

Life Without Debt

- A basic understanding about debt - what it is and how to avoid it
- Encouraging true stories that will motivate you
- The true facts about the debt industry and their temptations
- Practical warnings about debt that will keep you from getting into more debt
- Busting the myths about needing and using debt
- Timeless principles that give you the real... and the right... reasons to get out of debt and stay out of debt
- Find out how - and why - you can stay out debt FOREVER
- I'll teach you proven, easy to understand techniques that will have you paying off debts in record time
- The truth about the lucrative and opportunistic credit industry
- Dozens of ways to save money, reduce expenses and get out of debt
- How to set financial goals and actually keep them
- Avoid scams, gimmicks and sucker deals

Get Out of Debt &
Stay Out of Debt Forever



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G. BRENT RIGGS

LIFE WITHOUT DEBT - G. BRENT RIGGS

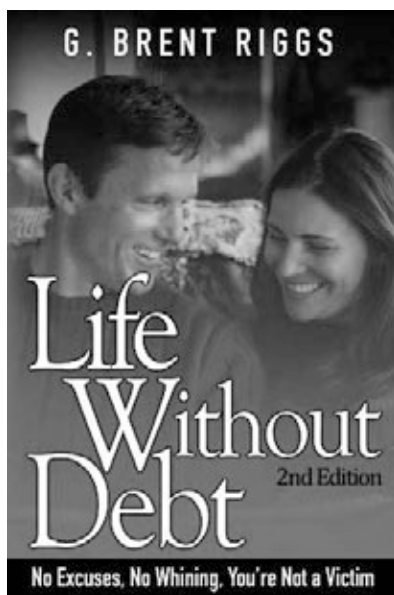
Life Without Debt

2nd Edition

No Excuses, No Whining, You're Not a Victim

LIFE WITHOUT DEBT

No Excuses, No Whining, You're Not a Victim



**Get Out of Debt FAST!
Stay Out of Debt FOREVER!**

G. Brent Riggs

Life Without Debt

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It's Even More Important Now

The financial crisis we're addressed in the past couple of weeks is just symptom of the real problem: our country and most individuals are up to their ears in debt, and as such, are becoming enslaved to false affluence and a lack of fiscal discipline.

The real test is the putting a threshold on a fresh-start solution. It's just a temporary cover. If you are consistent after such a clean starting signal, you have no one to blame but yourself when the bills, once hit, which will be easier rather than later.

You need to get out of debt (and you can), and you need to start living a financially disciplined life if you do. I don't want to suffer the same when the crash truly comes, and I'm in a position to consider to others who will be looking for answers and role models when the same happens.

So what if the "crash" doesn't happen? Is it really that important to get out of debt?

I've shared my way out of debt more than once. I can tell you that marriage and family is tremendously more enjoyable when you are not in constant stress and worried over money and debt, when you do not have to worry about saving life, you can take that same emotional energy and pour it into your relationships.

• Brent

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Palin: Obama's Vice President

By Brent Riggs

Palin: Obama's Vice President
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Life Without Debt

Buy, Buy, Buy
Buy, Buy, Buy
Buy, Buy, Buy

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Preface

Some personal finance teachers claim that your debt is not your fault; you're a victim... That is some serious horse manure nonsense!



Now let me preface that by saying I'm not talking about those people who have fallen prey to some legitimate personal tragedy that has wiped them out financially. I realize that some medical situations, or accidents or even scams can completely destroy a family financially for years or even a lifetime. I'm not talking about those rare cases. I'm talking about the typical person, couple or family today that purchases LIFESTYLE ON CREDIT.

To say that they are not at fault and have simply been victims of the debt industry is pandering and ultimately destructive to those very people. People who use this hook to get people to buy their financial programs or books are appealing dishonestly to the immaturity, ignorance and continued impulsive greed of the very people they claim to be helping.

So, you'll find NO "it's not your fault" in this book. Even those people who have experienced financial tragedy as I described above, can benefit from what I'm teaching, because it will help them through this difficult time.

Yes, the credit industry is a monster. Yes, there are scammers, marketers and lenders using every trick to get you to pay lucrative penalties and fees for borrowing. Yes, there is an entirely society of sharks baiting you into using more credit. But that doesn't mean it's NOT your fault.

They are playing to your greed. They are playing to your impulsiveness. They are playing to your lack of discipline. Yours. You. You have to accept your faults concerning your debt before you will ever make any real progress to correct it.

You can show people how to reduce debt and get out of debt, but if you don't teach them the right attitudes about money and 100% personal responsibility for their choices, they will simply end up back where they were. Financial freedom doesn't come from tricks or techniques to simply alleviate debt, but from discipline, correct attitudes and proper foundational motivations regarding spending, saving and stewardship.

Being in debt is suffocating. Worrying about making your monthly payments is draining. On the contrary, being debt-free is just the opposite: it's refreshing, liberating, and has a tremendous positive impact on your life.

I've been in and out of debt several times myself over the years. Sometimes it was debt from medical bills or unforeseen circumstances. That didn't make the stress any less. The truth is, if I had planned well, stayed out debt consistently, and been more disciplined BEFORE the unforeseen events, then I probably

wouldn't have gotten in debt at all, or at a minimum, I would have been prepared to deal with it more quickly and with less turmoil.

The truth is, though, like most people, my debt was due to the same old thing: buying things I couldn't afford, not budgeting, and blowing my income impulsively. "No money down, low month payments, low introductory rates"... all the same enticements that tempt us to think "only \$100 a month, I can afford that." Thinking in "minimum monthly payments"... a sure fire recipe for financial disaster.

Getting out of debt has so many benefits; it's hard to think of them all. Stress over money is the number one stated cause of divorce. Stress makes us fat, saps our energy, and destroys our health. Debt and stress rob us of relationships and enjoyment. Debt causes depression and hopelessness. It's a monster.

