

The Bible & Your Money

Joel Parkinson
Alliance Christian Center

NLT 2



Hope Christian Fellowship
"Making Disciples who Live and Love Like Jesus"

13320 St Rt 7
Lisbon, OH 44432
330-385-HOPE

1909 Ellsworth
Salem, OH 44460
234-575-0162

43152 St Rt 39
Wellsville, OH 43968
330-362-0224

Scripture taken from the **HOLY BIBLE,**
NEW LIVING TRANSLATION, Second Edition
© 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.
Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers

© 1996 Alliance Christian Center, Inc.
670 West Main Street, Alliance, Ohio 44601

Copying this material in whole or in part is both permitted and encouraged for the benefit of the church. We ask only that this material not be copied and resold for profit and that the contents would not be altered without the prior permission of the author.

FORWARD

The Bible and Your Money is a discipleship module on the application of biblical principles to the Christian life. It is designed for self-study, but can be used in a mentoring or group context as well.

There are several ways that this material may be used in Small Groups or in the church.

- 1) A leader may assign one or more of these modules to individual Small Group members to be covered during the normal equipping times of the meetings. Such assignments should not preclude but should **follow** completion of the "Discovery Series" or at least *Discovering God*, and *Discovering Our Foundations*.
- 2) A leader may elect to cover this module as a group project. This should only be done if **everyone** in the Small Group definitely needs or wants instruction along these lines. Otherwise, it will be counterproductive to make everyone do it. If you do it as a group, have everyone complete a chapter before each meeting and cover a few of the discussion questions at the meeting.
- 3) This module may also be suitable for an outreach project for your Small Group. Have two to four members of your group start a separate Bible study on one of these issues using this material. Then invite unsaved friends and neighbors to participate. Use this opportunity to show that the Bible has the answers to their problems, to share the gospel with them as you are led by the Spirit, and to introduce them into your Small Group.
- 4) A leader may also simply use this material as a counseling resource as he/she sees needs arise in his group. Perhaps someone does not need his or her whole financial situation revamped, but just needs some pointers on budgeting. Then feel free to cover the chapter on budgeting without taking time to cover everything else.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES OF THIS WORKBOOK.....	7
THREE PERSPECTIVES OF MONEY	9
ESSENTIALS FOR PROSPERITY	15
EARNING A LIVING	21
GIVE TO GOD WHAT IS GOD’S.....	27
LIVING WITHIN YOUR MEANS.....	33
FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY	39
LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE	45
APPENDIX A— BUDGET WORKSHEETS	53
APPENDIX B— INSURANCE & WILLS	59
APPENDIX C— GLOSSARY OF FINANCIAL TERMS.....	31
APPENDIX D— BALANCE A CHECKBOOK.....	63
OPEN BOOK TEST	65

FEATURES OF THIS WORKBOOK

We have prepared this workbook for you to help you along the way of discipleship. There are several features built into this workbook you should be aware of.

- 1) It is designed for self-study. Although someone will help you through it, you will be doing most of the work yourself.
- 2) Most of the Bible verses are cited for you to look up rather than being quoted in the text for you. This is intentional in order to help you learn your way around the Bible for yourself.
- 3) The workbook is based on the New Living Translation (NLT) of the Bible. There are several good translations of the Bible available, but we chose to use the NLT because of its contemporary wording. If you do not already have an NLT Bible, you should get one to make your studies go smoother.
- 4) When you have completed the material in this study, someone in your Small Group (who has already gone through it) should review it with you. They will be available to answer any questions you have. Their main purpose will be to help you see the importance of what you learned for being a more effective disciple of Jesus Christ. You can also complete the test in the back, turn it in to the office and receive a Certification of Completion.
- 5) This particular study is a supplement to the other discipleship materials. Jesus said, "Where your money is your heart will be." Therefore how we handle our hearts and our financial matters is of great importance in the Kingdom of God.

THREE PERSPECTIVES OF MONEY



Attitudes Toward Money

At most, today's money is just a piece of paper. Usually it is nothing more than an electronic figure in some bank's computer. That's all! Nothing more! Money is neither backed by, nor represents, anything tangible. Its only value to you is that you have faith and trust that it will be of value to someone else that has something you want.

And yet, money can have a powerful influence in our lives. Financial strains are one of the leading causes of divorce. Money can ruin people with excessive debt or even bankruptcy. Money problems can virtually enslave us, forcing us to work long, hard hours to pay off bills or to support our liberal spending habits. It can hinder God's blessing in our lives because we fail to tithe. We may be denied the "true riches" of spiritual responsibilities because we have been irresponsible with worldly wealth. Greed can so consume our attention and love that we neglect other people, miss the kingdom of God, and find ourselves spending eternity in hell apart from God.

How can something as intangible as money have such overwhelming effects on people? The answer is not that money itself is powerful. It is not. The answer is, our own **attitude** toward money is powerful. There is nothing inherently good or bad about money. But as soon as we think there is, then we adopt a perspective that is bound to mislead us from the biblical walk God intends. And **that** is ruinous for our lives.

So it is critical to understand how the Bible views money and wealth before we make any attempt to master our own money matters. Once we have a good grasp of the general nature and purpose of money, then we can proceed to fix the particular problems we may have with it.

Note: For this module, you will need the ***New Living Translation, Second Edition*** to fill in the blanks.

Is money evil? Is it something that Christians should avoid? Not at all. The ideas that there is something unholy about wealth, that believers should take an oath of poverty, or that we cannot have money and salvation at the same time is foreign to the Bible.

DEUTERONOMY 8:18

But remember the LORD your God.

_____ is the one who gives you the _____ to _____, in order to fulfill the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath.

PROVERBS 3:9-10

_____ the LORD with your _____ and with the best part of everything your produce. Then, he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.

ECCLESIASTES 5:19

And it is a good thing to _____ wealth from God and the good health to _____ it. To _____ your work and accept your lot in life — this is indeed a gift from God.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17

Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly _____ us all we _____ for our enjoyment.

You see, there is nothing evil about money and wealth themselves. In fact, God wants to bless us and wants us to enjoy his blessings. So, **is money good?**

Money - Good or Evil?

Is wealth something we should eagerly seek after? Is the possession of wealth a definite sign of God's blessing upon our lives? Does it mean we are holy? Not at all.

PROVERBS 11:4

Riches _____
on the day of _____,
but right living can save you from death.

Money cannot help you escape God's judgment or get you into heaven. (See also, Proverbs 15:16, 16:8, 28:6.)

PROVERBS 22:2

The rich and poor have this _____
_____: The LORD made
them both.

Money does not make you a better person in God's sight. There are no "economic classes" with God.

ECCLESIASTES 5:10

Those who love money _____
_____ have enough. How
meaningless to think that wealth brings
true _____!

It is a waste to seek after wealth because your hunger for it will never be filled.

ECCLESIASTES 5:11

The more you have, the more
_____ come to help you
_____ it. . .

The fact is, expenses grow along with income. For example, many working mothers find that the cost of taxes, a second car, a new wardrobe, eating out for lunch and child care consume most if not all of the added income from her career.

ECCLESIASTES 5:12

People who work hard sleep well, whether they eat little or much. But the rich
_____ get a good
_____.

There are psychological burdens to building and maintaining wealth that weigh heavily on men (Prov. 13:8).

MATTHEW 6:24

No one can serve _____.
For you will hate one and love the other;
you will be devoted to one and
_____ the other."

You can only have one Lord and Master. Honoring one will neglect the other.

COLOSSIANS 3:5B

. . . Don't be _____, for a
_____ person is an idolater,
worshiping the things of this world.

Greed sees money as an object of worship in the place of God, making money our idol.

1 TIMOTHY 6:7

After all, we brought nothing with us
when we came into the world, and we
can't take _____
with us when we leave it.

Wealth has no eternal value.

1 TIMOTHY 6:10

For the _____
_____ is the root of all kinds
of evil. And some people,
_____ money, have
wandered from the true faith and pierced
themselves with many sorrows.

Our **attitude** toward money is what can be evil
(Prov. 28:20, Luke 12:15).

1 TIMOTHY 6:17

Teach those who are rich in this world not
to be proud and not to _____
in their money, which is so
_____. Their trust
should be in God, who richly gives us all
we need for our enjoyment.

Money - A Tool

Money is neither good, nor evil. **Money is simply useful.** It is a tool that God uses to provide for our needs and bless us with material comforts. It is a tool we can use to support our physical needs and to bless those around us. Money is a **means** not and **end**. In other words, money is neither something to be avoided nor something to be kept. It is something to be used.

PROVERBS 11:25

The _____ will _____; those who refreshes others will themselves be refreshed.

PROVERBS 11:26

People curse those who hoard their grain, but they bless the one who sells in _____ of _____.

Money is a medium or channel for transferring blessings and meeting needs. To the extent it is used productively, the people using it will benefit.

PROVERBS 31:18

She makes sure her _____ are _____; her lamp burns late into the night.

Monetary profits are useful for buying what we need. They allow us to buy food, clothing, shelter, heat, lighting, etc.

LUKE 16:9

Here's the lesson: Use your _____ to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.

Wealth is useful for extending the kingdom of God. I do not mean that we can buy salvation. Nor do I mean we can bribe people to get saved. But financial support of the church, supporting missionaries, spending money to entertain and befriend unbelievers, and meeting the financial

needs of the lost creates an environment where people have an opportunity to hear and receive the gospel.

LUKE 16:11

And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, _____

_____ you with the true riches of heaven?

God often uses worldly wealth to test us. Depending on how we handle it, he may give us greater responsibilities.

ACTS 2:44-45

And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and _____ the money with _____

_____.

We use money to bless others.

I THESSALONIANS 4:11

Make it your goal to live a quiet life, _____ your own business and _____ with your _____, just as we instructed you before.

Earning money allows us to be free from dependency on others. There is nothing wrong with receiving help when we need it, but our goal should be to be on the giving end, rather than to receive (*see Acts 20:35, Eph. 4:28*).

Money is **useful** for buying what we need. Money is **useful** for blessing others in need. Money is **useful** for spreading the gospel. Money is **useful** as a test for faithfulness. Money is **useful** to free us from dependency. But it is only useful if we use it.

Proper perspective

As I said before, money is not powerful, but our attitude toward it is. When we find that our marriages, careers, or lives are ruined or controlled by money, we have to ask ourselves where we have gone wrong with our attitudes. Perhaps we love money and possessions somewhat. This may make us work too hard or live beyond our means. Perhaps we hate money subconsciously. We feel guilty for spending money on something for ourselves. We believe that earning money with a job somehow shows a lack of faith in God's provision. Such attitudes can lead to unpaid bills, poverty, or even laziness with respect to work.

Sometimes our attitudes toward money are complex and contradictory. Read **Acts 4:34-5:11**. Ananias and Sapphira had a problem. On the one hand, they felt they **should** give away all the money they made because other people did so. On the other hand, they **wanted** to keep some of the money for themselves (**Acts 5:1-2**). They both hated and loved money at the same time. This tension led them to lie which is why they were struck dead (**Acts 5:4**). In fact, the money was at there "**disposal**", meaning they could **use** it as they saw fit within biblical principles.

