

...GAIN PEACE OF MIND BY PLANNING

Most people have problems with finances, but they just don't know why.

According to the latest surveys, over one-half of all families in America are presently experiencing financial difficulties. And the real truth is many do not seem to know why they are having these difficulties. If these type problems are so common, then it would be important to understand the reasons they exist.

BASIC CAUSES OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

The following is a listing of some reasons of financial difficulties. This listing can be a means of educating oneself in these most critical areas.

1. Failure to follow scriptural principles. The Bible is full of guidelines regarding financial principles. In fact, one half of all parables and one out of six verses in the New Testament deal with stewardship. Get the Bible and start an in-depth study of the guidelines and principles in the Word of God.
2. Failure to identify priorities. A person and family must identify their priorities if they are ever going to be successful in their financial life.
3. Failure to discipline. This horrible word causes people more problems than anything else in the world. Discipline must be exercised in every phase of a person's life and in the world of finances it is critical.
4. Failure to establish goals. A person who has no goal is a person without direction. A person without direction is going nowhere. A person must establish the financial goal for themselves if they ever want to arrive at a successful financial position in life.

5. Failure to control spending. A written control is necessary to control impulsive spending. Limits must be established and kept.
6. Failure to establish a budget. A budget is not a nervous breakdown on paper. It is a clear guideline of where your money comes from and where it goes. Do not negate the importance of a written budget...it is vital to anyone's financial success.
7. Failure to identify needs vs. wants. Everyone has desires. However, no one can allow desire to override the basic needs. A person must identify what is really necessary and then control impulses to over spend. To be successful you must identify your needs in order to be aware of how to spend money wisely.
8. Failure to adjust lifestyles. We live in a society that promotes spending and maintain a lifestyle that may not be conducive to their income. A person must adjust their lifestyle to live within their financial means.
9. Failure to resist credit buying. It is too easy to get a credit card today. It is must more difficult to pay off that credit card balance when a person has abused the card. Limits must be established to control spending and stay within reasonable limits of credit card purchases.
10. Failure to recognize the wrong counsel. A person can get any type advice anywhere, anytime. But the secret is getting the correct and competent counsel from those who know what is best.
11. Failure to be accountable to God. Too many are guilt of thinking that God is not concerned with their finances. God made you a manager of your possession. You are responsible for managing your finances
12. Failure to save. There will always be emergencies in life, and most of the time they will occur when you least expect them. For that reason, a person must establish disciplines in their financial life in order to save for the future.

These are only a few of the reasons people have difficulties in their personal financial lives. It is highly important that a person, a family, or a business establish proper guidelines to insure financial stability. One of the best guidelines for financial stability is to have a written plan that gives proper direction for the income and outgo of finances. In the financial world, it is called a budget.

CHRISTIAN EXPECTATIONS

Too often people are afraid to budget because it seems to be more trouble than it is worth. However, a budget is not a nervous breakdown on paper. It is an organized and systematic manner of controlling income and expenses so a person can recognize danger areas in their financial life before they happen.

Too many Christians find themselves in financial hardship. Why? We belong to the body of Christ and we have God on our side. If heaven is his throne, the earth his footstool; if He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, then why are his children struggling and finding it difficult to “get by” in this affluent society?

The secret to getting ahead is not from “have luck in the stock market” or “making that once in a life time investment” or even in “receiving an inheritance from a wealthy family member”. It is defined as *time!*

All the investments and inheritances one can attain will not be the solution if you don't take the time to plan and protect. A person must take the time to discipline themselves to have a written plan that will provide the guidelines of scheduling money in and out of the home, thus providing a means of protection from financial disaster.

A Christian should expect their finances to be in better shape than that of the average person in the world. Christians have the backing of the God of glory and His Word! One of the first things a Christian should do is take the time to investigate the scriptures concerning their financial situation. Notice some scriptures that give us guidelines for planning, preparation, and protection of finances.

