

THE MINISTER'S FINANCES

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So, you are called to preach and now you wish to get your credentials with the United Pentecostal Church, International. Ministry is more than just getting behind the pulpit or teaching a Sunday School class. It must become a lifestyle and that lifestyle includes integrity, honesty, and fairness.

Each of these three ingredients consist of areas that are vitally important to the minister. Without them, a minister's reputation is tainted and no one will trust what he or she says or does. Without trust, a minister cannot effectively reach and touch the lives of people.

While there are many areas of concern that affect the minister's integrity, honesty, and fairness, none are greater than in the area of finances. The financial discipline and habits one creates becomes the means of being successful or unsuccessful. Every minister wants to be successful, so it is important to develop consistent financial habits that will govern and dictate the direction you go in the ministry. Discipline in this area is critical to maintaining the lifestyle that is consistent with the Word of God.

It is important for a minister to control his own personal finances, however, when the minister is privileged to take a role of leadership as pastor, evangelist, or official, he will be watched and critiqued in the area of finances. For example, a pastor becomes the administrator of the church and a vital area of administration is the financial stability of the church. A minister must adhere to the principles of good financial administration in order to allow the church to grow, thus growing himself.

Your financial obligations. A minister will have financial obligations because of the fact, it is a part of life. Not many people are born with a 'silver spoon' in their possession, so a person must come to terms with his financial responsibility. Regardless of a person's income, there will be times that it seems the financial burden is greater than one can bear. You've heard the statement, "Save for a rainy day." This is so true because there will be days when the storms will come and the rain seems to never quit!

You, as a Christian, are required to pay your bills and meet your obligations. One of the first obligations is that of paying tithe. To the minister, this is *not an option* regardless of how you receive your income. The minister must be the example for the saints and if the minister does not pay tithe, he can't expect the people to which they minister to pay tithe. While this may seem redundant to mention, a minister must be honest enough to pay his tithe and offering to the local church. An individual will never succeed financially unless they learn the principle of giving.

Of the basic principles of finances in the Word of God, the first is that of paying tithe and offering. According to Matthew 6:31-34, God promised provisions for His children. He can and will take care of us and in order to receive his care, we must understand that the promises of God are conditional. When we do what we are supposed to do, then God will provide for us.

Giving is a command according to Malachi 3:10 as stated, "*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts...*" The purpose of giving is to teach us to put God first. Deuteronomy 14:23 records that a person is to tithe of all their possessions... "*that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always*". Solomon says that our giving is considered as honoring God: "*Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

The Israelites brought the first portion of their harvest to the Lord God to acknowledge that He was the owner of their land. May we always give God the firstfruits of our income so that we may honor Him as Lord of our lives and possessions. By doing so, God will then pour out a blessing for us. I Samuel 2:30 gives us the impetus to grasp this principle, "*Them that honor me I will honor*". This is God's generous promise to all who faithfully, consistently, and generously give of their finances.

If a minister is going to be blessed by God he or she must be consistent in their giving. We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. Don't require something of the people of God that you yourself are not willing to do according to the scriptures.

This also includes that of meeting the obligation of the District and National Organization. Each minister must adhere to the guidelines of the manual of the UPCI and that includes meeting the financial obligation as stated. (See UPCI Manual, Article VII, Section 7). Annual dues are due and payable to the UPCI and each District has a specific financial plan. Failure to meet these obligations could be embarrassing not to mention the possibility of losing one's credentials. If you have questions regarding the financial plan of the District, do not wait until it is too late to do something about it; contact your District Superintendent or District Secretary for the proper information concerning your responsibility.

A minister must pay his bills. Not doing so means that you have cast a shadow on your integrity and character. A minister cannot positively affect the lives of other and maintain an honest lifestyle without paying their bills.

If you find yourself in a financial bind, and cannot meet your responsibility for a particular obligation, call the person to whom you owe. Discuss it with the person to whom you owe, but don't ignore it. In today's society, a person's credit score is more important than ever before. You want to maintain your financial credibility because the day will come when you may wish to purchase a home or other item that requires a credit report. A bad mark on your credit report or a low credit score may take years to correct.

Stay out of Debt. The second principle of God's financial plan is to control your debt. Unfortunately there are no scriptures that prohibit a Christian from getting into debt, but neither are there any that encourage it. It behooves the minister to be careful in this area of accumulating debt. While it may be necessary to secure a loan for an automobile or mortgage for a home, caution must be exercised so that you do not obligate yourself beyond your ability to meet that obligation.

First of all, a minister has a spiritual obligation to care for his family. According to scripture, he that does not take the proper care of his family is worse than an unbeliever. (See I Timothy 5:8) Allowing yourself to get caught into the debt trap will hinder you being able to care properly for your family which can certainly affect your relationship with your spouse and children.