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON MONEY AND WEALTH

MONEY-HATING PERSPECTIVE	MONEY-USING PERSPECTIVE	MONEY-LOVING PERSPECTIVE
Money is evil. (Deut. 8:18)	Money simply is, but can be used or abuse.	Money is loved. (I Tim. 6:10)
Money is worthless. (Luke 16:10-11)	Money is useful. (Luke 16:10-11)	Money is priceless. (Luke 12:20-21)
Money is not mine at all, but God's. (Acts 5:4)	Money is yours to use within God's precepts. (Acts 5:4)	Mine, mine, mine...All mine! (Matt. 6:19-20)
We must take an Oath of Poverty. (I Tim. 6:7)	Money is intended to bless us and others. (I Thes. 4:12, Luke 16:9)	Financial wealth is a God-given right. (Phil. 4:12)
We should never ever get rich. (Deut. 8:18)	We should act wisely with what God gives. (Mal. 3:10)	We deserve to get rich quickly. (Prov. 13:11)
We must give away all we have.	We must spend money by God's principles. (Matt. 6:33)	We should hoard our money for ourselves. (Prov. 11:24-25)
We do not need a budget if we are led by the Spirit. (Prov. 22:3)	We must budget our spending according to God's principles. (Mal. 3:10)	We can budget our spending ourselves without God's help. (Prov. 3:5-6)
If I am lazy, God will still provide for me. (Prov. 12:24)	We must work hard, yet trust in God, not our own ability to work. (II Thes. 3:10)	If I work hard and save wisely, I will be secure. (I Tim. 6:7)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Languages often have several words for things that the culture values. What does it tell you about American culture that our English language has so many formal words ("money", "cash", "currency" "dollars", etc.) and slang words ("bread", "greenbacks", "bucks", etc.) for money?

Which perspective of money do you think the following common phrases tend to imply? "It's only money." "Easy come, easy go." "A penny saved is a penny earned." "The almighty dollar." "Money makes the world go around." "You can't take it with you." "Bring home the bacon."

What are the specific financial problems that you face? Making ends meet? Paying bills on time? Excessive debt? Lack of savings and investing? No job? Compulsive spending? "Shoooooooooping", as my wife likes to call it? Lack of tithing?

How have these financial problems adversely affected your mood? Your self-respect? Your job? Your marriage? Your children? Your devotional or church life? Your security and optimism for the future?

How can solving your financial problems relieve other problems you have?

Given your troubles, which perspective of money do you think you follow? The money-hating? The money-using? The money-loving? How does your attitude toward money have to change before you can deal effectively with your financial difficulties?

What are some steps you can take to change your attitude toward money? Scripture memory? Bible study? Prayer? Repentance? Self-discipline? Personal accountability with someone you trust?

Will you attack your money attitudes **NOW** and bring them in line with the biblical perspective?

ESSENTIALS FOR PROSPERITY



To Tithe or Not to Tithe

MALACHI 3:10

"Bring all the _____
into the storehouse so there will be
enough food in my Temple. If you do,"
says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will
open the windows of heaven for you. I
will pour out a blessing so great you
won't have enough room to take it in!
_____! Put me to the
test!"

This single verse encapsulates the keys to prosperity. Obey it in letter and principle and blessing will be yours. It is a promise of God. It is a statement of fact.

Unfortunately, many people read **Malachi 3:10** incorrectly or, at least, incompletely. It is sometimes twisted to promise monetary wealth when this it does not do. Accordingly, I wish to outline how to achieve "financial fitness" by drawing certain truths from this verse. Then I will elaborate on these things to give the practical steps to the prosperity we all want.

The result of **Malachi 3:10**. The very first thing that needs to be pointed out is what the **result** of the promise is in **Malachi 3:10**. We must have a clear picture of what it is God is promising. Otherwise, we are likely to uphold our end by tithing only to be disappointed when God gives us what he promised and not what we thought he promised. So note: God promises us **blessing** not **money**! He will "pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in!" It is true that this might include financial wealth but it might not. In the context (**verse 11**), the Lord talks about blessing the crops of Israel. God nowhere in the Bible promises to make every tithing Christian into a millionaire. He promises to bless us and leaves the nature of this blessing somewhat indefinite.

This blessing may take on many forms. First, we can at least count on God providing for our needs. This is the substance of the prayer in **Proverbs**

30:7-9 and the promise of Jesus Christ in **Matthew 6:25-34**. We know for a fact that the Lord will take care of our basic needs for food and clothing (**Mat 6:31**). But let's not confuse needs for "greeds." Neither the promise of **Malachi 3:10** nor of **Matthew 6:33** assures us that we will eat fine foods or wear stylish clothes. They do not mean we will have large bank accounts or every convenience available in the modern age. We will be able to live a comfortable life and that is all that is definitely promised here.

Another type of blessing from God is spiritual. By showing our faithfulness and obedience through tithing, the Lord might graciously bless our relationships and responsibilities. "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (**Luke 16:11**). True riches are found in persons, not things. If the Lord multiplies our friendships or our ability to touch people's lives, we have gained much more of value than money. This is not to say that tithing will in itself get our loved ones saved and raise us to a position of great spiritual influence. But, it is to say that how we deal in our finances is a test and if we fail the test we are virtually assured of failing in other spiritual endeavors. **Luke 16:11** says that proper use of money is necessary to attain true riches, but it is not sufficient to insure it.

We might also be blessed by the Lord working Godly character in us. Paul says that "Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth." (**1 Tim. 6:6**). To give financially to the Lord's work has a profound effect in diminishing or eliminating our own greed and selfishness. Paul says that **contentment** is gainful and **great** gain at that! How often we scorn the happy and "stupid" poor man who is not motivated to build a fortune when in fact he may be better off than the tycoon who never finds satisfaction in his financial empire. The fact is that contentment is more scarce than money and should be the more treasured commodity.

A Formula for Success

Finally, we **might** receive monetary wealth as a blessing. The Lord does choose to make some Christians rich financially. And there is nothing wrong with such wealth. King David was a tremendously wealthy and godly man. Yet money should not be expected. Paul was also a godly man and not financially rich at all. But if we have our needs met, if we have received the true riches of vital friendships and spiritual responsibilities, and if we have attained godliness with contentment in these things, will we care that we are not multi-millionaires? I think not since contentment will preclude such aspirations by definition.

So the first thing to be noticed about **Malachi 3:10** is that the promised result of tithing is an indefinite, though enormous blessing. This will, no doubt, involve the fulfillment of our basic needs, but beyond this, the Lord will surprise us.

The Conditions of Malachi 3:10. "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple." (**Mal. 3:10a**). The obvious condition for God's promised blessing in this verse is that we tithe. A tithe is God's requirement (**Mal. 3:6-10**), of one-tenth (**Deut. 14:22**), on everything we earn (**Lev. 27:30**) in acknowledgement of his provision (**Rom. 11:16**) to support the work of the Lord (**Num. 18:21**). We will cover tithing in more detail in another chapter. But for now, I want to look closer at the text to show that it implies three distinct conditions for prosperity instead of one.

- **First we must tithe.** But this involves more than the mere giving of ten percent to the church. It also involves a general obedience to God's commands. That is, we must have biblical **PRIORITIES**. It is not so much that giving ten percent is "magical" in itself as it is that giving ten percent is in obedience to God's will.
- **Second, we must continually tithe.** It says, "Bring **all** the tithes into the storehouse..." If we simply tithe once or twice on our paychecks and stop that does not qualify us for God's continued blessing. Our continued

tithing is the condition for continued blessing. This involves **PERSISTENCE**. Although the persistence implied by **Mal. 3:10** only applies to tithing, we will see later on that persistence is needed in other areas as well to maintain prosperity.

- **Third, God tells us to tithe for a purpose:** "so there will be enough food in my Temple." God wants the money for a certain reason. Whether it be to physically feed the needy or spiritually feed the church by paying the salaries of those who labor in the word, God has a plan for the church's income. Again this is specifically speaking of an intention on God's part in this verse. But it points to the fact that we also must have **PLANNING** for our finances if we are to successfully attain prosperity.

Even though it is dangerous to think of prosperity in terms of a formula, the following equation will illustrate the necessity of three factors in the multiplication of prosperity:

Notice that each of the three factors are multiplied and not added. You cannot, for instance, have

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{PRIORITIES} \\ \text{X PLANNING} \\ \text{X PERSISTENCE} \\ \hline = \text{PROSPERITY} \end{array}$$

right priorities and planning but no persistence and expect positive results. Tithing and planning to tithe and failing to continue to tithe equals zero continued blessing. We need all three for success and we will now consider an elaboration of these three factors in achieving prosperity.

Priorities & Planning

Priorities - Setting biblical priorities is the initial step to prosperity. This must be done before planning or persisting because it defines our plan and what we persist in. Tithing has already been mentioned as a financial priority and necessity. Yet there are other priorities that must be kept in mind.

Jesus said, "...give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God." (**Mat. 22:21**). This lays down the general principle of giving what is due to everyone as Paul elaborates in **Romans 13:6-8**. On the one hand, we **must** give to Caesar, that is, pay our taxes to the government (**Rom. 13:7**). But this **cannot** be at the expense of giving to God what is God's. Just because Caesar demands a large sum is no excuse for diminishing or eliminating our tithe. God's requirement is not dependent on Caesar's requirement. Both requirements must be met. But Jesus, in **Mat. 22:21**, does not mean to say that only God and Caesar have claims on our income. He is simply saying that we must pay what is owed to anyone just as Paul says in **Romans 13:7**.

Based on these observations, we can list at least four financial priorities in the following order:

- Tithing to God (Mal. 3:10).
- Paying taxes to the government (Rom. 13:7).
- Paying our bills to creditors (Rom. 13:8).
- Personal spending (Acts 5:4).

The order is important. No authority is higher than God's, so no claim on our income is greater than His. Next, the government is an authority because it is instituted by God (**Rom. 13:1**) and has a legitimate claim to some of our money as indi-

cated by Jesus in **Mat. 22:21**. Third, we must be faithful to pay our bills. "The wicked borrow and never repay,..." (**Psalms 37:21**). It is an evil thing to borrow money or secure goods and services without paying for them. Finally, what is left is at our disposal. With the money at our disposal we may give offerings beyond our tithe, give to the poor, buy a house, or go on vacation. How we spend this leftover money will largely be determined by our personal priorities and preferences. But the money left to our disposal is only that which is left over after paying our tithes, taxes and bills.

Planning - After determining our priorities, we must plan how to meet them. This involves setting a budget and deciding on savings and investments. Without a budget, we have no road map on how to reach our desired priorities. The budget gives us a framework to use in achieving these desired goals. Perhaps the rich can do without a budget, but most of us cannot. I once counseled a married couple whose main strain in their relationship was money matters. I advised them to establish a budget rather than "being led" to make individual expenditures. They refused to prepare a budget and I could not help them. Today they are divorced. Vague advice on what to do with money without a concrete budget is worthless and futile.

The second aspect of planning is savings and investment. The alternatives in this field are beyond the scope of this chapter. Details of both budgeting and investing will be covered later. Yet it should be mentioned that savings and investing should form an integral part of the budget rather than receiving the crumbs that are accidentally left over. I might add that you should save toward a particular goal and withdraw money only for that purpose. Furthermore, investments should be limited to what you understand.

Persistence

Persistence - "...Those unwilling to work will not get to eat." (**2 Thes. 3:10b**). This principle is specifically directed to those who refuse to earn a living by gainful employment. No one who is able-bodied and unwilling to work has any legitimate right to expect a handout from the church or state. But it is also true that if a man will not work at his budget or at his savings that at some point he may not eat. We must be persistent in all of our labors and financial matters to achieve long term success.

Therefore, we must **persist** in our job. "Lazy people are soon poor; hard workers get rich." (**Prov. 10:4**). "Work brings a profit, but mere talk leads to poverty" (**Prov. 14:23**). We must **persist** in our savings. "Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows over time." (**Prov. 13:11**). We must **persist** in following our budget. To take some poetic license with **Proverbs 29:18**, "When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is joyful."

Previously, we looked at three **attitudes** toward money. We must shun the money-hating and

money-loving attitudes and adopt the money-using attitude. In this chapter we discussed three **actions** with money. We must have priorities, planning and persistence. We need one and only one attitude toward money, but we need all three actions with money:

PRIORITIES
X PLANNING
X PERSISTENCE
= PROSPERITY

Often our attitudes affect our actions. One can hardly expect someone who "hates" money to be motivated to set priorities, plan and persist. Neither can one be expected to adopt Biblical priorities when he or she "loves" money. So our attitudes and actions concerning money go hand-in-hand. Together they will lead us into Biblical prosperity.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What kind of prosperity is it that God **promises** us? To what degree is it financial? Spiritual?