It's Not a Fun Subject

Admitting you've done a sorry job handling your money or that you've fallen for all the consumer marketing gimmicks is not easy. Often, we want to make excuses and justify our debt when most of the time it's the result of one thing: **buying a lifestyle your income cannot afford**. You don't have to be an "addict" or "out of control" to get in debt. It's a very simple and devious formula: consistently spend more money than you make over a period of time, and as sure as the sun rising in the east, you'll find yourself in debt.

Here's what you have to do: 1) Admit you've not been diligent in the area of finances, 2) recognize your impulsive spending habits, and 3) commit to the reasons why you SHOULD be debt-free. No excuses, no whining, no lame victimhood games.

With rare exceptions, people primarily get into debt because they want more lifestyle than they can afford. Understand that, and you are on your way.

What This Book Is Not

I make no claims about giving professional or legal advice. I'm just a normal guy who has lived a lot of life. I've owned and still own businesses. I have a family. I teach, coach, and mentor based on my own life experience. I spend a lot of time educating myself, and I don't give you suggestions and advice about things I do not do myself.

If you want someone with impressive credentials and a name followed by alphabet soup, I'm not your guy. If you need someone with a title, or in this instance, someone with "Financial Planner" or "CPA" after his name, then I apologize for disappointing you.

If you want someone who has experienced a lot, learned a lot, and has a natural gift for motivating and teaching others, then you've come to the right place.

I will guarantee you this: if you use the suggestions and techniques I present, you WILL get out of debt. I don't care what

your income is or the level of debt you have. You WILL get out of debt, it's just a matter of how quickly.

If you get out of debt for the right reasons and educate yourself about WHY you should stay out of debt, I can guarantee you'll have the foundation to stay out of debt forever.

I'm nobody special. I learned these things, put them to work, and now enjoy the freedom and joy of financial peace. You can too. I've got faith in you.

- Brent www.brentriggsblog.com

Is It Really Worth The Effort & Sacrifice?

Life is short. Is all the hard work needed to get out of debt really worth it? Is there a great reward for it, or are we just limiting our enjoyment, failing to get what we can, while we can?

TRUE STORY

The rewards of thinking, teaching or even reaching the goal of "Life Without Debt" are not fully realized until something happens to test the benefits of it.

In July of 2008, our three year old adopted daughter from Guatemala was diagnosed with Leukemia. It's amazing how one word can literally change the focus, routine and paradigm of your entire life.

About a month later, I was informed by my employer at that time that I had the choice of a 50% pay cut or no job. They had been experiencing some cash flow difficulties and previous layoffs had already occurred. The time could not have sucked more, but we trusted in God's provision and timing, and were thankful to still have health insurance to cover our daughter.

So the expenses went up, and the income came crashing down. What kind of pain would this inflict on you in

*your current financial situation? Turmoil? Crisis?
Devastation?*

Leading up to that, we had spent the previous years getting out of debt, had stopped the use of credit, saved up emergency money, and had chosen to live a comfortable lifestyle, but a lifestyle well below our means.

So instead of being faced with a gut-wrenching CRISIS, we were faced with “major adjustments. We tightened the budget, shuffled some things around, and began to make plans for other business opportunities that would start the process of rebuilding our income.

A little stressful, yes, but nothing compared to what it would have been IF: we were living paycheck to paycheck, living above our means financed by easy credit, living in a house that was at the limits of our financial ability, driving new expensive cars, and smothered in twenty or thirty thousand dollars in credit card debt (typical for an American family).

Was the hard work of living debt free worth it? Just ask our daughter who enjoys our attention and care because we are not out of our minds with financial stress.

Some Basics

When it comes to getting out of debt, a lot of people have a hard time getting started because it seems like such a daunting task. Many others are enticed to try gimmicks or, hope against hope, to hit it big in a casino or lottery.

The truth is there is no magic pill or quick fix for getting out of debt. Like most things in life, things that are bad and unhealthy are easy and readily available. Things that are good for you take hard work and discipline. It's easy to get fat; it's hard to get into shape. It's easy to get into debt, but it takes hard work and determination to get out.



It's not a complicated process, so don't let anyone tell you otherwise. It takes hard work and discipline. If you are being sold a quick fix, then you are being lied to and you better get ready to go even deeper into debt.

Remember, you don't have to be **out of control** to get heavily in debt. All it takes is for you to consistently spend more money than you make over a period of time. You don't have to go out on shopping binges. All you need to do is finance a little higher lifestyle than your income can pay for.

When it comes to finances, remember that “compound interest” is both your best friend and your worst enemy. When you’re building wealth, it will help you build wealth quickly. When you owe money to other people, compound interest will be there to make sure you owe them as much as possible.

Been There, Done That!

Just about everyone in America has experienced the frustration and stress of being in debt. The overwhelming majority of us have known what it is like to get in debt and worry about being able to pay the bills. A large percentage of people who do finally get out of debt have clawed their way out of the pit two or three times. An even larger percentage will never get out of debt at all.



In Western society, debt is a culture, a way of life. Debt is a product, a very lucrative product that is the real moneymaker behind many consumer goods, especially large ticket items. On top of that, it is commonly taught and believed that debt is necessary to become wealthy.

Debt is promoted, not under that name of course, as a way to purchase a lifestyle that will make you happy but not necessarily one that you can afford. Generally speaking, and I know there are exceptions, there is one primary reason why people get into debt:

Debt is typically caused by purchasing a lifestyle your income cannot afford.

Lifestyle... that is the culprit behind most personal debt. We are a society afflicted with “affluenza,” the sickness of those who want to appear wealthy or live as if they are wealthy but lack the income to support the lifestyle.

Facts About Debt

Most people would be surprised to know that debt is a relatively recent phenomenon in our society. A couple of generations ago, our grandparents, their parents, and the businesses they created actually considered debt to be wrong... not just an unwise choice, but actual sin.