Take caution in handling credit cards. Our society has become a credit card society in the past twenty years, and because of that it is too easy to get a new credit card. In a recent newspaper article in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, it has been proven that a person will purchase thirty-four percent more with a credit card than a person without one. That causes debt and the possibility of being too burdened to survive financially and spiritually. One of the greatest social problems of our society is that of credit card debt. Do not allow yourself to be caught up in the spending frenzy in that you feel you must have everything you desire and see.

Bankruptcy is not a viable option. A Christian should not consider the possibility of bankruptcy unless there are catastrophic circumstances. A minister must always be cautious in this area and before even considering the possibility of bankruptcy the minister should seek counsel with a professional advisor and also with his District officials. Bankruptcy is not the ultimate solution for getting out of debt because it ‘hangs over your head’ for many years afterwards and affects your financial potential.

If a minister finds himself in debt, then there are means to assist outside the realm of bankruptcy. Professional debt counselors and other similar non-profit organizations that deal with consumer debt are available to anyone at a nominal or no cost. Consult these professionals who are trained in this area and so that you can see the factual means of getting out of debt outside of bankruptcy.

Excess debt can hinder a person’s relationship with God. A minister has enough things to worry about and pray over without excessive debt to burden him down. Deal with your financial obligations diligently and you can live a life free from financial worry and prosper according to God’s will and plan for your life.

Saving is important. The third principle of God’s financial plan is to be faithful and consistent in saving. One of the most difficult things for a person to do is to consistently save money. We make all type excuses and come up with every reason imaginable to excuse ourselves from the lack of saving money. Yet most people know the benefit of saving even though they may not personally save in the manner they need.

Take time to study the life of Joseph, the first accountant, in Genesis 37-41. Joseph learned the benefit of saving and by doing so, saved not only himself and his family from ultimate destruction, but he provided the means for saving the people of God.

Failure to plan and save for the future can lead to severe consequences. Howard Shultz, founder of Starbucks said, “vision is what they call it when you see what other’s can’t”. You must be able to see the need that may present itself in the future. There will always be things to happen that will interrupt your lifestyle such as the car breaking down or the kids getting sick. A person must plan for this type consequence.

The reason most people don’t save it that they have just a small portion at present and it seems so useless to put it into some type savings plan. But small things become larger in time. A consistent plan of saving is a way to prepare for catastrophic and unforeseen circumstances and is also a means of alleviating worry about one’s financial future.

Solomon said in Proverbs 22:3, “*a prudent man foresees the difficulties ahead and prepares for them...* (Amplified Version). It takes discipline and perseverance to consistently save. It is virtually impossible for a minister not to save for his financial future if he will rely on the plan of God. God’s help; God’s principles; God’s concern all make consistent saving available.

Historically, we understand that God’s chosen people, the Jews, have always seemed to possess money. There is a reason for the fact that Jews seem to be among the wealthiest people in the world. It was an understanding in Biblical days that a man was to save enough money during his lifetime to be able to take care of a future generation if necessary. This way future generations would never be embarrassed nor do without the necessities of life. Each male would save and these funds would be passed on to future generations. Imagine the results generations and generations later. Saving is a part of God’s plan for His people’s security.

Notice the law of multiplying when it comes to saving money. If you are presently only able to save \$10.00 per week, with just a normal amount of interest accumulating with your savings, you would have the following amounts:

At the end of:	Amount saved with interest:
1 year	\$ 506
2 years	995
5 years	3,328

10 years	7,338
15 years	11,716
20 years	19,227

And this is just at \$10 per week! Look beyond the present and see the value of saving!

Plan for retirement. Not only does a minister need to save for the so-called ‘rainy day’, but he should also have a future retirement plan of action. Usually there are two reasons why a minister fails to plan for retirement. First of all too often we have the mentality that the church will take care of us when we get to retirement. Is it fair to put the total retirement burden on the church and a new pastor? A minister should establish a retirement plan (and the church should help fund it) during his earlier and peak years so that funds become available upon retirement. For a minister to think exclusively that the church is going to take care of him at retirement is totally impractical. I understand that the minister many times sacrifices, gives, and does without, however, this does not alleviate the responsibility for us to “prepare for the future”.

Secondly, many ministers never feel they have enough money to set something aside monthly or annually for retirement. It does not take much at first, just start a plan! If you are working at a secular job that allows for a retirement contribution, please take advantage of it. Many times the employer will contribute a matching amount and there is no better way to accumulate funds than utilizing a tax deferred retirement plan partially funded by the employer. If you do not work a secular job, then meet with the church and attempt to establish something simple and practical for your situation. It is never too early to start.

Finally, do not use the “rapture” as a means for not savings. Yes, the Lord is coming back, and we have to live each day as if he were coming that day. Yet we still have to plan for the future in case He does not come back in our lifetime.