What kind of prosperity have you sought or desired? How does it differ from biblical prosperity? How do your goals need to change?

Have you ever felt guilty about desiring prosperity? Have you ever felt great wealth was your "right" either as an American or as a Christian? Do you think that these attitudes toward prosperity are the result of a wrong attitude toward money or a wrong understanding of prosperity? Why?

Do you believe that you have biblical prosperity? Are your needs met? Are you faithful with what you have? Are you godly? Are you content?

If you are not prosperous, which actions with money do you think you have neglected? Biblical priorities? Planning? Persistence?

Why have you neglected these actions with money? Because of a wrong attitude toward money? You don't know how? A lack of self-discipline?

Why is it so important to prioritize **and** plan **and** persist with money? Are you willing to give attention to all three of them from now on?

EARNING A LIVING



Work!

Like it or not, the first step toward achieving biblical prosperity is to **work**. We must earn a living through gainful employment. We must put effort into our budget and investments. Even outside the financial realm we must actively serve others both within and outside the church.

The Bible rebukes those who are lazy in getting or working a job:

PROVERBS 10:4

Lazy people are soon _____;
hard workers get rich.

If you are able to work but refuse to get a job, you have no right to expect anything but poverty.

PROVERBS 12:24

Work hard and become a
_____; be lazy and be-
come a _____.

Eventually, laziness will catch up to people. They will become virtual slaves to those they owe money.

PROVERBS 18:9

A _____ person is as bad as
someone who

_____.

Here the Bible puts the destructive and the lazy in the same class because neither one is productive.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:10

Even while we were with you, we gave
you this command: "Those unwilling
_____ will not get _____
_____."

Read verses **11-15 of 2 Thessalonians** as well. Not only are the lazy not entitled to charity from Christians, but Christians are **obliged** not to give to those who are genuinely lazy.

Laziness can take on several forms. There are those who simply and openly refuse to work. But, there are also those who find feeble excuses for their laziness. They dream of the "ideal" job. They insist on waiting for the "right" job. They want to do something "fun." They expect to be paid exceptionally well for their work. So they pass up the opportunities to work that really exist for these fantasies. The Bible exposes these "wait and see" attitudes as veiled laziness:

PROVERBS 12:11

A hard worker has plenty of food, but a
person who _____
_____ has no sense.

PROVERBS 14:23

Work brings profit, but _____
_____ leads to poverty.

It's your own fault if all you do is talk about getting a job and you find yourself wanting.

PROVERBS 28:19

A hard worker has plenty of food, but a
person who _____
_____ ends up in poverty.

Of course, the Bible distinguishes between laziness and inability. Christians who are unable to work or can't find a job should be helped by others. But they should be **willing** to do something productive. A good test is to see if they will do some odd jobs around the house or the church in return for your help. It is not so much that the giver is expecting something in return for what he gives. Instead, he is looking to see what attitude the needy has toward working. Those who are willing to work should be helped well above and way beyond what they can realistically earn with the odd jobs you offer. Those who are unwilling to work are not entitled to anything at all.

Types of Work

While the Bible clearly says that we should earn a living with productive work, there are several excuses given by some Christians to avoid work. Before addressing these excuses directly, I want to make some distinctions between **kinds** of work. Most of the excuses for not working that people "find" in the Bible confuse the type of work in question. There are at least five kinds of work in the Bible:

Five kinds of work in the Bible:

- 1) **Physical exertion of any kind.** This includes things like gathering food (*Exod. 16:26*), lighting a fire (*Exod. 35:3*), or gathering wood (*Num. 15:32*) whether or not you are paid for the effort. This is the kind of work that was forbidden on the Sabbath day. Under the Old Covenant, the Sabbath meant resting from all work, whether or not it was something you were paid for. But, under the New Covenant, we are not obliged to observe the Sabbath (*Col. 2:16-17*).
- 2) **Employment by someone else.** This means you work for another person who pays you. While the Bible doesn't require that you work for someone else, it clearly approves of employment as a means of earning a living. Jesus approved of employment in the parable of **Matthew 20:1-16**. John the Baptist encouraged tax collectors and soldiers to continue in their secular professions (*Luke 3:12-14*).
- 3) **Physical or mental effort for profit.** While this would include employment, it also includes what we would call "self-

employment." The apostle Paul, for instance, worked as a tentmaker (*Acts 18:3*) to support himself (*1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8*). We likewise have an obligation to work for a living (*Eph. 4:28, 1 Thes. 4:11-12*). But it doesn't matter morally whether we work for someone else or not.

- 4) **Doing good deeds or the right things.** The whole Bible requires that Christians do good deeds out of faith. We were created in Christ to do good works (*Eph. 2:10*). Our faith produces good works (*1 Thes. 1:3*). And faith without works is dead (*James 2:26*). These good deeds are doing the right things for the right reasons. While such good deeds might involve physical exertion or earning a living, they also include obedience to many other commands of God.
- 5) **Doing good deeds to merit God's favor.** While we should do good works, we should not do them to earn salvation. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works (*Eph. 2:8-9*). Indeed, we are supposed to repent of "dead works" (*Heb. 6:1*) which are deeds and rituals done to earn "brownie points" with the Lord.

The Bible makes no moral distinction between the first three kinds of work. All three were prohibited on the Sabbath under the Old Covenant. All three are permitted on the Sabbath under the New Covenant. And all three are generally approved of in the Bible. There is a moral distinction made between the last two kinds of work. But the distinction between "good works" that are good and "good works" that are bad lies in **why** we do them, not in **what** is done.

Excuses

Having made these distinctions in types of work, we are ready to examine some of the excuses sometimes given not to work for a living.

EXCUSE #1: We must trust in God's provision.

Jesus tells us, **Matthew 6:25** "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?" (**Mat. 6:25**). The gist of **Matthew 6:25-34** is that we should trust God, seek His Kingdom, and He will provide for us. Some people take this to mean that we do not need to work and that, in fact, working is a denial of God's provision. However, a close reading of **Matthew 6** will show Jesus never condemns work. The whole passage has to do with attitudes like worry and trust not with behavior like idleness and work. So trusting in God does not preclude the need to work. Indeed, it is God "...who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath." (**Deut. 8:18**).

EXCUSE #2: We are saved by grace, not by works.

Paul wrote, "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." (**Eph. 2:8-9**). Does this mean that if we are saved we should not work? Absolutely not! For one thing, **Ephesians 2:10** goes on to say, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." So, what is an issue is the motivation or reason for works. We do good works because they are good, not to earn salvation. For another thing, working a job is not what Paul is talking about. To use **Ephesians 2** as an excuse not to work confuses employment with good deeds.

EXCUSE #3: We should be able to depend on other Christians.

The Bible clearly says that believers have a moral obligation to help others in need. Some folks wrongly assume that they may depend on charity from other Christians without seeking a job. But the only obligation we have is to help people in genuine need (those who cannot work or cannot find work). There is no obligation to help the lazy. We have already looked at **2 Thes. 3:10** which says, "Even while we were with you, we gave you this command: 'Those unwilling to work will not get to eat.'" Moreover, we are morally obliged **not** to give to those who are persistently lazy. Finally, every Christian has the moral obligation to make it their goal to be free from financial dependency on others (**1 Thes. 4:11-12**). So it is a wrong attitude to refuse to work because you think other Christians must provide for your needs.

EXCUSE #4: We are called to a Sabbath rest from work.

Finally, **Hebrews 4:4-11** talks about a Sabbath rest for the people of God. We are to make every effort to enter that rest (**verse 11**) which is a rest from our works (**verse 10**). So should Christians quit their jobs? Not at all. **Hebrews 4** is talking about resting from good works in the sense of not striving or working for our salvation. It is parallel to **Ephesians 2:8-10**. Since we are saved by grace, we can rest from meritorious labor. But, this does not mean we rest from all work. If it did, it is not so much our jobs that we must end, but all work of any kind. Remember that the law prohibited even cooking on the Sabbath. So if **Hebrews 4** extends the Old Testament Sabbath from one day out of the week to every day, we could never work at our jobs, but neither could we do housework or cook meals. In short, we would starve.

So, you see, there is no biblical excuse for refusing to work.

Goals for Work

The Christian goal for hard work is not necessarily to become wealthy in the worldly sense. "Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich. Be wise enough to know when to quit. " (**Prov. 23:4**). So, there is nothing biblical about being a "workaholic" or holding down several jobs to "climb the economic ladder." The goals for hard work are to support a reasonably comfortable lifestyle, to be able to help others in need, and to achieve relative financial self-sufficiency.

The goal of a comfortable lifestyle:

ECCLESIASTES 5:19

And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To _____ your _____ and accept your lot in _____ — this is indeed a gift from God.

The goal of helping others:

EPHESIANS 4:28

If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good _____, and then give generously to others in need.

The goal of self-reliance:

1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12

Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not Christians will respect the way you live, and you will not need to _____ on others."

Remember that these are **goals** for work. You may not achieve all three of them immediately or at the same time. It may take several years of hard work before you come to the point of abun-

dance where you may enjoy your possessions, freely share with others, and be financially self-sufficient. In the mean time, there is nothing wrong or ungodly with being helped by other Christians (**Acts 2:45, 4:32-35**). But, it is clearly unbiblical and ungodly to rest in a state of dependency on other people.

There are several practical steps you can take to find a job if you are out of work. Look in the classified ads in the newspaper. Look for "help wanted" or "now hiring" signs at stores or restaurants you pass by and fill out applications. Ask friends about openings where they work. Prepare a resume if you are a professional. If you cannot find a job, begin with odd jobs like mowing the lawn, shoveling snow, or cleaning house for people you know or in your neighborhood.



You must be willing to start small, perhaps even with a minimum wage job. Almost everyone I know with a good job or career, even well paid professionals, began at "the bottom". If you refuse to start small, you may never get a job. If you grumble and loaf on a low-paying job, you are virtually assured of never getting a raise, a promotion, or a good reference. At best you will be stuck there. At worst, you will be fired. But, if you start small and do good work with a good attitude toward your boss, you will inevitably benefit from it. God blesses our faithfulness with small things (**Luke 16:10-11**).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What kind of jobs have you had in the past? Which ones did you like and why? Which ones did you dislike and why? Do you think you disliked a job because it was bad or was it bad because you had a bad attitude?

Do you presently have a job? Does it pay you "enough"? How much of your financial difficulties are the result of a lack of work? How much are they the result of unfaithfulness with the work you do have?

What is your general attitude toward work whether it be at home, for church or on the job? Are you lazy? A willing worker? A "workaholic"?

How do you need to change your attitude toward work? What steps can you take to make this change? How has this chapter helped?

Have you ever used an excuse other than inability to try and justify not getting a job? Are these excuses are wrong? What is true "inability"?

How do the three goals of a comfortable living, sharing with others, and financial self-reliance help put work into perspective? How do they push us out of laziness? How do they restrain us from being over-worked? Which goal(s) do you need to focus on more?

What steps are you going to take now to actively seek a job or to improve your attitude and effectiveness on your present job?

GIVE TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S



What is a Tithe?

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!" (**Malachi 3:10**).

In Chapter 2 we looked at **Malachi 3:10** to glean some general principles of achieving biblical prosperity. One general principle was to adopt biblical priorities with our money. Obviously, one specific priority needs to be tithing. What exactly is a "tithe"? Let's take another look at **Mal. 3:10** to see what a tithe is.

"**Bring** all the tithe." Notice that **God is speaking** through the prophet Malachi here. So, what we have is a **command** from the Lord to tithe. The first thing we need to realize is that a tithe is God's requirement. It is not just a suggestion.

DEUTERONOMY 14:22

You _____ set aside a tithe of your crops—one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year.

It **belongs** to the Lord (**Lev. 27:30**).

"Bring **all** the tithe." A tithe is a set percentage of everything that we earn or produce. We do not determine the percentage ourselves, nor do we withhold anything we earn from being counted in the percentage.