Of course, today, we don't call anything wrong for fear of being labeled judgmental, but make no mistake, a few generations ago, debt was considered stupid and wrong. Famous business owners like those who founded JCPenney, Sears & Roebuck, and Ford Motor Company would not allow customers to buy their products on credit, nor did they offer any type of credit services. Today, debt products have become the major source of income for most

of those major corporations who refused to offer it just a few decades ago.

Don't be fooled, debt is a very lucrative business. You are not offered credit, payment terms, and plastic because of the goodwill and love of corporations who just want to do something nice for you. You are offered credit for one reason and one reason only: it is an extremely profitable venture.

**In a typical year, billions of solicitations
for credit are offered to the public.**

No company would go to the expense, time, and effort that it takes to put those "debt product offers" together if it was not paying off for them big time.

Warnings About Debt

Let's go over a list of warnings about debt that will help you avoid getting into more debt. Like me, you've probably already been victim to some of these things. If you educate yourself about debt, you can keep from falling prey to more debt traps in the future.

You have to get a loan to buy a car

Simply put, this is complete nonsense. You do not have to have a loan to buy a car. You simply need to be disciplined and save the money first. You need to control your impulsiveness and keep the long term goal in mind. Most people convince themselves that

they must have a new car for all sorts of “convenience and lifestyle reasons.” Since the auto industry makes it so easy and attractive to get credit, it is extremely tempting to go into debt to get a car you cannot afford. The simple fact is, if you must take out a loan to get a car, you are buying a car your income cannot afford.

The truth is, you can get a lot more car for your dollar if you save up the money first, look for a very well maintained two or three year old used vehicle, and start waving cash around in front of a motivated seller.

TRUE STORY

Do my comments about car loans sound familiar to you? When I was a teenager, I got my first job. I immediately determined HOW MUCH CAR PAYMENT I could afford. Of course, I had no problem finding a car dealer who agreed with my assessment that I could afford \$225.00/month in car payment... after all, I made over \$500 in monthly pay! (If that percentage of income for an auto doesn't scare you, it should!) Of course, I discovered quickly that there is more to owning a car than the minimum car loan payment.

As my income rose, about every year or so I got new car fever and carefully calculated that \$50 more a month, or \$80 more a month was something I could “easily”

afford, especially when I got “no payments until March” and no down payments.

As you can imagine, I ended up about 10 years later with a \$600+/month car payment on a vehicle that I was MANY thousands of dollars upside down on, aided, of course, by each car dealer who was more than willing to rollover my deficit into a new loan.

Once I got smart, I paid off the deficit on the vehicle, then sold it for book value to get out from under WAY MORE car than my income could support stress free. I’ve never bought a new car since. I’ve purchased, WITH CASH, reliable used cars. Currently, we drive a very decent 4 year old Honda minivan and a 3 year old Toyota. We don’t owe a dime for cars and could sell both of them for a profit at any time if we chose to.

This is a story I have told my kids over and over. You should warn your kids about the dangers of “new car fever.” If you are in the same situation I was in, don’t worry, you can get out of it too. Pay off the deficit if you are upside down, then sell the car. Save your money to buy a used car WITH CASH, even if you have to drive a junker for a while. The stress is not worth the lifestyle of debt.

Leasing is smart

First of all, let me teach you a principle. The automobile industry, or any big ticket item industry for that fact, does not offer you a way to own their product that is the most cost

effective for you; they offer what is most convenient and easy-to-obtain financing solution that allows you to finance the greatest amount possible. Whichever debt product is being offered, you can rest assured it is the most profitable for them.

Whatever financing package is being pushed, that is the debt product that is most lucrative.

Leasing is actually a very expensive method of obtaining a car and is not worth any tax advantage that you've been sold on. When you run the numbers, leasing is pushed by the automotive industry because the profit margin is much higher than conventional loans.

Rent to own, payday advances, title pawning, etc. are needed for the poor to survive

The truth is, each of these "services" make poor people poorer. Why do you think you do not see these types of businesses in the more wealthy areas of town? It's because you do not build wealth using any of the high priced services. To the contrary, they are surefire ways to get into and stay in even deeper debt.

TRUE STORY

I had a friend who had a habit of taking his equipment, work tools, and valuables to pawn shops to get quick cash. Then he would work ridiculous hours trying to make extra money to pay the interest owed to the pawn shop so that they would not sell his belongings.

After many months of working himself silly, he would finally have enough money to buy back his possessions which, sadly enough, he would often turn around and pawn again soon after that.

Of course, he consistently bemoaned the fact that he couldn't get a break in life and was sure he'd hit the lottery soon.

Cosigning helps others

If you have to cosign for someone, what does that tell you? If the lending agency has reason to deny credit to someone, what makes you think this person is going to pay back the loan? The very fact that someone needs a cosigner should tell you that you are probably



going to end up being responsible for the loan. Rather than cosign, just give them the money. Why?

Cosigning foundationally changes a relationship. Instead of being a father and son or friend and friend, you now become lender and borrower. Once the stress, aggravation, and mistrust begins because of missed payments or “circumstances out of their control” (which seem to occur in lopsided percentages to people with a history of bad debt), your relationship will sour. If you have the money, which you should if you’re willing to cosign, it is better to just give the money than to cosign for it and risk destroying the relationship.

Lotteries will make you rich

Folks, let’s just cut right to the chase about lotteries and similar get-rich-quick fantasies. The lottery is a tax on the poor and the stupid. You have virtually zero chance of getting rich from the lottery, and yet a growing and alarming percentage of people think that at some point in their life they will hit the lottery jackpot. Again, you have virtually no chance of becoming wealthy from the lottery.

The lottery is a tax on the poor and stupid.

Other than that, I have no opinion about it.

Rather than stupidly throwing away your money on a no-win proposition, take the same money that you use to buy lottery tickets and instead of gambling it, invest it. Over the years, the

money that you would have flushed down the toilet playing the lottery will pay off in earnings - every single time without fail. Rather than being a “for sure loser,” be an absolute and certain financial winner by investing that money.