Your living standards. How many times have we heard the statement, “you can not keep up with the Joneses”? We tell our children this when they want something that a neighbor’s child or saint’s child has and our child wants it. But the same is important for the minister to live by. Jesus said, “*Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*” (Luke 12:15 NIV)

The peer pressure of the minister is not a phantom philosophy...it is real. We are pressured, whether willingly or unwillingly, many times to attempt to stay up with the neighboring minister or a minister friend with whom we associate. A minister must live within his financial means regardless of what others do. Too often the person you watch as having more and better things is the person who is getting in debt. We must be careful of those old fashioned sins called greed and envy!

If you cannot afford a new car, there is nothing wrong with driving an older model. If you cannot afford to go to general conference, do not go into debt to impress another minister. Live within your means and this habit of discipline will eventually pay off. You will eventually get ahead of those who have borrowed and spent more than they were capable.

In order to live within your financial means, you have to identify your priorities. A minister should set with their spouse and identify what you really want and prioritize those things that are important. Do not just randomly spend...plan to spend.

In order to live within your financial means, you have to discipline yourself. We enjoy using that word when speaking to our children, but being practical and applying discipline to our own life is unpopular. Discipline in spending is necessary. Just because you want something, does not mean that you have to purchase it. Never hide a purchase from your spouse. Discipline means that both parties are open and honest with each other and they never hide spending or hide money from each other. Work together to control impulsive spending. Establish limits and live within those guidelines.

In order to live within your financial means, you must establish goals. What is it worth to you to get out of debt? Can you see one, five, or ten years down the road being free from the burden of financial difficulty? Do not negate the importance of having attainable goals that give you a direction to follow.

In order to live within your financial means, you may have to adjust your lifestyle. Everywhere you turn in this society (and in the church) we see a lifestyle that promote more and more spending. Our economy is based on spending. Our feelings are based on

spending. You cannot live a lifestyle beyond your means and be spiritually secure and free to work for God.

In order to live within your means, you need to be accountable. Primarily you are accountable to God for your finances. God provides and makes you the manager of his provision. Too often we are guilty of believing that God is not concerned with our finances, but the facts are he is. One out of every six verses in the New Testament and over one-half of all the parables deal with stewardship. This is simply the management of our life and what we do with it. You are accountable to God for all you have.

Financial planning and recordkeeping is a must! Most people have problems with finances, but they cannot understand why! According to recent 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 such difficulties. If these type problems exist and are so common, then it would be important to understand the reason for their existence.

Too many fail to plan and maintain the proper records because they do not feel they have the time or the expertise to do it. But neither of these reasons are legitimate. I have been asked many times the question, “how can I save money on my taxes?” Any tax preparer that has been in practice for any length of time will always say in response, “keep better records.” This means you must budget, have a written documentation of income and expense, and then stick with it. This is an important part of recordkeeping so that you will understand where you are financially and head off any problems.

Denise Matejic, a professional money manager of Rutgers University said, “I feel that much of the difference people see between what they have and what they need could be made up by financial planning and management.” Too many people mistakenly think that if they could just secure ten percent in more income they could get ahead and prosper. That may not be true because it becomes difficult to get an additional amount at times. However, it is proven that a person will have more spendable income if they just learn to manage and budget it wisely.

A budget is not a nervous breakdown on paper! It is a written, systematic plan of tracking money in and out of your life. A budget is a clear, concise guideline of where

your money comes from and where it goes. If you do not know how to establish a written budget, don't give up...consult someone to help you. It will pay off.

A budget is important because it will:

- Let you control money instead of money controlling you
- Let you control spending habits and set disciplines
- Allow you to save in a systematic manner
- Lets you meet your financial goals
- Show you if you are living within your means
- Free up extra cash to save or pay-off debt
- Reveal money spent unwisely
- Help you get out of debt
- Help you prepare for emergencies that will come
- Help you live a happy life, reduce your worries, and have a full life living for God

Render to Caesar. One of the least enjoyable things for most Americans to do is file and pay their taxes. However, even Jesus rendered unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's (Matthew 22:21). I have had the unfortunate task of seeing many, many ministers struggle because they did not file a tax return and/or pay their taxes. The penalties and interest assessed by the government can multiply to the extent that they exceed the actual tax.

I believe it is the responsibility of a Christian to file their tax return and pay their taxes. If you are uncomfortable in filing your own tax return, find a qualified tax preparer to assist you. Ministerial taxes are complex and in fact complicated. There are many tax advantages available to the minister, so secure the services of someone who is knowledgeable in the area of ministerial taxes. If you have for some reason, gotten behind on filing your return, do not allow this to continue. A qualified tax preparer can assist you in filing all prior years and even in some cases, help in getting tax liability removed or reduced. Continual putting off the filing of return can be costly and create problems more than one wishes to handle.