DEUTERONOMY 14:22

You must set aside a tithe of your crops—one-tenth of _____ the crops you harvest each year.

We tithe on everything. (**Lev. 27:30**)

"Bring the whole **tithe**." The word "tithe" literally means "one tenth". So it is clear that the whole tithe is ten percent of everything we earn or produce through our job and investments.

DEUTERONOMY 14:22

You _____ set aside a _____ of your crops—one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year.

"Bring all the tithe **into the storehouse**, so there will be enough food **in my Temple**." Obviously, we do not give money directly to God who needs nothing (**Acts 17:25**). We give our tithes to the local church where we are members. The purpose is to pay the salaries of those on staff as well as the bills so that ministry can take place. Would you eat at McDonald's and pay Pizza Hut? Of course not. Neither should you receive shepherding care and equipping at one church and give your tithe to another ministry.

"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your Heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Matthew 6:25-34

Beyond that, the blessing is indefinite, as we saw previously in Chapter 2.

So a tithe is God's requirement of one tenth on everything you earn or produce to support the work of the Lord.

What Belongs to God?

Why do you suppose that God commands us to tithe? Obviously, God has need of nothing and we cannot hand Him a check or bundle of cash directly.

Tithes support those dedicated to the Lord's work.

In the Old Testament, the Levites were the people devoted to the priestly duties. They did not own or work large tracts of land because they were busy doing God's work. Yet the rest of the Israelites gave ten percent of what they produced to support the Levites. Today, those on a local church's staff earn their living in ministry and are paid out of the tithes and offerings given to the church by its members (**1 Cor. 9:13-14**).

NUMBERS 18:21

As for the tribe of Levi, your relatives, I will _____ them for their service in the Tabernacle. Instead of an allotment of land, I will give them the _____ from the entire land of Israel.

NUM. 18:23B

The Levites will receive no _____ of land among the Israelites,

NUMBERS 18:24

... because I have given them the Israelites' _____, which have been presented as sacred offerings to the LORD. This will be the Levites' share. That is why _____ they would receive no allotment of land among the Israelites."

Your tithe does not belong to you.

Perhaps you think that ten percent of your wages is too much. Did you realize that **all of your wages** and **all of your possessions** really belong to God? He created everything, including you and what you

have. He is the one that enables you to make a living. He is the one who provides for all of your needs.

LEVITICUS 27:30

One tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain from the fields or fruit from the trees, _____ to the LORD and must be set apart to him as _____.

"Holy" means set apart or dedicated. So your tithe is God's possession, not yours. If you withhold tithes, you are robbing God (**Mal. 3:8**).

DEUTERONOMY 8:18

Remember the LORD your God. He is the one who _____ you _____ to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath.

COLOSSIANS 1:16

... for through him God _____ everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created _____ him and _____ him.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17

Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly _____ us _____ we need for our enjoyment.



Mere Tradition?

Some people think that tithing is an Old Testament requirement that is no longer binding on Christians. However, this is often an excuse not to tithe rather than a genuine conviction. The moral and practical (not ceremonial, see **Col. 2:16-17**) laws of the Old Testament are still binding on us. It's just that they are not necessary for salvation. Can we murder today because murder was condemned in the Old Testament? How about stealing or adultery? In the same way, tithing is just as valid today as it was in the Old Testament.

Tithing existed **before** God gave Moses the law.

The fact is, it **was not** the Mosaic law that began tithing. Tithing was done long before Moses ever received the Ten Commandments and the rest of God's codes (*Genesis records history before Moses was born*).

GENESIS 14:18

And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a _____ of God Most High, _____ Abram some bread and wine.

GENESIS 14:20

"And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a _____ of all the goods he had _____.

GENESIS 28:22

And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a _____ of _____ he gives me.

Tithing was **continued** when God gave Moses the Law.

Tithing is not simply man's invention or tradition. It is God's idea and he confirmed the need for tithing when he gave Moses the various detailed laws that accompanied the Ten Commandments.

(Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy contain the laws God gave to Moses.)

LEVITICUS 27:30

One _____ of the _____ of the land, whether grain from the fields or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD and must be set apart to him as holy.

NUMBERS 18:21

As for the tribe of Levi, your relatives, I will _____ them for their service in the Tabernacle. Instead of an allotment of land, I will give them the _____ from the entire land of Israel.

DEUTERONOMY 14:22

You must set aside a _____ of your _____ — one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year.

Tithing was confirmed by Jesus Christ when he came.

The need to support the work of the Lord is just as real today as it was in the Old Testament. So when Jesus came, He did not set aside tithing. Instead, He confirmed that we should still tithe. As he said:

MATTHEW 23:23

What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to _____ even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You _____, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

We should still tithe, but not ignore other things.

A Matter of Trust

Perhaps you don't feel like you are able to tithe. Maybe ten percent seems like a lot of money. Maybe ten percent means the difference between making ends meet and falling behind in your bills. Should you still tithe to your local church? Absolutely! Let's review the facts in two Scriptures:

MALACHI 3:10

"Bring _____ the tithes into the _____ so there will be enough food in _____. _____ . If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!"

- Here God **commands** us to tithe 10% on all of our income.
- God's purpose is to provide for ministry in his house.
- If we do tithe, God **promises** to bless us abundantly.

MATTHEW 6:33

Seek the Kingdom of _____ above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you _____ you need.

- Jesus **commands** us to seek the kingdom before our needs.
- If we do, we are **promised** the food we need (**verse 25**).
- If we do, we are **promised** clothes we need (**verse 28**).

Now, if you are reluctant to begin tithing, I suggest that there are several possible reasons for this reluctance. **Perhaps you do not know what tithing**

is. While this is entirely possible, I trust that this chapter has sufficiently explained to you what tithing is and the need to tithe in obedience to God and to support the work of the Lord.

Perhaps you do not trust God to provide for your personal needs. If so, then you should pray that God will give you faith that he will honor his promise to provide for your daily needs. If you are worried that you will not be able to make ends meet, then pray that God will help you overcome your concern. You might also want to consider "Parkinson's Law" (named after C. Northcote Parkinson who is not related to me). Parkinson's Law says that what we spend tends to meet or exceed the money we have. If you have \$50.00 in your pocket, you will probably spend it. But if you put \$10.00 in your pocket and \$40.00 in the bank, then you will be more likely to spend the \$10.00 and save the rest. The bottom line is that most people could make do with ten percent less of their income even without any further provision by God. And God does and will provide!

Perhaps you are simply unwilling to give up part of your income. You might know that you could live on ten percent less but do not want to. That television, or fishing reel or new dress is too appealing. If this is your case then a change of priorities is needed to enable you to put the kingdom of God before your personal desires. My own experience has shown me that tithing is a tremendous way to break the grip of greed on one's heart. I was **very** greedy before I got saved and struggled with greed afterward. When I read about tithing I knew it would put this problem behind me and I just went ahead and did it. To this day, I have been content with my standard of living. This really was great gain!

Ask God now to help you trust him and to put His Kingdom first.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In your own words, what exactly is tithing?

Are you convinced that tithing is required by God? That it is a tenth of the money we earn or get? That your tithe belongs in your church?

Why is it important **to you** to be faithful in tithing? Why is it important **to your local church** that you tithe?

Do you presently tithe to your local church? If not, why not? Because you did not know about tithing? Don't know how to give to our church? Doubt God's provision? Wrong or misplaced priorities? Love money?

What attitudes or beliefs do you need to change so you will be willing to tithe? Will you make these adjustments now?

Read **Matthew 22:15-22**. Who is the higher authority, God or the government? In light of **verse 21**, do you think that what is God's depends on what the government demands in taxes? So should you tithe on your gross pay before taxes or on your net pay after taxes?

How does or can tithing help your own financial situation in the future?

LIVING WITHIN YOUR MEANS



Budgets - A Tool

We have seen that priorities, planning and persistence are all essential to achieving prosperity. While a budget is an essential part of financial planning, it is also necessary to implement priorities and it is the guide we use for persisting in financial discipline. Our budget is the tool we use to count the cost of everything we do and balance them so we can afford it (**Luke 14:28-29**). Either you will develop and follow a budget that reflects biblical priorities and your needs, or you will run the risk of mounting debt and eventual poverty.

There are several factors that should guide your budget.

(1) It must reflect biblical priorities. This is easy to do by listing the line-item entries in the order of priority. Your highest priorities must be **obligations** like tithes, taxes, and debt payments (**Rom 13:6-8**), so begin with them. Follow this with **living expenses** like groceries, clothing and utility bills. These are obviously more important than luxuries. Then list **discretionary** expenses. These are things you do not have to spend money on but want to. They include charitable giving, savings and investments, entertainment, vacations, and so forth. If you list your expenses by priority, it makes it a lot easier to make rational cuts when you are over budget. Simply look at the bottom of your list and make cuts there, leaving the more important things alone. The Budget Worksheet, provided later in this chapter, is structured in just this way.

(2) Your budget should anticipate all kinds of expenses. Yearly expenses like insurance and Christmas gifts should be factored into the monthly budget along with regular monthly expenses like

groceries and electric bills. Annual and quarterly costs are simply divided by 12 or 3 months, respectively, to be included in the monthly budget. The Budget Worksheets provided in Appendix A attempt to cover all kinds of expenses. But to make sure you include everything, review old bills, credit card receipts, checkbook registers, and so forth to be sure you include everything.

(3) Your budget cannot exceed your income. Like expenses, all sources of income should be considered. These include your salary or wages, interest and dividends, capital gains, Social Security, alimony, etc. But your total expenses cannot be greater than your total income. Otherwise you are guaranteed a mounting debt that will eventually enslave you to creditors.

(4) Your budget should be geared towards getting you out of debt. This is a necessary corollary of the biblical priority of paying bills. We do not simply want to stop going deeper in debt, we want to get out of it totally. We will cover this in more detail in Chapter 6. But for now, let it be said that debt retirement should be an integral part and major goal of your budget.

(5) Your budget must be mutually agreed to by the husband and wife. It is true that the husband is the head of the home (**Eph 5:22-29**). But as the head of the home he must look first to the needs and desires of his wife. Hence, he should include her in the decision making, even if he has the final say. Also, both the husband and wife are capable of blowing the budget so both need to agree to it and hold the other accountable to it.



More Budgeting Factors

(6) The budget should be fair to both the husband and wife. It is advisable, though not strictly necessary, to have equality in spending for both spouses reflected in the budget. The amount allotted to the husband for fishing gear and bowling should be the same as the wife's amount for hair appointments and lunch dates with friends. The reason that this may not be necessary is if one or the other spouse does not desire much spending money while the budget will allow more spending for the other. In such cases, an inequity is acceptable because the spouse receiving the smaller amount does so willingly. But one spouse should never require the other to have less spending money at their disposal.

(7) Your fixed monthly expenses should be budgeted so that they can be paid with only the husband's income. This principle may seem old-fashioned, but I think it is wise. Your mortgage, groceries, utilities, and so on should be within the husband's means. That way, if the wife intentionally or "accidentally" (there are no accidents with the Lord) becomes pregnant, she has the option of staying home with the baby. This is not to say that the wife's income cannot be used for such things as entertainment, vacations or savings which can easily be curtailed. Nor is it to say that the wife cannot work after children arrive. That is another issue. What it is saying is that this approach allows the couple the freedom to make choices when a baby is born. With too many working couples today the decision for the wife to continue working

after babies come along is stipulated by a huge mortgage and an extravagant lifestyle rather than a real desire to work.

Two budget worksheets are provided in Appendix A. Before you make any changes to your budget, fill in the first budget worksheet with current figures for your income and expenses. To get this information, consult your paycheck stub, bank statements, checkbook registers, old bills and credit card receipts. Don't bother with making cuts or changes yet. Just see where you are at so you know how much you need to adjust.