Home-equity loans are great for consolidating debts

Home-equity loans are great for getting into more debt despite what all the commercials say. Think about it. You are offered a loan to consolidate all of your debts at a lower interest rate freeing up more money for you to go out and round up more consumer debt. This fantasy that people will take their now-available-cash-flow and pay off their home equity loan is just that – a fantasy.

The debt consolidation loan industry knows that the overwhelming super majority of people will simply take their freed up cash and go out and secure more debt, thereby generating even more business for the debt industry. These loan businesses are not stupid, and the sooner you realize they are in this for the money and not to help you, the sooner you will quit falling for their temptations.

You must have loans or open credit cards to build credit

First of all, we’re not trying to build credit, we are trying to get out of debt. Open zero-balance accounts are accidents waiting to happen. Why? Because life happens.

Your kid needs braces, you need to go on a vacation, you need new furniture, you just have to have a new car... Reasons pop up all the time to tempt you to use available credit. If that credit is not

Open credit
accounts are
debt accidents
waiting to
happen

available, you have a buffer zone between you and your impulses.

Credit lenders actually see zero balance accounts as trouble waiting to happen because you are asking them to loan you money on your current “debt to income ratio.” They can see that at any moment you could run up your debt significantly by using available credit accounts. Open zero-balance accounts can actually be detrimental to getting more credit, such as a mortgage.

You must have a credit card to do business

There was a time when bank or debit cards were not accepted in some places that credit cards were. Those days are virtually over and, as far as I know, may be dead already. I have been using a Visa bankcard for several years and not one time has it been declined anywhere, for any reason.

Teenagers need credit cards to learn financial responsibility

That’s just a crock of doggie doo that the debt industry has perpetuated. Teenagers need to first be taught to be responsible with cold hard cash, then a bank account, and a debit card.

Teenagers not only do not need credit, you are setting a dangerous precedent and lifestyle choice if you allow them to get used to it at such a young age.

Teenagers are the new target market for the credit industry. Teenagers supposedly feel more like adults when they use credit cards. There may be some truth to that on the surface, but again, don't use credit cards. Teach them to use a bank card that is deducting money from their bank account every time they make a purchase. Teach them real financial responsibility, not debt-laden lifestyle enhancement.

You must have a credit card for a safety net

No, you don't. Save up an emergency cash fund to use as a safety net. You will be surprised how many fewer "emergencies" you actually have if you're spending cold hard cash instead of running up the credit card.

TRUE STORY

I once knew a female about 30 years old who had one of these "safety net" credit cards. Over time, the balance crept up to around seven or eight thousand dollars. This debt came from things like new tires on the car, roof repair on the house, new clothes for a new job... you know, "emergencies."

The interest rate on the card was around 21%, and she did not have good enough credit to move it over to

another credit card with a lower annual percentage rate. She was barely able to make the interest payments, and over time, the card was actually creeping up in balance each month. After paying on the card for several years, she not only had not reduced the balance, the total owed had grown several hundred dollars.

I ended up helping her talk to the credit card company to get the interest rate lowered and then take a one-time lump sum payment for the balance which ended up showing on her credit report as a judgment against her. She only had to pay about half the balance and the credit card company STILL made out like a bandit.

Of course, she was still stuck with paying off the lump-sum loan, but at least it wasn't on a credit card because she had a family member who put up the money and didn't charge interest.

Use credit cards to get cash back bonuses and airline miles

Again, we go back to the principle that any time some sort of reward is offered or benefits featured, the company offering the debt product is not doing it to be nice. Always follow the money. No matter what kind of rewards - bonuses, airline miles or whatever is offered - you can bet your behind that company still

knows they are going to make a lot of money from their debt product.

Credit card companies realize that most people never use their airline miles or credit card rewards. Even when they do, the credit card companies have arranged these reward offerings in such a way that the cost to them and benefit to you is nowhere near what it has cost you to secure those benefits by using the credit card. Don't use a credit card, use cash. Then take the interest you are saving and invest it to get REAL rewards.

Borrowing always changes relationships

I want to emphasize that borrowing always changes relationships. Whether it is the consumer and the product manufacturer, friends borrowing from friends, or family members borrowing from each other, the relationship always changes for the worse. When you go home for Christmas and you're behind three payments on a loan from your parents, it changes the relationship. When you're out to dinner with your best friend who is still wondering whether or not you're going to pay him back, it changes the relationship.

The Truth About the Credit Industry

In October 2008, many of the problems that have long been hidden in the credit industry finally showed up in a big way. The

immediate response was for the government, the very same people who caused the problem to begin with, to now "solve" the problem by taking \$700 billion of your money and mine and giving it to the people who created this disaster. Yeah, that works...

Since this book is about personal finance, I'm not going to talk much here about the problems with the mortgage industry and the government bailout. I'm going to focus on the credit industry which many of our politicians wanted to include in the bailout. The cause of the big financial crash is the exact same cause that will eventually burst the credit bubble: easy credit to people who lack financial discipline and the ability to repay it.

As I said at the beginning of this book, I'm not one of those people who run around saying "it's not your fault you're in debt" (excluding those who have experienced a medical catastrophe or some accident through no fault of their own). To whatever degree you are in debt from using credit cards to purchase lifestyle, it is your fault! Until you change your mindset about credit, no amount of good information on the predatory practices of the credit industry and how to avoid them will keep you from getting in debt.

So keep the number one foundational principle in mind as you read this section: you must change your attitude about debt in order to get out of debt and stay out of debt. You must accept personal responsibility for being in debt and not blame it on anyone else, including the credit industry. With that said, let's

take a look at the credit industry so you'll know how to deal with them and avoid them in the future.