Be consistent in paying your taxes. In a tax audit case recently, I heard the auditor say, "most preachers do not pay their taxes on time...it's a shame to waste good money." The facts are that many preachers do not pay their taxes on time and it costs in additional

assessments of penalty and interest. Get on a cash basis for paying your taxes. Once again, a tax preparer can help set this up so that you become regular in the payment of taxes.

You do not have to worry about taxes. Too often the minister either gets behind in filing or paying and then the nights come for worry and the relationship between spouses is strained. By staying current and taking advantage of ministerial tax laws, one can by-pass the constant worry and struggle. Judge Learned Hand of the U.S. Court of Appeals said, “Over and over again courts have said that there is nothing sinister in so arranging one’s affairs, as, to keep taxes as low as possible. Everybody does so, rich or poor; and all do right, for nobody owes any public duty to pay more than the law demands...”

Stay current on your taxes. Take advantage of the ministerial tax law. Use competent and qualified professionals to help. You will be relieved of worry which allows you to devote more time to the ministry and not secular things.

Be careful. There are some things that a person can do to avoid falling into a financial trap. Briefly, review these items so you, as a minister, can be diligent and take care when dealing with finances.

1. Avoid ‘get rich quick’ schemes! This may include so-called ‘pyramid’ type plans and those plans that sound so good...in fact too good. Stick with what you know. Solomon said, “*Through wisdom an house is builded, and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*” (Proverbs 24:3,4). Do not allow a friend or associate to pressure you into investing into some program or scheme that usually never materializes as promised.
2. Never risk borrowed money. You cannot afford to speculate on money you will have to work harder to repay if the risk falls apart. Solomon said, “...*and the borrower is servant to the lender*” (Proverbs 22:7 NIV). When you borrow money be sure you can pay it back.
3. Never make quick decisions. If the person promoting the item does not want to give you time to think about it and discuss it with your spouse or other knowledgeable individuals, drop it quick! Solomon, who seems to be very wise in financial matters said, “*The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty*

comes surely to poverty” (Proverbs 21:5 NASV). If you are told that you must hurry and participate because someone else is going to jump at the chance and buy, then back away. There is always another opportunity waiting.

4. Seek good, wise counsel. “*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise*” (Proverbs 12:15) Wise, independent counsel can spot flaws in the plan. Not that friends may wish to help, but a professional will tell you the truth, guide you in the direction that is best for you, and will understand all the problems that could arise and will help you avoid them. In addition, always take time to discuss the matter with your spouse. You’ll never be sorry for doing so.
5. Establish your life by God’s Word. Seek God’s plan for your life. Pray over your finances. Discuss your financial matters with wise and competent spiritual leaders. Be patient and wait on God to supply as you follow His Word. “*The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.*” (Proverbs 10:22)

SUMMARY. Care must be taken in the area of finances. Some people seem to have that ‘knack’ for getting ahead while others must struggle to understand the principles of finances. Don’t allow yourself to get overburden...follow Godly principles and seek the will of God. Your God wants to help you and will.

As a minister, you can get ahead financially and should. God will bless you if you will do your part. God is more concerned in your finances than you are. Pray for his guidance and help and you might be surprised how He will guide you and provide your needs.

Scriptural References concerning finances:

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

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 12:15-21; Luke 14:28-30

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

Co-Signing a Note: Proverbs 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16

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

Slothfulness: Proverbs 18:9; Ecclesiastes 19:18; Hebrews 6:12

Business Life: Leviticus 19:12; Proverbs 10:4; 13:4; Romans 12:11; Luke 6:35

Saving: Joshua 37-41; Proverbs 21:5,20; 30:24,25

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

Other Resources for research and study:

Personal Finances for Dummies by Eric Tyson

Rich Dad, Poor Dad by Robert Kiyosake

The One-Minute Millionaire by Mark V. Hansen

How to Get Out of Debt by Jerrold Mundis

The Family Financial Workbook by Larry Burkett

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

Values & Virtues by Howard Hendricks & Bob Phillips

God's Little Lessons for Leaders by Honor Books

5 Steps to Financial Freedom by James Wise

The Leadership Lessons of Jesus by Bob Briner & Ray Pritchard

Wisdom & Work: A Biblical Approach to the Workplace by Kenneth Boa, & Gail Burnett

Proverbs by Solomon

Questions for considerations:

1. Why should the minister be concerned with finances?
2. What are the basis three principles of God's financial plan?
3. The purpose of giving is important. What is it?
4. Is it true that God will bless a person who follows His principles? Why?
5. For what reason must a minister pay his bills consistently?
6. Why should a Christian not consider bankruptcy?
7. What are the basic reasons a person should faithfully save money?
8. Jesus Christ is coming soon, why worry about retirement?
9. Who should you become accountable to concerning your finances?
10. What are the five reasons a person should be careful with their finances?

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