If your total expenses exceed your income, you **must** make some budget cuts to bring spending in line with income. If you want to increase the amount you can save or invest, or

if you want to speed up your debt-retirement, you will also need to make cuts. Perhaps at first you feel as though you cannot live with less. Perhaps you are overwhelmed by the task. Maybe you lack discipline so much you feel as though you cannot cut back, even if you make cuts on paper. But it can be done! It is primarily a matter of your will power.

The mere fact that the budget worksheet is designed roughly according to priorities should give you some hints right away where to make budget cuts. But let me take each category of spending and challenge some common beliefs and assumptions. You may find that you can easily live within your means once you change some faulty ideas you may have.



True Needs

Discretionary Spending

The only real "needs" you have are food and clothing. If you look through the Bible, these are the things which are called needs. These are the things the needy are without.

MATTHEW 6:31-32

So don't worry about these things, saying, "What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?" These things dominate the thoughts of _____, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. (See also Mat. 25:37-39)

1 TIMOTHY 6:8

So if we have enough _____ and _____ let us be content.

JAMES 2:15-16

Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What _____ does that do?

So let's dispense with the idea that we "need" to have that second car. Or we need our VCR and stereo. Or we "need" that vacation in Hawaii. You are obliged to pay your tithes. But offerings to the church or giving to others beyond your tithe are not necessary. If these things bust your budget, do away with them. God only expects you to ... give according to what you have, not what you don't have. (*II Cor. 8:12*).

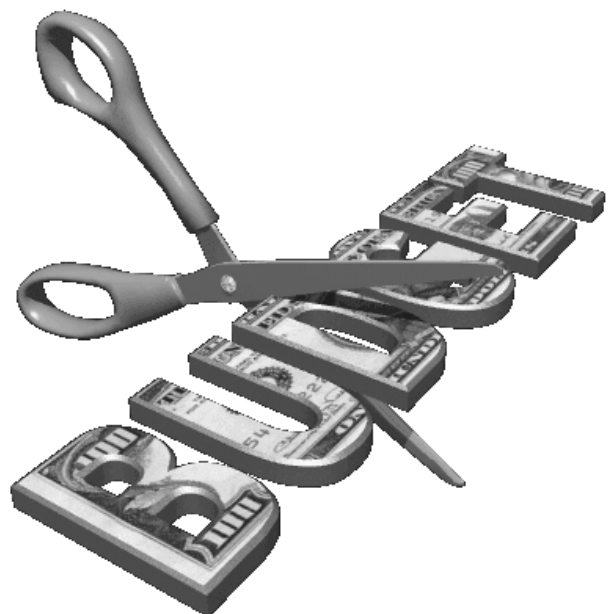
A common budget-buster for many people is Christmas. We spend hundreds or sometimes even thousands of dollars we cannot afford to buy stuff for virtually everyone we know. If you can afford it, fine. But too many people falsely feel obliged to be extravagant with Christmas shopping. Think about this: "**Exchanging gifts**" is a contradiction in terms! By definition, a gift is something we hand over to

someone else with no strings attached. If something is expected in return **it is no longer a gift**. Do not get caught up in a false spirit of generosity, the culture of guilt trips, or the tempting advertising of retail stores. We should give gifts only if we can afford to and only because we want to bless others, not because we feel pressured to.

Living Expenses

We need food and clothing. But many of us could do with a lot less food and clothing. Use coupons to buy food that's also on sale at the store. That way you get a double-whammy of savings. The clothing we do need can be bought cheaply at garage sales, resale shops, and Salvation Army. Perhaps you could start a "barter club" in your church or neighborhood to exchange kids' clothes as they outgrow them.

Other living costs can also be trimmed. We can turn lights off to save electricity. We can turn the heat down. We can talk less on the phone or even have our phones disconnected. (People lived for thousands of years without phones!) You can trade down to a less expensive car. You can move to a cheaper apartment or buy a smaller house. If you still can't make ends meet, you can move in with someone else and share the rent. Many of us think we have a "right" to our own car and house.



Obligations

You might think there is nothing you can do about your obligations. It is true that in your present situation you have certain obligations you must meet. But sometimes you can change your situation. There are many things beyond the scope of this chapter you can do to reduce your tax liability. I am not talking about tax evasion. I am talking about ways you can earn and save money tax-free. You can trade down to a cheaper car or house to pay off debts. You can accelerate your payments on car loans and mortgages which reduces future interest payments.

Having challenged your thinking a little bit, complete the second budget worksheet in Appendix A after adjusting your spending. Start cutting from the bottom up and keep cutting until expenses are the same or less than your income. Be sure to "negotiate" the budget changes with your spouse. When you are done, and when you both agree, commit your budget to the Lord and ask him to help you stick to it.

From here on out, the success or failure of your budget will depend on your discipline in **persisting** with it. It does no good to plan a budget according to biblical priorities if you toss it out the window every time your desire to have something gets the best of you. Generally, budgets are met or busted depending on how well you stick to your "discretionary" spending. People who are used to excessive spending often struggle to change their spending habits. So here are some tips for how to discipline yourself when you want to overspend:

- Get used to spending less by declaring a "financial fast." Go without **any** discretionary spending for a month. Just go "cold turkey" as though you were breaking a drug habit. After a month, gradually increase your discretionary spending to the budgeted amount. This will discipline you and give a boost to your savings.
- Simply avoid going places where you are tempted to spend money. Don't go to the mall unless you need to. When you do go shopping, take a list of what you need and commit yourself to buying only what is on the list. Refuse to go "window shopping". Just shop for what you need. Never buy on a whim.
- Spouses should regularly encourage each other to stick to the budget by reminding each other of the long-term goals you have of getting out of debt and saving toward that thing you want in the future. Resisting spending is hard unless you consciously realize that it is the means you need to take to get something you want more later on.
- Put the designated amounts of cash in envelopes marked "entertainment", "spending", etc. each month. When the envelope is empty, refuse to spend any more that month.
- Do not carry cash with you, or else you will tend to spend it.
- Make an agreement with your spouse that if you over spend you will turn over your check book and credit cards to him or her for the same amount of time that you indulged.

PERSISTENCE.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

NOTE: If this is a group discussion, you do not need to give any monetary figures for income or spending. You can just express yourself in generalities.

Do you tend to plan things in detail, or are you more likely to be spontaneous? How does this tendency spill over into your budget?

Have you had a budget in the past? Do you have more trouble making a budget or sticking to a budget once it is made?

What will help you with your budget this time? Organizing it by priorities? Including all spending and income? Re-evaluating what true needs are? The "college of hard knocks"? Agreement with your spouse?

What part of your budget are you most likely to "cheat" on? Why? How can you discipline yourself to avoid overspending in this area?

How balanced are you with Christmas shopping, birthdays and weddings? Why do you think that "exchanging gifts" is a contradiction in terms?

What are some of the creative things you can do to cut your expenses in discretionary spending? Living expenses? Obligations?

How does this approach to budgeting put your finances in perspective and give you hope for the future?

FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY



Debt = Slavery

Excessive debt is a form of slavery. This fact is recognized and taught by the Bible. It is also the practical end result of debt given its nature. Of course, the term "excessive" is somewhat subjective. Not all debt is a form of bondage. But before we examine what kinds of debt are tolerable, I want to show you the general danger debt poses to your liberty.



The Bible warns us that debt can lead to slavery.

PROVERBS 12:24

Work hard and become a leader; be lazy and _____ a _____.

PROVERBS 22:7

Just as the rich rule the poor, so the _____ is _____ to the lender.

The reason that laziness leads to bondage is that a lazy person earns no income yet must spend money to obtain basic needs like food and clothing. His options are either to "sell" himself directly to someone or to acquire debt to obtain the money needed. Either way, the result is slavery. Slave masters tell their "property" what to do. Creditors likewise will eventually control your life in order to receive payment.

The Bible warns us not to be drawn into debt.

PROVERBS 11:15

There's danger in putting up security for a _____; it's safer not to guar-

antee another person's debt.

PROVERBS 22:26-27

Don't agree to guarantee another person's debt or put up security for someone else. If you can't pay it, even your bed will be _____ from under you.

Putting up security means to guarantee someone else's loan. In today's terms, it is co-signing a loan with someone, risking your own possessions as collateral for another's debt. So the idea here is that assuming partial responsibility for another person's loan puts you at risk of being liable for his debt. If he cannot pay, then you will have to. And if you cannot pay, then you will lose possessions or be drawn into bondage to creditors yourself.

Practically speaking, it should be obvious that excessive debt is like slavery. When your debt gets out of hand, the interest and principle grow beyond your means to pay, and it begins to control you:

- You begin to work longer hours or a second job to make payments.
- You cut back on things you want to buy so you can make payments.
- If you simply make minimum payments, the debt continues to grow.
- You begin to worry, lose sleep, and despair because of your debt.
- Creditors send threatening letters and bill collectors to you.
- Eventually, you begin to lose your car and other possessions.

All of this is beyond your control. Indeed you are controlled by the debt, do these things against your will, and have become a slave.

How much Debt is Too Much?

As I said before, not all debt enslaves. For instance, so called "short term debt" is often convenient to take advantage of. Businesses often order merchandise on 30 days credit (usually offered interest free by the seller). Individuals may use a credit card to go Christmas shopping so they don't have to carry cash with them. Or they may order something over the phone using a credit card. In such cases, you do not take on the debt to buy something you cannot afford. In fact, you have the money in the bank and will pay off the debt when you are billed to avoid a finance charge. Buying on "short term" credit like this is expedient. It is not a way of living beyond your means.

Another kind of debt that might be tolerated is what I call "invested debt." In this case, you go into debt to buy something. But whatever it is you buy is virtually guaranteed of holding or increasing its value. The funds obtained with the loan are invested instead of consumed. For example, you may have taken out a mortgage to buy your house. Although you have a debt, you can always sell your house and immediately pay off the debt because the house (hopefully) will not go down in value. In a worst case scenario, you may lose your home to foreclosure. But either way, you are not burdened with a debt that you cannot pay off and are therefore not brought into slavery.

Notice I did not say short term debt or invested debt are desirable or ideal. You still may be paying interest. They are simply tolerable because they do not overcome you and control you. But "consumer debt" is always dangerous. Consumer debt is when you take out a loan to buy something that you cannot presently afford otherwise. For instance, you may use a credit card to go on a shopping binge. Your debt grows, but you have little or nothing to show for it. So you have to work harder in the future to pay for instant gratification you wanted in the past.

Are you in too much debt? To a degree, it is a judgment call as to whether you have excessive debt. It is my firm opinion that no amount of debt is desirable. But there are several indications that a person definitely has too much debt.

- **If you regularly pay a finance charge on your credit cards**, then you are probably misusing them! As I said above, a credit card is useful for short term credit. But if you use it this way, you will pay the bills immediately. Incurring interest charges indicates you are using the card to buy what you cannot now afford.
- **If you have a debt that cannot be paid off** by selling the thing you went into debt for, then you probably have excessive debt. Cars, clothes, food, entertainment and vacations are instantly consumed or depreciated in value once they are bought. Buying them on credit saddles you with a debt that cannot be recouped by selling them.
- **If you cannot budget your income to cover your obligations** like tithes, taxes, minimum debt payments and basic needs, then any debt you have is too much. You must retire debt to make ends meet.
- **If you worry or argue about, lose sleep over, or work long hours to pay bills** then any debt you have is too much. It is weighing you down psychologically.

Debt Control

Jesus taught that "No one can serve two masters." (**Matthew 6:24**). Paul wrote, "... I am allowed to do anything" - but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything." (**1 Cor. 6:12**). If debt controls you instead of you controlling debt, then you have a problem that must be addressed decisively. It is in your own best interest as well as your moral responsibility to Jesus Christ to get out of debt as soon as you can.

But bankruptcy is not an option.

Bankruptcy is a legal proceeding that essentially wipes your slate clean of debt. But there are two problems with bankruptcy. Morally, it amounts to stealing. Whether you borrow from someone and refuse to pay them or simply take something from them without their permission, the end result is the same. You have immorally obtained something that does not belong to you.