Through Jesus Christ, we are delivered from the powers of darkness and have been set up in the kingdom of light. We are citizens of another world, God's Kingdom, and have become joint heirs with Jesus Christ. (Eph. 2:19)

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us... that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:13-14, NKJV)

As Children of God we have been released from the curse that is upon this world of darkness and have been given a divine insight into the world of God's children. Because of this, we have a spiritual guidance that cannot be found outside the realm of the spirit. We are positioned, as Children of God, to enjoy the full benefits of the Word of God, which included God's economics.

The Word of God will also provide the Christian with a shield from uncertainties and un-reliability of this world's economics. Christians should enjoy financial freedom. We have God on our side and in our corner. The problem is we don't take the time to investigate the scriptures to find the direction we need to implement wise and spiritual guidelines that assist in this vital area.

The Bible gives us many guidelines, that, if we would use them, would save us from heartache and pain...even financially. Pick up that Bible and use it. Study it. Follow it. God is concerned with how you live in this life. God expects you to, you need to expect it to work.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Someone said, "money is not everything", which may be true. But it sure is good to have some when you need it. A mother once told her daughter, "Don't just look for a man with money when you get ready to marry. Money won't bring you happiness." Then after thinking about it for a moment, she further said, "However, Neither will the lack of it bring happiness." So true in both regards.

While this world is so designed to require money, we need to learn how to keep and protect what we have been given. Money requires management. And God has made us managers of all his gifts and benefits to us. We must learn to better manage what we have if we expect to have more.

A person can have plenty of money and still be in financial difficulty. Money is one of those commodities that will not take care of itself...it requires the hands-on management of people.

Some Christians refuse to talk about money, however, the New Testament is filled with examples and scriptures regarding the use and management of money. In the Gospels, for example, Jesus tell a parable about money entrusted into people's care. This parable discussed the expectation that money is to be managed profitably. (See Matthew 25:14-30).

THE BLESSING OR CURSE

Why is it that every Christian who is working is not doing well financially well? Unfortunately too many Christians are not equipped with the scriptures and methods required to better manage their money. God has redeemed man from the curse of the law to give him liberty in all things. This includes money.

A person who calls himself a Christian must adhere to the scriptures in order to better prepare himself. Christians should not worry about money. They should not fret about their finances. But they should rely on the blessing of God to provide for them everything they need.

In the Chronicles, the young king Amaziah was entrusted with the army of Judah. He numbered them and prepared them for battle. However, with only three hundred thousand men ready for battle, the king felt that he needed more soldiers. So he contacted with Israel for one hundred thousand more men and paid one hundred talents of silver for their services.

The man of God came to King Amaziah and said that God did not want him to use the soldiers of Israel and if the king did so, God would not be with him. It was obvious what had to be done, however, the King questioned the man of God. “What then shall I do with the hundred talents of silver that has been paid for the service of Israel’s army.” The man of God replied, “God is able to give you much more than this!”

God is able...fully capable...ready and willing to give you much more if you will only learn to maintain his economic plan and manage what you have. You can have the blessings of God on you life by obedience.

REASONS FOR OUR WORKING

There are reasons that we have to work. Listed are some brief reasons that we are to work and the benefits we gain from it.

1. We work to provide for our Family. I Timothy 5:8 says, “*but if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.*”

God expects a Christian to labor to provide for family needs. Providing for family necessities is a part of keeping the faith. Failure to do so makes that person equivalent to an unbeliever.

2. We work in order to help others. Ephesians 4:28 says, “*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*”

Our generosity to help others is important to our Christian character. We must be concerned with the needs of other.

3. We work to render to God. Mark 12:17 says, “...render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

God gives us the 100% so that we might in turn give him 10%. By doing so, he blesses the 90% that is remaining.

STEWARDSHIP IS CRITICAL

God provides to us so that we might in turn protect what he has given us. Our God entrusts us to live within our financial means and ability. To live outside this ability, jeopardized the provisions of the family.