The credit product industry is a huge and extremely lucrative market earning in excess of \$30 billion per year. That's billion with a B. While the government has done a few things to regulate ridiculous interest rates, there is no regulation against fees and penalties, and that has become the primary way that the credit industry makes money. They charge you fees for every imaginable service or transaction and set up the system in such a way as to cause you to very easily began to rack up penalties as well.

Over 1 billion credit cards are in use in the United States, and about one and a half trillion dollars of transactions are processed on them enjoying one of the highest profit margins of any business. Credit card banks and lenders are some of the largest contributors to political candidates on both sides of the aisles. To believe that that does not buy them favorable regulation is to live in a dream world.

We hear so much about the "evil oil companies and their obscene profits" who make on average about 6% profit (while the government gets 18% on the same money) but never hear a word about credit card companies and lenders who jack up rates as high as 30% on top of collecting countless fees and penalties.

It's amazing what banks and credit card companies get away with and never get reported. Financial Peace author Dave Ramsey pulls no punches and calls companies like American Express scumbags

and predators on national radio. It's hard to disagree with him considering some of the settlements they have been subject to: Citibank, \$45 million for improperly assessed late fees; Advanta, \$7.2 million settlement for charging higher interest rates than advertised; Sears, \$36 million settlement for raising interest rates after saying they would not. The sad part is, \$50 million is chump change in the credit industry. They settle these disputes for what amounts to be a painless penalty and then go right on doing whatever it is they were doing in the first place.

Don't be fooled. The credit card company can say they will do something 27 times and it doesn't mean squat. They can go about doing exactly what they want to do, and if and when they are ever challenged, simply pay a settlement and keep right on going. The credit industry is so lucrative that a few lawsuits are nothing but a slight nuisance in the overall scheme of profitability.

Let me educate you about one of their favorite tricks: universal default. Not all credit card companies and banks use universal default, but many of them do. In essence, universal default could be described as saying "we think you MIGHT NOT pay us, so were going to raise your rates." This is most often accomplished by accessing your credit reports and looking for any negative entry that gives them an excuse to declare universal default. By declaring this, they now have the right to raise your rates as high as legally allowed. So if you miss a payment on a medical bill or go to collections for any reason known or unknown, that becomes an

automatic excuse for many lenders to crank up your interest rate on all credit products to the highest limits possible.

They don't have to explain themselves, they don't have to tell you why, and they can tell you pretty much anything they want to tell you as a reason. It's absolutely legal, and they can do it as well as lower or cancel your available credit.

There are four credit areas that you must be most educated and aware of: bankruptcies, credit cards, mortgages and student loans. These are the areas where the worst of the predatory practices reside. Student loans are particularly troublesome in that the credit industry is in bed with the education administrations. The academic institutions frequently receive kickbacks, commissions or some other type of monetary payback in exchange for open access to their student bodies. For the most part, this is done in such a way as to bypass the parents when possible. If you have college students or high school kids about to graduate, you are making a mistake if you don't get well educated and alert about the student loan industry.

So what's a brother to do? Are we just helpless at the hands of the credit industry? Many people selling financial programs or get out of debt services would have you believe just that. Of course that is just as intellectually dishonest as the predatory lending practices they denounce. You are not at the mercy of the credit industry either before you get into debt or after. Let's look at a few things they don't want you to know...

Did you know there is a statute of limitations on debt? Now, we need to be careful here because I never say that you should not repay or don't owe debt that you have legitimately incurred. However, much of this debt is passed around and bought up from collection agency to collection agency and large amounts of punitive fees and penalties are tacked on. I don't care how old the debt is, whether or not it's been written off, or whether or not it's ancient history, or even if you file bankruptcy, if you owe something, you should pay it back no matter what it takes. I'm talking about the principal amount that you owe, but penalties and fees are another matter. I think you should do everything in your power to keep from paying jacked up, outrageous punitive penalties and interest rates. The statute of limitations is one way you can fight back.

Each state has its own laws on the statute of limitations concerning debt but typically runs from 3 to 6 years. So if you're being harassed or contacted about debt that is past the statute of limitations, then you are in the driver's seat as far as the negotiations with a collection agency. In fact, you can tell the collection agencies to kiss off. In order to make restitution, you should figure out what the principal amount was that you legitimately borrowed and go back to the original company and make arrangements to pay it. Now legally because of the statute of limitations, you can simply avoid paying, but that is dishonest. It is corrupt for the lending industry to use legalities and technicalities to jack up what you owe. It is just as lacking in

integrity for you not to pay something you owe because legally you can get away with it.

So check out the statute of limitations in your state, and if you're being hounded by a collection agency concerning old debt, tell those collectors to get lost and quit bothering you. Then, go back and make restitution with the original lender. Often, they will simply tell you to forget it, that it has already been written off and at that point you no longer have the moral duty to pursue it.

Also keep in mind when dealing with collection agencies that they are very persistent, and you should not let them scare you. Never admit to a collection agency that you owe anything (related to debt that is past the statute of limitations) and never send the money because this is an admission that you owe the debt. They will use any and every means to try to prove that you are agreeing to pay the debt back. Don't deal with the collection agency, go back to the original lender and make arrangements to repay any legitimate principle directly to them.

So what about debt that has not run out the statute of limitations? Here are a few tips:

- Never admit to any specific amount but only that you will investigate it to see if you owe anything at all.
- Never agree with the debt collectors about any arrangement or anything they ask you to do.
- Ask the debt collectors for proof of what you owe, the alleged debt occurred and a line item exclamation of the items or services.

Remember that you can always negotiate. While integrity requires us to pay back the principal amount owed on any legitimate lending, the ridiculous interest rates, penalties and fees are up for grabs. There are no official laws that state what they can charge or what you must pay, it is all a negotiation. Be tougher than they are about getting interest rates and penalties significantly reduced or removed from the amount owed.

