

Family Finances

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The Bible has a lot to say about money. It was Jesus's favorite topic. For those committed to a Biblical family, understanding and applying God's Word to our money is critically important. Money issues can tend to dominate your energy and thoughts. Sometimes this issue becomes so big that good intentions for family relationships get squeezed out.

How can you master your money so it does not master you? How can you turn your money from being a challenge to your spiritual and relational goals to being an area of victory?

STEP ONE: Be content and faithful in the little stuff

We often think the answer to our money problems is to have a little more. However, Solomon observed, "Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness." (Ecclesiastes 5:10, NLT). The writer of Hebrews adds, "Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have..." (Hebrews 13:5, NLT).

Being content with what you have doesn't mean God can't bless you with more. Two of the servants in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 learned the value of being faithful with whatever they had. To them the master said, "You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things." We learn from this parable that God wants to see what we will do with a little before He'll entrust us with more. Contentment is a key to God's blessing.

STEP TWO: Value people over stuff

In Romans 13:8 (NLT), the apostle Paul says, "Pay all your debts, except the debt of love for others. You can never finish paying that! If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill all the requirements of God's law." Most Christian financial advisers stress the value in eliminating and staying out of debt as much as possible. The less debt you have, the more you're able to focus on the "debt of love for others."

Focusing on relationships over things can cause you to reconsider your buying and work decisions. Isaiah 55:2 asks the question, "Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?" Do you ever feel like you're working hard to pay off debt for purchases that weren't essential and didn't even satisfy? How could you simplify your expenses and make them more consistent with your family priorities?

STEP THREE: Don't be controlled by fear

God tells us we shouldn't fear what the world fears (1 Peter 1:17 and 3:13-15). His Word tells us that God will provide for all our needs (Mt. 6:25-34). What would it look like if you really trusted God for your provisions rather than trying to "earn" everything? The more you look to Him for your security and provisions (1 Peter 5:7 and Philippians 4:19), the more you are directed to the eternal relationships around you (Ephesians 3:14-19 and John 13:34-35). Trusting God frees you up to invest in family and to give generously to other families who are praying for God's provision.

STEP FOUR: Write a family budget

A huge tool of the enemy is to confuse us about our finances and then to overwhelm us with all the details. Taking time to thoughtfully plan how expenses are handled can be a tool of freedom from financial stress.

STEP FIVE: Give God His part

God tells us to invest in eternal things and He tells us that our heart will follow where we put our money (Mt. 6:19-21). As well, God commands us to give to His ministry and then promises to bless us as a result. Giving to God is the only area where He challenges us to prove what He promises (Malachi 3:10).

Going Further - Resources

Recommended Books:

- *Master Your Money* (by Ron Blue) provides a Christian framework for becoming a good steward of the money God entrusts to us and outlines a life-season specific strategy for your family finances.
- *The Treasure Principle* (by Randy Alcorn) explores Jesus's teaching on our finances - something about which he had more to say than most topics, including heaven.

Recommended Website:

- www.crown.org is sponsored by Crown Financial Ministries and provides a variety of articles, online tools and resources for those who want to become more intentional about managing their money.

Personal Inventory:

Assess your financial health.

T F – You spend on the expectation your income will rise.

T F – You take cash advances on one credit card to pay off another.

T F – You spend more than 20% of your income on credit card bills.

T F – You almost always make only the minimum payment on your credit cards.

T F – You have trouble imagining life without credit.

T F – You often fail to keep accurate records of your spending.

T F – You don't know if you are saving enough.

T F – You put off savings until "things get better."

T F – Having several credit cards makes you feel more secure.

T F – You like to collect cash from your friends at restaurants and then charge the bill to your credit card.

SCORING:

4-5 True answers = yellow light = CAUTION

6-10 True answers = red light = STOP! Seek help to change some spending habits.