God owns everything but he gives us the use of it all. As we can be further trusted, he entrusts us with more. We become the managers of his blessings and provisions. If we can be trusted with what we have, how do we expect God to trust us with more? The management and care of God’s provisions is critical to future blessings.

According to Matthew 25:15-27, God expects dividends and a return on his investment. If we do not properly care for it and squander it, then we can expect to be cut off from the continued blessings of God. Luke gave us a clear indication of this in Luke 16:10 as he stated that the person who is faithful in little things is an indicator of faithfulness in larger things.

While earthly things are temporal, we still have to live here on earth. God gives us everything we need to live, survive, and enjoy the fullness of life. We must care for it with all diligence.

WHY A BUDGET?

A budget is the tool provided in accounting terms that gives us the proper indication of how we stand in our finances. Too often people refuse to prepare a budget because it seem cumbersome and boring. A budget can be implemented in

most home but give only 1-2 hours per month. That is not much time to have a clear indication as to where you stand financially. Not only will a budget give you a picture of where you stand, it will help you organize your bill paying so you don't get behind and have to pay late fees, and it will show you the debt you have so you can pay it off systematically.

A budget is a guide that tells you whether you are going in the right direction so that you can expect to meet your financial goals. You may have goals and dreams but if you do not set us guidelines for reaching them and you do not measure your progress periodically, you may end up going so far in the wrong direction you can never get out of financial difficulty.

- A budget lets you control your money instead of your money controlling you.
- A budget lets you control your spending habits.
- A budget allows you to save in a systematic manner.
- A budget allows you to meet your goals.
- A budget will tell you if you are living within your means.
- A budget will free up spare cash so you can use your money wisely.
- A budget helps the family reach realistic financial goals.
- A budget helps you prepare for emergencies (which will come).
- A budget reveals money spent unwisely.
- A budget will help you get out of debt.
- A budget will help you in your married life, family life, and help you worry less, which is what the Lord intended.

There are many people who do not use the means of a budget to track income and expenses. The reasons for not using a budget may be many, but a few more common ones are:

- Impatience – you want what you want...right now!
- Impulsive buying – Don't take the time to think about spending.
- Too far in debt – feel like there is no help regardless of what you do.
- Lack of discipline – ouch! We don't like discipline...even financially.
- Habits are hard to break – and too often we don't want to break them.
- No communication – secrets eventually come out however.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Developing and maintaining a budget is a FAMILY AFFAIR. If you are married, you must work together. If you have children, this is the proper time to teach them how to operate within their means.

To make a budget work, there are some things that must be attended to prior to spending.

Together you should:

- Decide on needed items and plan how much can be spent before going shopping.
- Always use a shopping list that has been approved by both spouses.
- Buy only the planned items.
- Compare prices and quality before buying.
- Use credit only when necessary for necessary items.
- Do not use credit for items that are not realistically needed.
- Decide together on a vacation spending
- Encourage each other of the benefits of saving
- Make realistic goals of being debt free
- Start gift shopping early and stay within a prescribed means
- Don't over spend just to make someone in the family feel good.
- Decide how much to save on a regular basis.

Set down together and discuss the family budget and include in the discussion the benefits of becoming debt free for the future.

The following provides a simple method of how to establish a budget.

1. Use the budget worksheets provided.
2. Go through your check book and/or bills for the last twelve months to fill in the categories on the worksheets.