PSALM 37:21

The wicked _____
and never _____, but the
godly are generous givers.

ROMANS 13:8

_____ to anyone—except for your obligation to _____ one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law.

Furthermore, if you declare bankruptcy, you have not really solved your problem. Your tendency to overspend is probably still there. You will probably repeat your folly because you have not learned your lesson by disciplining yourself. So you must

take responsibility for your debt load and pay it off at a reasonable pace.

Of course, you may ask your creditors to "forgive" your debt or ask them to have patience with you as you do your best to pay them back. Many creditors will be gracious to those who are working at paying off their debts, especially if the debt is due to some crisis like emergency surgery instead of a spending binge. But the decision to forgive or cancel your debt is up to the creditor, not you.

Your only real option is to cut back on your spending and expenses and apply the savings toward paying off your debts. This may take a degree of will power and discipline that you have not had before. But you **must** decide to attack the problem and, with God's help, you **can** do it! But how? The answer is two-fold: part motivational and part practical.

The motivational answer is to remember that the Bible says being in debt is a form of slavery. "Just as the rich rule the poor, so the borrower is servant to the lender." (**Prov. 22:7**). Your efforts and thoughts are focused on appeasing your creditors instead of enjoying life and serving Jesus Christ. Now if you were a slave in the ancient Roman Empire, would you use money you earned on the side to make your life as a slave easier and more comfortable? Or would you use it to buy yourself out of slavery? Anyone who perceives the blessings of liberty would do all they could to obtain their freedom. Likewise, if you are burdened with debt, you should use all your extra income to pay off your debts quickly! It is truly a release from a great burden to pay off that last debt. And when you do, you will enter a fresh new realm of liberty and contentment, free from the financial control of others.



How to Get Out of Debt

Once you have **decided** to get out of debt, the steps you need to take are rather easy in principle. If you have dug yourself into a hole, the first step in getting out is to stop digging. The next step is to start filling in the hole. So also, the first step in getting out of debt is to stop incurring more debt. Then you begin to pay off the debts you already have.

- **Stop adding to your debt immediately.**

- ⇒ Cut up or destroy all your credit cards **right now**. It is a struggle to be responsible with them. You cannot afford to charge more on them. The interest is exorbitant.
- ⇒ Cut or eliminate as many "discretionary" line items as possible in your budget. Balancing your personal budget will keep you from going further into debt.

- **Unload debt by lightening your load of possessions.**

- ⇒ Trade down to a more economical, affordable car. Perhaps you can trim down or eliminate your car loan this way.
- ⇒ Try to refinance your house at a lower interest rate. Or sell it and buy or rent a smaller, more affordable place to live.
- ⇒ Use a garage sale and classified advertisements to sell unneeded household items and use the cash to pay off debts.

- **Set aside money each month to apply to debt retirement.**

- ⇒ Make further cuts in your budget beyond simply balancing it and apply the extra money to paying off standing debt.

⇒ This is undoubtedly the best investment to make. Generally it is unwise to carry a heavy debt load along with significant savings and investments. (We will discuss this in Chapter 7).

- **Target all money set aside for paying off one specific debt.**

- ⇒ Pay only the minimum monthly payment on all but one of your outstanding debts.
 - ⇒ Pick the debt with the largest interest rate (usually your credit cards) to pay off first. Apply all your extra funds from sales and budget cuts to paying off this debt as soon as possible. This will be the quickest way to reduce your interest liability. It will also give you an early sense of victory over one of your debts when you pay it off.
 - ⇒ Some car loans are structured so that you have to pay all the interest whether you pay it off early or on schedule. If you have this kind of car loan, there is little advantage to paying it off early, so pay off the car last of all.
- Knock off debts one-by-one this way until you are debt free!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you ever been able to use and control "short term debt" or "investment debt" to your advantage? How? Or have these "tolerable" forms of debt simply proven to be stepping stones toward excessive debt?

Do you have a history of debt problems? If so, are your debts the result of living beyond your means? Unexpected circumstances? Being drawn into someone else's debt by co-signing a loan? Something else?

What things tempt you to over-spend? What things tempt you to buy them on credit? What does this tell you about your values and priorities?

Do you feel like a "slave" to your debt or creditors? What indicators do you have that you are in excessive debt?

Why is it a sin to declare bankruptcy? Would bankruptcy fundamentally solve your debt problem? Why or why not?

How must you change your attitudes and your behavior to overcome your debt problems? What kinds of budget cuts will you make to redirect funds toward paying off your debts? What other ideas do you have for getting out of debt?

How do you think your life will change when you are debt free? How will your new liberty affect your budget? Job? Marriage? Spiritual life?

Looking Toward the Future



Saving & Investing

The first element of **planning** necessary to achieve prosperity was to design and stick to a budget. The second element to **planning** necessary to achieve prosperity is saving and investing. Your budget helps you make ends meet now. But saving and investing look toward the future. They are decisions to live **below** your means now in order to achieve some goal beyond your means down the road.

Everyone is familiar with the terms “saving” and “investing.” As we will see later, everyone needs to be involved in saving and investing in one form or another. But few people can accurately define them. Most people think these two words mean the same thing. In fact, saving and investing mean two related but very different things.

SAVING is a decision to spend money later rather than sooner. You set it aside for later use with little or no risk.

INVESTING is a decision to put money to work so you can spend more later. You accept some risk in exchange for a profit.

Both involve setting aside money for later use. But saving is “safe.” You put it in the bank and it either earns you no interest, or the interest earned will just keep up with inflation. ON the other hand, investments always assume a degree of risk. You do something productive with the money that may result in a loss, but more likely will turn a profit. The distinction between saving and investing is shown in the parable of the talents in **Matthew 25:14-30**. The first and second men **invested** their talents and gained a return. The third man simply **saved** his talent and had nothing extra to show for it.

This distinction is important because people need to save **and** invest. If you just save, you will not get a significant return on your money. But if you only invest, all your money will be tied up and you may not be able to cover unexpected bills and expenses that pop up. So, you invest most of your extra money to earn a profit over the long run while you set aside a smaller portion of money as savings toward unexpected events and bills.

Having made this distinction, there are several components to saving and investing that some people neglect to consider.

- **Insurance** is a form of collective saving toward a possible crisis. People pay premiums to an insurance company who covers the accidental loss of your car, house, or health (see Appendix B).
- **A last will & testament** is a form of saving. It protects or “saves” your estate as an inheritance for your heirs. (Appendix B)
- **Getting out of debt** is an integral part of investing. By paying off debt, you have more money at your disposal in the future.
- **Tax strategy** is an integral part of investing. By carefully planning **how** you make and spend money, you can keep more of it.

A Right Perspective

Saving and investing are wise and biblical. Some Christians wrongly see no need to provide for the future because they rightly trust in the Lord taking care of them. But, the Bible is clear that we should save and invest just as we should work and earn a living.

PROVERBS 13:22

Good people leave an _____ to their grandchildren, but the sinner's wealth _____ to the godly.

Notice that both the good man and the sinner have saved for the future. The difference between them is who receives what they have saved.

PROVERBS 21:20

The wise have wealth and _____, but fools _____ whatever they get.

Here, the Bible tells us it is wise to save and foolish to spend or consume everything.

PROVERBS 22:3

A prudent person _____ danger and takes _____. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.

One supplication of this verse is to anticipate the hazards of unbudgeted expenses, retirement without an income and other future needs for money and save for them.

MATTHEW 6:19-20

"Don't store up _____ here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there

the _____ of your heart will also be."

Jesus was not condemning the idea of investment. In **verse 19**, He was coming against the idea of investment for the sake of greed. We should not accumulate money just so we have it, but to use it later. In **verse 20**, He was coming against the worldly idea of investment to the exclusion of spiritual gain. Our investing should not draw us away from God.

LUKE 12:20-21

But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you _____ for?' "Yes, a person is a fool to store up _____ wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.

Here again, we see that the problem is hoarding wealth for ourselves and to the exclusion of wealth toward God. But, there is nothing here that condemns investing for godly purposes.

I TIMOTHY 6:17

Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to _____ in their money, which is so _____. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

Notice Paul did not command that the rich give away their wealth and become impoverished. He simply wants them to have the right perspective of their wealth (**See also Proverbs 18:11**).

Guiding Principles

Before you develop a plan for saving and investing, you need to have a **philosophy of investing**. This philosophy includes the guiding principle for your investing and helps you determine how you will invest. All too often, people try to save and invest in order to maximize their monetary profit. Some people are “conservative” investors because they don’t want to lose money. Others are “aggressive” investors because they want the biggest bang for their buck. Either way, they are caught up in a money chase. But, the problem is, this approach forgets the true purpose of investing, which is not to accumulate money! There is another reason for investing:

You do not invest to maximize PROFITS, but to maximize your LIBERTY to live, serve God, and bless others as you see fit.

True, making money will be a part of this, but it is not all of it. Making money is a means to the end of liberty, not the end itself. For my own part, I have consciously avoided some potentially profitable investments because they would have given too much control of my life to banks, the government, or the economy. I want to be free to serve God unencumbered whether banks collapse or not, whether taxes, interest rates and inflation rise or fall. In short, I am more interested in being free from the control of outside influences than I am in making big money.

You can see this attitude toward making money, getting out of debt and investing throughout the Bible. Agur wanted neither poverty, which might cause him to steal, nor riches, which might cause him to forget God (**Prov. 30:7-9**). He didn’t want to maximize his wealth, but wanted to maximize his freedom to serve God to the fullest. Paul worked night and day so he would not be a burden on anyone and could share the Gospel freely (**1 Thes. 2:9**). He encourages us to work, and presumably invest, so we will not be dependent on anyone and may win the respect of outsiders (**1**

Thes. 4:11-12). Paul warned against the love of money as a bondage (**1 Tim. 6:9-10**), yet does not condemn wealth which we are to enjoy (**1 Tim. 6:17**). Everywhere, the goal of any wealth, small or great, is to be free of worldly burdens that distract us from enjoying life and serving God. **As soon as wealth itself becomes our goal, it too becomes a burden that enslaves us rather than giving us liberty.**

Money is more like a river than a reservoir. It is a means of getting someplace, not a thing to be accumulated. Like a river that widens and flows through lakes, you may temporarily accumulate your money. You may save money temporarily just as a river flows through a lake. You may make your money grow through investments just as a river widens downstream. But, the flow must be ever onwards, on course, and toward a goal. Otherwise, money will be accumulated to your ruin just as a dammed-up river floods and destroys everything around it.

The ultimate “course” of our investments should be toward a progressively freer life. The specific goals along the way should keep this in mind. We save so we do not have to worry about an unexpected bill for car maintenance, sickness, etc. We invest toward long-term goals like going to college, buying a house, starting your own business, retirement, etc. You never accumulate money just to have it.

Investment Plan

Once you have decided on your reason to save and invest (liberty) and determine your specific goals, it is time to develop an investment plan. Needless to say, saving and investing should be an integral part of your budget. Each should be a line item that you contribute to monthly, just as you pay your tithes, taxes and bills. Be sure you save **and** invest for the reasons stated earlier. Limit investments to things you fully understand. Don't invest in something vague or mystifying to you since you will likely lose, even if the idea is sound.

There is no way to cover all the investment opportunities available to you here. Here, I will only give a suggested breakdown of how to allocate your savings and investing. First, determine your so-called "net worth" by adding up all your assets (savings, investments, home value, etc.) and subtracting your liabilities (outstanding loans, bills due, etc.) Of course, you are worth much more than this to God, but this is the net amount of money you have available. You then allocate this net worth like you cut up a pie.

20% SAVINGS (Suggested Breakdown):

- **1% Cash** - Put 1% of your funds into cash (\$10, \$20, or \$100 bills). Keep this cash in a safe place like a bank safe deposit box. The purpose of this money is as an emergency fund for a crisis or an economic depression. Most people malign cash as an investment since it loses against inflation. Cash is a very poor investment. But, this cash is for savings purposes. It is also a very small part of your total net worth (be sure to keep a record of how you obtained the cash so the IRS will not accuse you of tax evasion).
- **9% Bank Accounts** - This would include money in your checking and savings accounts and short-term certificates of deposit. You may earn some interest on these accounts, but it will either be a token amount or barely keep up with inflation. So, these funds do not earn

much, but they are safe and readily accessible in an emergency.