Many times, we can simply be upfront with them about our financial situation, and the principle holds true that getting something is always better than getting nothing. If the collection agency or credit card company refuses to negotiate interest rates, penalties and fees, then you can persistently remind them that being unable to pay them anything at all is certainly not in their best interest.

Let's end this depressing section with some positive action steps:

- Ask to have penalties and fees removed from your account.
- Ask the credit card company to remove annual fees.
- Insist that the credit company lower your interest rates in order for you to have the ability to pay.
- Educate yourself about credit card gimmicks and traps such as 0% introductory rates and the preprinted checks they send in the mail.
- Know your rights as a credit consumer: you cannot be contacted before 8 AM or after 8 PM; they cannot tell other people that you owe money; they cannot have you arrested or say that they can; they cannot talk to anyone but you about your debt; they cannot threaten to sue you (only the original creditor has the right); they cannot

contact you by phone if you have requested they contact you in writing only; they cannot threaten to take your employment income.

- Be sure to keep detailed and clear records about who you spoke to, details of the conversation and dates.

Oh yeah, get out of debt and quit using credit.

Timeless Principles About Debt

Regardless of whether you call yourself religious or spiritual, there are principles about debt that transcend our personal opinions. So, whether these principles come from the Bible or are just some wise saying, if they are true, they are true.

The Bible has much to say about money and being in debt. Just because these principles come from the Bible doesn't make them biased or irrelevant if you do not believe in the teachings of Christianity. So, try to put aside any bias you may have and learn from these timeless principles.

Proverbs 22:7 - The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is slave to the lender.

The borrower is slave to the lender. Of course, we know this is true. Foreclosures, bankruptcies, collection agencies, and repo companies all have great power over us when we owe them money. When you borrow, you are a slave to the lender. If you don't owe anyone anything, then they cannot bang on your door or send the law to get their money from you.

Romans 13:8 - Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

The Bible teaches that you should owe nothing to anyone except to love them. No matter whether you accept the Bible as your religion or not, you can hardly deny that principle. If you have no debt and owe no one anything except to love them and be kind to them, you will eliminate a large amount of potential stress.

Finally...

Ecclesiastes 5:10 - He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.

If you can never feel satisfied with what you currently have, you may never get out of debt. It is a common trait in human nature that those who want more, simply for the sake of having more, will never get enough.

If you get in debt simply because you want a higher lifestyle than you can afford, there will always be a more affluent lifestyle just beyond your reach. The cycle will never end. You will get into debt to obtain one lifestyle, only to get into more debt to reach the next level of lifestyle. You have to want to be debt-free for the right reasons and not just so you can have more money to spend.

Whether you are a Christian or not, the Bible has a wealth (pun intended) of principles and teaching about money. Money as an inanimate object is of course devoid of innate morality or influence. It is what HUMANS do with money that makes it either

a blessing or curse, heartache or joy, tool or trap. It is with that in mind I offer the following section which is much more “Biblical” in tone, but I implore you not to dismiss it if you are not the “religious” type. Regardless, the wisdom the Scriptures offer about money has to do with honesty, integrity, motivation and character. Christian or not, what decent person is not interested in those things?

Money: the Good, Bad & the Ugly

Luke 12:34 - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

*1 Timothy 6:6 - Now godliness with contentment is great gain.
(NKJV)*

Money. Prosperity. Wealth. Career. Lifestyle. Comfort. Luxury. Recreation. Status.

For most, no other issue consumes such a great portion of our time, thought, emotion, energy and life. It is one of the primary sources of stress, broken marriages, depression and frustration. Debt is suffocating most people, and yet we still don't have enough. We live in a world consumed with wealth and lifestyle. Truth be known, most Christians have no more peace and contentment about money and material possessions than the rest of the world.



Throughout this section I will use several terms interchangeably: "wealth", "riches", "lifestyle", "money" and "things." Either term will refer to our material possessions and in general all the earthly riches that we have or pursue.

It is good to understand "things" as God originally intended, then know what went wrong. God originally created man to enjoy direct fellowship with Him. There was a place in man's heart, the "throne" of his life, that only God was worthy to occupy. God enjoyed sole occupation of man's uncorrupted heart and "things" were kept in their proper perspective and place.

Everything external of man ("things") was created for man's use, man's enjoyment... as a blessing from God to His children.

"Things" were subservient to man and always external to his heart. Only God was allowed the adoration, love and desire that

flowed from an innocent heart. Man had one thing inside: God - and countless things external, all under his dominion and there for his enjoyment... compliments of the Creator of the Universe. And then we decided to mess it up.

"Things" war to take God's rightful position in our life.

When sin entered God's creation, the natural order was thrown out of balance. Now all of sudden "things" entered into man's heart and to this day fight fiercely to keep God off the throne of every life. "Things" replace God. Money is such a big issue because it is the primary vehicle by which "things" are acquired.

Money and "things" dominate our lives in all but the poorest of societies - just in varying degrees: the desire for them, the pursuit of them, the maintenance, organization, protection and securing of them. In more affluent societies, we have a mentality that our lifestyles should be always increasing towards more comfort, more leisure and more luxury. One of the most common advertising phrases now is: **"you deserve"**... a nice house, a new car, the latest clothes, the softest bed and a longer vacation. You deserve it! Why? Well, that's never explained. But it suffices just to inform people they "deserve" prosperity because it appeals to the lowest common denominator of sinful hearts.

I'm not about "money bashing" any more than I am the "rah-rah" "success & prosperity" teacher. Money and material possessions

are not the issue. **Our hearts are the issue.** Our attitudes, motives and perspectives on "things" are the issue.

God decides whom to bless materially for His own purposes. It is not our place to pronounce that wealth is wrong. It is always our place to learn what God has to say about wealth and change our lives accordingly.

Now, let's begin to look at money... the good, the bad and the ugly.

The Ugly: No amount of money will ever make an unhappy person happy; or a discontented person content

Ecclesiastes 2.10-11 - Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.