3. Think about your hobbies and other activities you may enjoy and add these to your work sheet categories.
4. Go through your bank statements and/or pay stubs to calculate your monthly income. Enter this on the works sheets.
5. Add all other income such as interest income, dividends, bonuses, or other forms of income you may have.
6. For each expense category, establish a budget amount that is realistically reflects your actual expenses for the coming months. Put these at levels where it will enable you to save money.
7. Keep track of all expenses throughout the month and total these on the work sheets provided.
8. Subtotal all the income and expense categories including the monthly mortgage and notes you have.
9. Subtract the expenditures from the income to arrive at a net income.
- 10.If the net is negative, your expenses are greater than your income. You must change your spending habits to reduce your expenses.
- 11.If the net is positive, transfer as much as possible to a savings or investment account at the end of the month. Do not leave extra money in your checking account because it is too easy to spend it.
- 12.After you have tracked your actual spending and actual income for at least a three months, you can easily see your spending habits and identify where you can make cuts or start paying off debt.
- 13.Once you are comfortable with the budget process, take an indepth look at the overall budget. Locate your largest spending category, discuss how to reduce debt by reducing your spending habits. Plan for specified savings.
- 14.Up-date your budget of income and expenses on a monthly basis.

A budget cannot be maintained without the cooperation of all family members. One member of the family cannot keep information from another. Working together provide a spirit of unity in the home and helps control what happens in the area of finances.

THE BUDGET'S ATTITUDE

One of the top reasons that so many people, including Christians, fail at budgeting is simply attitude. If a person thinks of it as a penny-pinching sacrifice instead of a means for achieving one's financial goals, then it is unlikely they will stay with it. To increase the chances of a successful budget, it is important to work on the attitude.

If "budget" sounds too harsh...consider it as a "financial plan" for the home. The plan can help you get ahead; control spending, and save for future spending. Budgeting really does matter in the process to help one reach their goals and without some formal plan of working with the finances, goals and dreams can never be reached.

Money is a tool...and a tool that everyone needs in today's society. This tool can enable a person to reach their goals in life, however, until a person knows where their money goes and how it is spent, a conscious decision about how to use this tool effectively is impossible.

So it is important to get the right attitude and not give up. Quitting too soon or tiring of the process is simply a means of failure in reaching the potential goals and dreams one has.

BIBLICAL GUIDE FOR ASSISTANCE

The following scriptures give spiritual guidance for the finances of the home. Take the time to read these and study God's plan for financial survival.

Prosperity: Genesis 39:3; Psalms 1:3; Joshua 1:6-8; Luke 6:38; John 10:10

Provision: Genesis 41; Exodus 15; I Kings 17; John 21:2-6; Matthew 4:11

Giving: Deuteronomy 14:23; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23; Hebrews 7:1,2

Budgeting: Proverbs 22:3; 24:3,4; 27:12; Luke 12:16-21; Luke 14:28-30

Debt: II Kings 4:1; Psalms 37:21; Proverbs 1:17,18; 22:7; Romans 13:8

Co-Signing a note: Proverbs 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13

Waste: Genesis 41:36; Luke 15:13; John 6:12

Slothfulness: Proverbs 18:9; 24:30,31; Ecc. 10:18; Hebrews 6:12

Prudence: Psalms 112:5; Proverbs 8:12; 13:16; 15:5; Hosea 14:9; Amos 5:13

Business Life: Lev. 19:12; Proverbs 10:4; 13:4; 24:10; Romans 12:11,17; Luke 6:35

Saving: Proverbs 21:5,20; 30:24-25

Discipline: Matthew 7:13,14; Luke 9:51; Hebrews 12:11; II Corin. 8:11

OTHER RESOURCES:

Personal Finances for Dummies by Eric Tyson

Rich Dad, Poor Dad by Robert Kiyosaki

The One Minute Millionaire by Mark Victor Hansen

How to Get Out of Debt by Jerrold Mundis

A Step-by-step Guide of Financial Bliss by Ken Marinace

Talk your Way out of Credit Card Debt by Scott Bilker

The Family Financial Workbook by Larry Burkett

Debt Free by 30 by Jason Anthony

Frugal Families: Making the Most of Your Hard-Earned Money by Jonni McCoy

QUESTIONS:

Why do I need to have a financial plan for my home?

What are the causes of financial difficulties

Should Christians expect more from their financial plan than non-Christians?

Why must I be accountable to God and my family?

Am I truly blessed if I obey God's plan?

Why must stewardship be a part of my personal life?

Why should I budget?

Should all the family be involved in the plan?