- **10% Precious Metals** - Silver, gold and platinum are rare and costly. The Bible, nowhere denies this value. It simply denies it's eternal value. The unique thing about precious metals is that they tend to rise in value when "paper" investments decline. High inflation, economic uncertainty, or political turmoil make most investments lose value but enhance the value of precious metals. So, a 10% stake in silver or gold is not really an investment (it just sits there). Rather, it is a "hedge" against the decline of your investments.

80% INVESTMENT (Breakdown Varies):

- **Equity in your home** - If you own a house, your primary investment will be paying off your mortgage. This is almost always your best investment. Since mortgage rates are higher than accumulating other investments. Once the house is paid off, you cannot lose it to foreclosure to the bank if there is some personal crisis (unemployment) or an economic collapse. Indeed, getting out of debt is always a good investment, whether the economy is good or bad, no matter what happens to the investment climate.
- **Real Estate** - After you have set aside savings and paid off your house, you could buy more land or rental property as an investment.
- **Your Own Business** - If you are self-employed or would like to be, you may consider starting or expanding your own business.
- **Common and Preferred Stocks** - Stocks are securities that give you part ownership in a company. As the company grows and profits, the stock grows in value and pays dividends to its owners.

Investment Plan

- **Corporate, Government, and Municipal Bonds**
 - Bonds are securities that give you part ownership of a loan to the issuing entity. Instead of owning part of a company, the company owes you money and pays you interest as though you were their bank. Bond interest rates are generally higher than bank rates, but have some risk. As the economy and interest rates change, the market value of the bond changes as well. This means both a capital gain and loss potential behind the interest rate on the bond.
- **Mutual Funds** - Many people think that Mutual Funds are different from stocks and bonds. They are not. They are simply a different way of owning stocks and bonds. Instead of buying securities outright, you are effectively pooled with other people who buy the same things. Mutual Funds allow the small investor to diversify and spread his trade commissions. But, the value of Mutual Funds are subject to the same market forces as stocks and bonds.
- **Foreign Exchange** - The Exchange Rates among foreign currencies rise and fall with supply and demand. If the U.S. Dollar, for instance, is going down relative to a foreign currency, you can profit by buying the foreign currency before it goes up. You can further enhance the return by purchasing investments in that security. So, if you buy German Marks (which go up 10%) and use them to buy German Stocks (which go up 10%), you make a net return of 20%. Of course, things can go the other way and you can lose big too.
- **Collectibles** - Like art, antiques, rare coins and so forth will appreciate in value either in an inflationary environment or if something drives up demand for them.

- **Precious Metals** - Precious Metals can also form part of your investment portfolio. If you understand the commodities markets and the economy, you may be convinced that silver or gold are going to rise. In that case, you might put more than your 10% "hedge" into these metals.

While about 80 percent of your "net worth" should be invested, I purposely avoid saying how you should break down this investment. For one thing, you should stick to investments that you clearly understand for yourself. Do not depend on Brokers or Financial Planners to make investments for you. Also, there is no such thing as an investment that is always good. Economic factors like inflation, interest rates, consumer confidence, productivity and so forth are always changing and have effects on investments. You have heard the saying, "What goes up must come down." Today's wise investment may run its course and be tomorrow's foolish investment. So, your investments must be flexible.

The Best Investment

One nearly absolute rule is - getting out of debt is always a good idea. Regardless of what happens to inflation, unemployment, or interest rates, being debt-free will never hurt you. Usually it will be very shrewd. If you lose your job, you will not need to worry about foreclosure on your car or house. If a tremendous economic crisis brings a total collapse of the U.S. dollar or of the banking system, your “investment” in your home will remain intact (its resale value may plunge, but you will still have a place to live). As interest rates surge, you can rest comfortably in your debt-free lifestyle. But, if you are in debt, each of these scenarios could ruin you.

Some people think that it is safe to hold on to a home mortgage while having a substantial sum invested or in the bank. Actually, this approach has few advantages and exposes you to several dangers. Home mortgage rates are always higher than bank savings rates. So, you have a net loss in interest by saving instead of paying off your mortgage. Furthermore, home equity can play the same role as a savings account for major crises (not small unexpected bills). If you have a catastrophic illness, for instance, you can always take out a Home Equity Loan on a house that is paid off just as you could dip into a savings account. On the investment front, you may get a higher return in other investments, but they will never be as safe as home ownership. Losing your job could lead to missing payments and foreclosure on your house. A change in the markets could wipe out your investments. An economic crisis could cause both! But, if you are debt-free, no economic turmoil will shake you.

Saving and Investing is Work

We have seen that prosperity requires priorities **and** planning **and** persistence. These factors equally apply to budgeting, getting out of debt, and investing. Shun “get rich quick” schemes. As the old saying goes, “if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.” Promises of getting rich fast

are either deceptive or wicked. So, you must realize that it will take work to build your savings and investments.

PROVERBS 13:11

Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from _____ grows over time.

PROVERBS 14:23

_____ brings profit, but mere talk leads to poverty!

PROVERBS 20:21

An inheritance _____ too early in life is not a blessing in the end.

PROVERBS 28:8

Income from charging high _____ will end up in the pocket of someone who is kind to the poor.

Of course, you do not know what tomorrow holds. Since you don’t know which investments will “pan out”, you need to “diversify” among several investments (**Prov. 27:1, Ecc. 11:6**). Moreover, riches are so uncertain that we must put our hope in the Lord, not wealth (**1 Tim. 6:17**). But, if you have God’s **priorities**, if you carefully **plan**, and if you **persist**, you can expect to have God’s blessing and His prosperity.



Discussion Questions

Are saving and investing the same thing? Explain how they differ.

Why should you save some money that is not easy to get to? What are some “unexpected” things that could happen where savings would come in handy.

Why should you put some money to work by investing it? What are your specific long term goals toward which you wish to invest?

Are saving and investing Biblical? Wise? Unnecessary? Ungodly? Sinful? Have you ever held a bad attitude toward investing? Why? Is it gone?

How does a “philosophy of investing” help give you a god, Biblical attitude toward money? What is your guiding principle for investing?

What is the value of having some of your savings in cash? In bank accounts? In precious metals?

Are you convinced that getting debt-free is your best investment? Why or why not? Do you have a renewed vision of getting out of debt?

How was this series on money helped you practically? Mentally? Spiritually? How has it enhanced your hope for the future?

APPENDIX A:

BUDGET WORKSHEETS

Your Present Budget



1. Your Present Budget

	Annual Budget ¹	Monthly Budget ²	Actual Amount ³
Income			
Salary, Wages & Tips	_____	_____	_____
Interest Income	_____	_____	_____
Dividend Income	_____	_____	_____
Other Income	_____	_____	_____
(_____)	_____	_____	_____
Obligations			
Tithes: To your local church	_____	_____	_____
Taxes: Federal/State/Local	_____	_____	_____
Property Taxes	* _____	_____	_____
Debts: Mortgage/Rent Payments	_____	_____	_____
Automobile Payments	_____	_____	_____
Credit Card Payments	_____	_____	_____
Other Debts ⁴	_____	_____	_____
(_____)	_____	_____	_____
Living Expenses			
Needs: Groceries	_____	_____	_____
Clothing	_____	_____	_____
Medicine	_____	_____	_____
Utilities Electricity	_____	_____	_____
Heat	_____	_____	_____
Trash Removal	_____	_____	_____
Water	_____	_____	_____
Telephone	_____	_____	_____
Upkeep: Automobile Insurance	* _____	_____	_____
Automobile Maintenance	* _____	_____	_____
Gasoline	_____	_____	_____
Homeowner's Insurance	* _____	_____	_____
Home Repair	* _____	_____	_____
Medical Insurance	_____	_____	_____
Discretionary Offerings to Church	_____	_____	_____
Giving: Giving to Others' Needs	_____	_____	_____
Holiday Gifts & Cards	_____	_____	_____

	Annual Budget ¹	Monthly Budget ²	Actual Amount ³
Living Expenses (continued)			
Future: Debt Reduction/Elimination ⁵			
Personal Savings ⁶			
Investments ⁷			
Life Insurance			
Enjoyment			
Household items & toys			
Entertainment/Leisure			
Family Vacation(s)			
Husband's Spending			
Wife's Spending			
Subscriptions/Memberships			
Hobbies & Clubs			
()			
()			
()			
()			
Total Expenses⁸:			

¹The annual figure should equal the monthly figure divided by 12.

²The monthly figure should equal the annual figure times 12.

³Anything left unspent in each category at the end of the month should first be applied to overspending in other categories. The remainder should be dumped into savings.

⁴These debt payments should be the minimum required by creditors.

⁵Money devoted to debt retirement should be focused on the one debt with the greatest interest rate.

⁶Savings is setting money aside safely for short term goals like buying a new sofa or refrigerator.

⁷Investing is putting money to work (with some risk) for higher returns and long term goals such as a house, college, or retirement.

⁸Total expenses cannot exceed total income.

* Annual estimates should be divided among the twelve months. Save this amount each month so funds are there when needed.

Initial Ideas Where You Can Cut Expenses

Category of Expense

Amount to Cut

Budget Cut

1. Your Present Budget

	Annual Budget ¹	Monthly Budget ²	Actual Amount ³
Income			
Salary, Wages & Tips	_____	_____	_____
Interest Income	_____	_____	_____
Dividend Income	_____	_____	_____
Other Income	_____	_____	_____
(_____)	_____	_____	_____
Obligations			
Tithes: To your local church	_____	_____	_____
Taxes: Federal/State/Local	_____	_____	_____
Property Taxes	* _____	_____	_____
Debts: Mortgage/Rent Payments	_____	_____	_____
Automobile Payments	_____	_____	_____
Credit Card Payments	_____	_____	_____
Other Debts ⁴	_____	_____	_____
(_____)	_____	_____	_____
Living Expenses			
Needs: Groceries	_____	_____	_____
Clothing	_____	_____	_____
Medicine	_____	_____	_____
Utilities Electricity	_____	_____	_____
Heat	_____	_____	_____
Trash Removal	_____	_____	_____
Water	_____	_____	_____
Telephone	_____	_____	_____
Upkeep: Automobile Insurance	* _____	_____	_____
Automobile Maintenance	* _____	_____	_____
Gasoline	_____	_____	_____
Homeowner's Insurance	* _____	_____	_____
Home Repair	* _____	_____	_____
Medical Insurance	_____	_____	_____
Discretionary Offerings to Church	_____	_____	_____
Giving: Giving to Others' Needs	_____	_____	_____
Holiday Gifts & Cards	_____	_____	_____

	Annual Budget ¹	Monthly Budget ²	Actual Amount ³
Living Expenses (continued)			
Future: Debt Reduction/Elimination ⁵			
Personal Savings ⁶			
Investments ⁷			
Life Insurance			
Enjoyment			
Household items & toys			
Entertainment/Leisure			
Family Vacation(s)			
Husband's Spending			
Wife's Spending			
Subscriptions/Memberships			
Hobbies & Clubs			
()			
()			
()			
()			
Total Expenses⁸:			

¹The annual figure should equal the monthly figure divided by 12.

²The monthly figure should equal the annual figure times 12.

³Anything left unspent in each category at the end of the month should first be applied to overspending in other categories. The remainder should be dumped into savings.

⁴These debt payments should be the minimum required by creditors.

⁵Money devoted to debt retirement should be focused on the one debt with the greatest interest rate.

⁶Savings is setting money aside safely for short term goals like buying a new sofa or refrigerator.

⁷Investing is putting money to work (with some risk) for higher returns and long term goals such as a house, college, or retirement.