If you are discontent right this moment, you are a discontented person, period. Whatever "if only" you have in your mind is a lie. If only I had a bigger house; if only I had a better job; if only I had more money; if only I had a different relationship; if only I could have more fun...

In Ecclesiastes, King Solomon takes away all our "if only's." He was rich beyond our wildest imagination. He set out to

have/do/experience everything life offered with no limits. When done, he declared that it is all a waste of time without God.

If you cannot learn to be contented and happy with what you have right now, at this very moment, you will never be happy with any amount of money or "things." You can believe God's Word and save yourself some heartache, or you can learn it at the School of Hard Knocks.

The Bad: Prosperity causes you to “need” what you never needed before

Hebrews 13:5 - Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (NKJV)

As money and material possessions increase, so does our desire for them. The older you are, the more you should be able to see this. Think of all the things you have now. Ten, twenty, thirty years ago... would you have dreamed you would have these things or need them?

Societies as a whole experience this too. A hundred years ago, food, water and shelter were considered necessities. Fifty years ago we added plumbing, electricity and transportation to the list. Thirty years ago, we added appliances, TV and air conditioning.

Today the list of "necessities" is embarrassing. They include numerous electronic items, microwaves, VCR's, fashionable clothes, a NICE car, makeup, sports equipment and on and on.

Don't believe me? Do an informal survey of the younger generations. Better yet, how uncomfortable would you be reducing your life to basic food, clothing and shelter?

Increased prosperity causes us to "need" things we never needed before, whether individually or as a society.

The Good: Ask God for just the right amount – not too much, not too little

With each "bad and ugly" truth we want to balance it by giving a Godly perspective on money so that we can replace sinful attitudes with righteous ones when it comes to "things."

Proverbs 30:7-9 - Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God. (NKJV)

The Biblical definition of "poor" is to not have enough food or resources to get through TODAY. To be "prosperous" meant to have enough for today and not have to worry about whether or not your needs would be fulfilled. To be "rich" meant to have more than you need for today.

By those definitions, only the poorest of the poor today are "Biblically poor." The majority of people are rich in God's eyes. It doesn't matter if we change the definitions or not, God's truth is

still the truth. We change the definition of "poor" based on lifestyle, not based on true necessity.

When it comes to material possessions, the writer of Proverbs instructs us to pray for "prosperity," but it's God's definition, not ours. "Lord, don't make me so poor that I have to steal and bring shame to your Name. But don't give me so much 'stuff' that I don't need You anymore and forgot that I depend on You."

Or in other words, "Lord, give me just the right amount of money to live a Godly life and do Your will; but not so much that material possessions hinder my need and love for You".

The Ugly: The pursuit of money never brings satisfaction and can consume your life

Ecclesiastes 4:8 - There is one alone, without companion: He has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, Nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, "For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?" This also is vanity and a grave misfortune. (NKJV)

The unbridled pursuit of material possessions, success or achievement in this world will lead to loss of relationships. Loneliness is the reward for the covetous and the workaholic. And yet, this person will never have enough, earn enough or find any sort of lasting satisfaction.

In fact, a person can become so consumed with "things" that they never even stop to ask "why?" He deprives himself for money. He

works endlessly for newer things, nicer things and more things.

And yet he doesn't even know why. He just does it.

The writer of Ecclesiastes declares this to be a waste of time and a very sad tragedy.

The Bad: Prosperity causes us to believe that what we have, we deserve

Deuteronomy 8:18 - "And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (NKJV)

*Job 41:11 - Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him?
Everything under heaven is Mine. (NKJV)*

One of the most common advertising slogans now is "you deserve." Get the "loan you deserve," the new car "you deserve," the lawyer "you deserve" who will sue someone for the "money you deserve;" and the employer who will give you the "job you deserve" and the "benefits you deserve."

This idea of "you deserve" appeals to the lowest common denominator of man: pride and greed; which explains why it is such a successful marketing tool.

We don't deserve anything. Everything we have is God's, and not only that, the very ability to earn wealth in the first place is a gift

from God. We don't "deserve" anything good on our own merit. We only get "good" because God is merciful, loving and kind. We should spend our time humbly thanking God that He sees fit to give us anything at all instead of whining that we don't have what "we deserve."

Who is man that we deserve anything from God? Which of us were here before God? Which of us created anything? Which of us has merited the slightest bit of deserving anything from God by our own righteousness? God blesses out of his love and tender mercy. As Christians we are most blessed because God sees us as righteous through the blood of Jesus. And yet Christians are just as guilty of "I deserve" as the world. We just mask it in the form of "Why me God? What did I do to deserve this?"

"Why me?" is "I deserve" phrased as a question.

Everything good you have, you didn't deserve. And if you never receive another good thing, you have already gotten more than you truly deserved to begin with. It's time to be thankful, not complaining and discontented.

The Good: Material blessings are a gift from God to be enjoyed as long as God remains on the Throne of our lives

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 - I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man

should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God. (NKJV)

There is nothing wrong with having money or having "things." It's when "things" have you that the problems begin. God gives us success and prosperity because He loves us and wants us to enjoy His creation.

When "things" threaten to banish Him from our hearts, the most loving reaction from God is the swift and sure removal of whatever is threatening His Kingship in our life. So enjoy what you have. Rejoice in the material possessions that God has given you as the fruit of honest labor and hard work.

Never forget the Giver, and never allow the gifts to receive the adoration, desire and love that belong only to God.

The Ugly: Wealth does not bring security

Ecclesiastes 5:13-14a - There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: Riches kept for their owner to his hurt. But those riches perish through misfortune; (NKJV)

No amount of money brings security. Any amount of money can be taken from you in a moment of time. Money can't secure your health, your safety, your peace of mind or your happiness.

Stock market crashes, thieves, lawsuits, governments and disasters can wipe out fortunes in a blink. "Riches kept for their

owner to his hurt" are riches that a man puts his faith, hope and security in. When they are taken, the security is taken as well.

