planning in our lives.

Principle #7 – Develop a Budget

“Through wisdom is a house built; and by understanding it is established.” Proverbs 24:3

Prayerfully submit spending decisions to the Lord. Everything we possess is owned by God, and we should spend to please Him and not for a selfish purpose.

Whether you make \$8,000 or \$800,000 a year, a budget or spending plan helps you make better financial decisions. It enables you to keep an eye on your values and priorities.

You may ask, “If giving is so “right” and produces such joy and blessing, and if saving is so wise and produces a sense of well –being, why do I have such trouble doing it?”

The answer is... get into the habit of keeping records. You’ll know exactly what everything costs; you’ll know what your basic living expenses are; you’ll know what those additional lifestyle luxuries cost. This will help you develop a realistic plan or budget.

Once this habit of keeping records is developed, you will find freedom which comes from knowing you are living within your means. Many times the inability to save or increase giving is due to overspending caused by not knowing where your money is going.

Most of us approach the four things we can do with money in this order- lifestyle, debt, savings, giving. With a plan in place- a budget- we can reverse the order by joyfully giving first and allowing our lifestyle to follow. As Christian stewards, we need to establish our budget around our giving, not our lifestyle.

Ask yourself two questions:

- 1. Do I need it?**
- 2. Can I afford it?**

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Not With Your Money

Sometimes in today's culture it is hard to stay out of debt let alone take on someone else's debt. When we are in debt, we are in a position of servitude to the lender. Scripture's perspective of debt is clear. "Let no debt remain outstanding" Romans 13:8 NIV

Principle #8 – Don't Cosign

Cosigning directly relates to taking on debt in that you become responsible for the debt of another. *"A man lacking in judgment strikes hands in pledge and puts up security for his neighbor."* Proverbs 17:18

What's the background behind cosigning? In essence what a professional lender is saying is that after analyzing the loan, he sees no way that he will offer a loan unless he can get someone who is financially responsible to guarantee the loan.

Alarming statistics surround those who cosign a loan. Crown Ministries reports that a Federal Trade Commission study found that 50% of those who cosigned for bank loans ended up making the payment. Seventy-five percent of those who cosigned for finance company loans ended up making the payments! The statistics prove that the casualty rate is high.

If you cosign, the creditor can collect the debt from you without first trying to collect it from the borrower. If you aren't in a position to pay it, you can be sued and/or your credit rating could be damaged.

We need to understand the real implications of cosigning and the debt that we are assuming through this action. As Christians, we should help our friends and family to appreciate the position they are putting us in by asking us to cosign.

If a lender won't take the risk, should you?

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Who's My Real Boss?

The Scripture spells it out: *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all of your might."* Ecclesiastes 9:10. The Lord expects us to do the best we possibly can. There is value in work.

Principle #9 – Work Hard

Our real boss is the Lord, and He is pleased with hard work in pursuit of excellence. Our work should never be at a level that people equate with mediocrity. Our work is a reflection of our spiritual relationship with our Lord.

This does not mean that we have to be perfect and never make mistakes in our work. The Lord expects us to do the best we can using the gifts, skills and abilities He has uniquely given us.

Our work is a gift. It is designed to develop character. A job is not just a means to earn money, it is also intended to produce godly character in the life of the worker... whether we are doctors, homemakers, secretaries, salespeople, managers or blue collar workers.

Yet as important as working hard and diligently at what we do is, there also needs to be balance. Some people work so much that they neglect the other aspects of their lives. If our jobs demand so much of our time and energy that we neglect our relationship with Christ and/or our family, then we are working too hard. We are forgetting the importance of balance in our lives.

"Workaholics" must take precautions to guard against sacrificing what's really important. The gift of work is just one of many gifts which God has given us!

The most important question we need to ask everyday as we begin our work is: For whom do I work?

The answer is: I work for Christ.

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A Word to the Wise

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.” Proverbs 12:15

Principle #10 – Seek Godly Counsel

Some decisions deserve more attention than others because of their importance and long-term implications. Before buying a house, purchasing a car or considering any other significant financial decision, we should pray about it and seek counsel.

Where should we seek counsel? We know that the Bible is the living Word of God through which He communicates His direction and truths to all generations. That’s why it should be the first filter in the process of making a financial decision. As the Psalmist says, “Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.” (Psalm 119:24)

If we are married, our spouse should be our primary source of human counsel. Seeking the counsel of a spouse helps preserve our relationship. No matter the consequences of a decision, if we’ve made it together, our marriage is more likely to remain healthy.

Parents are a second source of counsel. They know us so very well and they usually have the benefit of many more years of experience to share.

Finally, a close Christian friend whom we trust and respect and who demonstrates wisdom is a good source of counsel. Caring about our well-being, they will ask us the “right” questions.

It is important that we don’t let pride be a deterrent to seeking advice. Each one of us is in need of wise counsel from time to time. It’s a great source of strength in the sometimes difficult process of decision making.

If you do not have someone to counsel you, try to cultivate a friendship with at least one godly person who can advise you when needed.

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