⁸Total expenses cannot exceed total income.

* Annual estimates should be divided among the twelve months. Save this amount each month so funds are there when needed.

APPENDIX B: INSURANCE & WILLS

Insurance is really a form of collective savings. For any type of insurance, you take out a policy with an insurance company. You pay regular premiums to the company who promises to cover certain losses you may have in the future. Since a large group of people pay into the plan and only a few will ever experience significant losses, premiums paid are kept low compared to the relatively rare catastrophic losses covered by the insurance. A large group of people “pool their risks”, so to speak, to take some of the uncertainty out of life.

There are several kinds of insurance you can buy:

- **Automobile Insurance** covers your losses in the event of a car accident. In the United States, most states (if not all) require all drivers to have liability insurance. This aspect of car insurance covers your liability to other drivers and victims in accidents that are your fault. If, for instance, you run a stop sign and hit someone, liability insurance will pay for repairing the other person's car, medical costs and law suits against you for negligent driving. Collision coverage is optional and covers damage to your own car. Automobile insurance is somewhat expensive depending on your age, gender and driving record.
- **Homeowner's Insurance** covers things like your house burning down, water damage from floods, and theft by burglars. It is optional unless you have a mortgage on your house like most people do (for mortgage holders, the bank requires homeowner's insurance to cover the possible default on the mortgage if you lose your home). This kind of insurance is usually reasonably priced and well worth the cost, considering the magnitude of possible loss.
- **Medical Insurance** covers doctor visits, hospital stays, medicine, etc. when you are sick or injured. It is not presently required by law, but the potential for huge medical bills makes it very worthwhile to those who can afford it. Of course, medical coverage is very expensive, even for healthy people. For folks with a history of medical problems, it is very, very expensive.
- **Life insurance** is paid to a beneficiary when the person buying it dies. So, you can take out a life insurance policy on yourself so your wife and kids will be taken care of when you die. There are two myths about life insurance, perpetrated mainly by insurance salesmen. The first myth is that everyone needs it. If you do not have a substantial investment base and if your kids are young, you probably should have it. But, if you are financially well-off, and if your kids are grown and off on their own, a lot of life insurance is probably a waste (for one thing, you are probably advanced in age so the premiums will be out of this world). The second myth is that life insurance is a good investment. There are three kinds of life insurance: term, whole life and universal life. Term insurance is purchased for a specific period of time (a term). All you are getting is insurance for that time frame in the event of your death. **I cannot conceive of any reason why anyone should ever buy any kind of life insurance but term.** The other two kinds are designed to cover you for your “whole life” and combine insurance with investment schemes. As I said earlier, you do not need life insurance for your whole life. Moreover, the insurance company's attempt to combine insurance with investing usually tends to result in below average investments. If you want insurance, buy insurance. If you want to invest, invest. Keep the two separate so you can evaluate and adjust them as needed. Combining them simply confuses the issues and results in mediocrity.

There are other kinds of insurance, but you probably don't need them and probably can't afford them. All these kinds of insurance have a "deductible". So, whenever you have a loss, you are responsible for the loss up to that deductible. After the deductible, the insurance pays. Generally, you can choose how much of a deductible you want. The less the deductible, the higher the premiums you pay will be.

With all insurance policies, always remember that it is a form of collective saving. **You do not get ahead to gain anything by insurance. You simply avoid some setbacks and losses.**

WILLS

Wills are also a form of insurance. They are legal documents that protect and preserve your estate or "net worth" for your heirs. Most people can have an attorney draw up a will for them for less than \$100. This money is well worth it. Although the state has guidelines which rule how estates are divided for people who have no wills, you may want to stipulate how your estate is divided. Perhaps you may even want to leave specific things to specific people. Items of sentimental value may fall in this category.

Of course, your net worth may be small and you may simply want your spouse and kids to get everything (as the state would decide). But, there is one thing that as a Christian you should never leave to the state of "chance" - your children. If both you and your spouse are killed in a car accident, or die of sickness in a short time span, **the state will determine what happens to your kids!** Do you want your state to decide who will raise them, how they will be raised and educated, and how they will be taken care of? Certainly not! So, you need a **Will** to stipulate legal guardians for them in the event you both die. That way, you can ensure that they will be raised in a Christian environment, even if you are not around. A hundred dollars is a small price to pay for this kind of security.

APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY OF FINANCIAL TERMS

ASSET - the monetary or market value of something you own or possess

BALANCED BUDGET - a budget with precisely equal income and spending

BARTER - the direct exchange of goods and services without using money

BOND - a security that gives you part ownership of a loan

BUDGET - a detailed plan of how a person spends and invests income

CAPITAL GAIN - the profit made when selling a security or property

CASH - money actually possessed in currency form, not in an account

CHECKING ACCOUNT - an account that can be drawn on by writing checks

CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT (CD) - pays interest for a fixed period of time

COLLATERAL - something put in a creditor's name until a loan is paid off

CONSUMER CREDIT - a loan to buy something that is depleted or used up

CREDIT - the amount of money a lender is willing to loan someone else

CREDIT CARD - a plastic card representing a line of credit to the holder

CURRENCY - a denomination of money in the form of printed paper notes

DEBT - anything legally or morally owed to another person or persons

DEBT-RETIREMENT - the process of paying off a debt completely

DEPENDENCY - the condition of needing financial help from others

DISCRETIONARY SPENDING - spending that is totally up to you to decide upon

DIVIDEND - the part of a stock's profit paid to the stock holder

EQUITY - the value of something owned minus the amount owed on it

FINANCE CHARGE - the amount of interest presently owed on a loan or debt

FINANCIAL FAST - denying yourself of all discretionary spending for a time

FORECLOSURE - when a creditor re-possesses collateral on an unpaid loan

FOREIGN EXCHANGE - the trading among different foreign currencies

GIFT - something freely handed over without getting anything in return

GREED - the love of money for money's sake

GROSS - the amount of money received before taxes or deductions

INCOME - any increase of money that a person receives

INCOME TAX - the portion of income that the government demands

INFLATION - an increase in prices to offset a decrease in money value

INSURANCE - an agreement to cover a possible loss for payments up front

INTEREST RATE - the percentage of extra money paid/received on a loan

LIABILITY - anything owed to someone else, whether a debt or a bill

LINE ITEM - a particular entry on a budget with description and amount

LOAN - any money or object temporarily allowed to be used by others

MONEY - any widely recognized medium of exchange for goods and services

MORTGAGE - a loan and payment plan from a bank for buying a house

MUNICIPAL BOND - a city or state bond that pays tax-free interest

MUTUAL FUND - a pooled investment portfolio managed by a professional

NEEDS - things we must have (biblically - food and clothing)

NET - the amount of income received after taxes and deductions

NET WORTH - a person's total assets minus his or her total liabilities

OBLIGATION - any payment that is morally or legally binding on the payer

OFFERING - anything given to the church above and beyond the tithe

OVER BUDGET - the amount of money spent beyond the budgeted amount

PRECIOUS METALS - rare and costly metals like silver, gold and platinum

PREMIUM - regular payment to an insurance company for insurance coverage

PRINCIPLE - face value or amount initially given as a loan/investment

PROFIT - the extra gain received beyond the principle first invested

PROPERTY TAX - a percentage of property value demanded by the government

REAL ESTATE - any physical property such as land or buildings

SALARY - a fixed amount paid for work regardless of the hours worked

SALES TAX - the percentage of the retail value of a sale due to the government

SAVING - a decision to spend money later rather than sooner (at no risk)

SECURITY - a legal paper or document giving you ownership in something

SELF-RELIANCE - the condition of not needing financial help from others

SHORT TERM CREDIT - debt that is incurred for less than 30 days

STOCK - a security giving a person part ownership in a corporation

TAX - an amount of money demanded by the government to fund its programs

TAX AVOIDANCE - any legal structuring of income so you don't pay taxes

TAX DEFERRED - interest or income that is not taxed until later on

TAX EVASION - any lies or illegal schemes designed to avoid taxes

TAX FREE - interest or income received that is not taxed now or ever

TAX STRATEGY - an overall plan to minimize or eliminate tax liability

TITHE - then percent of gross income paid to a person's local church

TRANSACTION - a mutual agreement to exchange money, goods, or services

WAGE - a fixed amount of money paid in exchange for one hour of work

WILL - a legal document designating who will inherit a deceased's estate

APPENDIX D: BALANCE A CHECKBOOK

- 1) When you write a check, record the check number, date, payee and amount in the checkbook register.
- 2) Calculate the running balance of your account, adding deposits, and subtracting checks and other negative transactions (ATMs, cash withdrawals, etc.).
- 3) When you receive your bank statement, sort the checks out in numerical order and, in your register, check off which ones have cleared the bank.
- 4) Check your statements for any deductions, such as service charges, printing fees, etc. and record these in your register.
- 5) Check your statement for any additions, such as interest payments, and record these in your register.
- 6) Take your figure for the account balance after the last check that has cleared the bank. Add to the balance the amounts of any checks which have not cleared previous to this. Add this month's interest payments and other credits. Subtract this month's debits like service fees.
- 7) Compare the resulting figure with your statement's closing balance. If they match, you have balanced your checkbook. If they do not match, you must find the error.
- 8) It is very unlikely that the bank made an error, so be sure you know what the error is and can prove it before you call them.
- 9) To find an error:
 - Check that the amount of each check matches both the amount you have written in your register and the amount on the bank statement.
 - Double-check that you balanced last month's statement. If so, re-figure all the running balance figures since that statement to confirm your calculations are correct.
 - Redo step number 6 to confirm you added correctly.
 - If you uncover a bank error, call the bank immediately.
- 10) Save your bank statement at least until you receive the next month's bank statement and have balanced your checkbook for the next month.

TEST: The Bible & Your Money

Name: _____

Score: _____
(4 points each answer)

INSTRUCTIONS:

THIS IS AN OPEN-BOOK TEST. You will need a score of at least 80% to pass and receive a certificate of completion.

Please circle the letter of the best answer in each of the following multiple choice or true/false questions:

1. Money problems can:
 - a. Enslave us, forcing us to work long, hard hours to work off debt.
 - b. Hinder God's blessing in our lives because of our failures.
 - c. Deny us the true riches of spiritual responsibility.
 - d. All of the above.

2. What makes money powerful?
 - a. The labor we expend to get it.
 - b. The way we give it away.
 - c. Our attitude about it.
 - d. All of the above.

3. A tithe is:
 - a. A majority portion of everything you earn.
 - b. Your money, to be given as you see fit.
 - c. A tenth of everything you earn required of you to support God's work.
 - d. All of the above.

4. T F Money is an evil thing.

5. T F Having wealth is a definite sign of God's blessing upon our lives.

6. T F Money is a useful tool.

7. T F Often our attitudes affect our actions.

8. T F God guarantees us great financial prosperity if we follow Malachi 3:10.

9. T F One important first step toward achieving biblical prosperity is to work.

10. T F Your tithe supports those who are dedicated to the Lord's work.
11. T F Your tithe belongs to you.
12. T F Tithing is only a tradition that is no longer binding on Christians.
13. T F The Lord does not expect us to pay taxes to the government.
14. T F In a family, the budget must be mutually agreed to by the husband and wife.
15. T F If your total expenses exceed your income, you must cut your budget somehow.
16. T F We need food and clothing, but many of us could do with a lot less food and clothing!
17. T F The success of your budget will depend on your discipline in persisting with it.
18. T F Long term debt is better than short term debt.
19. T F It is sinful to save or invest your money.
20. T F The purpose of investing is to maximize your profit.
21. T F The best investment is being free of debt.
22. T F It takes work to save or invest.
23. T F A balanced budget is one that precisely equals income and spending.
24. T F A tithe is to be paid on the net amount of your paycheck.
25. T F A debt is anything legally or morally owed to another person or persons.

When you have completed your test, tear it out of the book and turn it in to the HCF office. If you receive a score of 80% or higher, you will receive a certificate of completion.