Wealth doesn't secure you from injustice, pestilence, wars, disease or adversaries. "Things" don't give you security. Being in God's will does.

The Bad: Prosperity actually decreases true wealth for most people because we buy more than we need or can afford primarily due to advertising

Proverbs 13:7 - There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches. (NKJV)

The more things we have, the more things we have to have. Prosperity feeds itself, and advertising is like pouring gas on a fire.

*A lot of advertising has a subversive purpose...
to make you discontent with what you have,
who you are and what others think of you.*

We see thousands of ads each week. The effects are worth multiple billions in ad campaigns because Madison Ave KNOWS the truth about what we want to deny: that advertising works and gets us to buy what we don't need, can't afford and shouldn't have.

Advertising in general cultivates covetousness, jealousy, class envy and greed. It is truly a killer of Godliness in a society. So am I

saying we should criminalize advertising? No. Jesus didn't come to enact social change. He came to change hearts. If the heart is right, the correction of symptoms will naturally follow.

For most people, prosperity decreases our true wealth. We buy things we don't need. Then we have to house them, care for them, insure them, organize them and protect them. And we have to buy the stuff to do that and on and on we go snowballing into garages full of "stuff" that require bigger houses that quickly get filled up with more "stuff."

Prosperity typically decreases true wealth for most people.

The Good: Examine your life and be honest about what your real treasure is

Matthew 6:19-21 - "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (NKJV)

It's easy to figure out where our "treasures" are in life. Look at a person's schedule and checkbook, and the answer will be clear what is important to them. It is profitable for us to do a self-examination occasionally to see if our "treasure" is where it should be: in eternity.

Look at your checkbook. God knows we need BASIC food, clothing, shelter; beyond that, where is most of your money spent? On eternal investment? Or on this life?

Look at your schedule. How much of your resources are spent pursuing, maintaining, protecting and managing “things”? How much time and money is spent getting MORE of these things?

Giving to God is the only safe and sure investment; it pays guaranteed exponential dividends for all eternity. Don't leave your treasures here on earth where rust and thieves destroy them. Send them to heaven where they will be waiting for you with a ten-fold, one-hundred-fold or one-thousand-fold or more return.

The Ugly: Wealth never brings peace of mind

Ecclesiastes 5:12 - The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, Whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. (NKJV)

When you drove a \$500 piece of junk, were you ever worried about someone scratching it? Did you care if someone borrowed it? Did the thought of it being stolen cause you much anxiety? Did you spend a lot of money insuring it to the max so you would feel "protected" from these things?

The more you have, the more tragic it is to lose it. The nicer and more expensive your things are, the more you worry about them being damaged and the more reluctant you are to allow someone

to use them. The bigger your stock portfolio is, the harder it is to watch the Market fall.

The more you have, the harder it is to ever relax from the endless needs to maintain, organize, insure, protect, maintain and care for it all. The more you have, the more people will be trying to get you to give it up to them. Someone or something will always be trying to relieve you of your wealth.

The answer? Send it on ahead to heaven where it will be perfectly safe, enjoy exponential rates of return and count for all eternity. The "abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep" only while he holds on tightly to his riches in this life. Invest in heaven, the eternal bull market.

The Bad: Prosperity brings the freedom and power to pursue idleness, pleasure, recreation and multitudinous choices rather than being focused on a few primary pursuits

Proverbs 13:7 - There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches. (NKJV)

God, family, balanced work and ministry... these are the important things in life that go neglected when prosperity brings the ability to pursue an endless choice of new experiences. But life would be boring just concentrating on a few primary responsibilities, right? Exactly my point.

Wealth and prosperity bring the freedom to have sex with less consequences because we can buy birth control, get abortions, have the government pay for illegitimate children or hire lawyers to sue for "support" we are "owed."

Prosperity gives us power to ignore health disciplines – overeating, poor diet, smoking, drinking, drugs, promiscuous sex... all can be somewhat remedied or the effects cushioned by prosperity that provides pills, therapy, surgery and support groups for every indulgence imaginable.

Prosperity gives us the freedom to get drunk, waste away the hours watching movies and surfing the Internet, indulge in endless sources of immorality, buy things we don't need, gamble, chase the newest adrenaline rush or sport, etc, etc, etc.

Wealth brings CHOICE OVERLOAD in every area of our life: clothing, vacations, entertainment, pleasure, recreation, etc.

Prosperity threatens to trap us in temporal pursuits that hold no eternal value. Wealth is not the problem. The problem arises when we choose to use the new found power and freedom that wealth brings to pursue fun, pleasures, sensation, comfort and luxury simply because now we can afford to.

The important things in life quickly become "boring:" God, family, work & ministry. The freedom and power that money brings can be every bit as addicting and intoxicating as drugs or sex. Don't underestimate its effects. As the level of your prosperity rises, increase your alertness to these dangers.

The Good: We love what we pay for or invest in

Luke 12:34 - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (NKJV)

What do your kids love more? The car you buy for them? Or the one they have to work, sweat and pay for themselves? We teach our children all the time the principle that wherever our hard-earned money is invested, we have more of an interest in that investment.

We teach the principle to our kids, yet ignore it when it comes to us and God. We spend our blessings on endless, worthless, temporal "things" that end up being quickly forgotten or neglected. Our God is trying to tell us to quit taking His blessings for granted and start using them for eternal good.

You are attracted to, and interested in, what you spend your time and money on.

Don't believe me? Show me your checkbook or schedule and I will tell you exactly what you are most interested in. Maybe another vacation or set of new golf clubs seems much more exciting than missionaries or evangelism. How do you change that?

- Give your money to missions and see how quickly you come to love and be concerned about missions.
- Give your money to the poor and see how quickly you come to love and be concerned about the truly needy.
- Give time to evangelism and see how quickly evangelism becomes an important topic in your life.

Where does most of your money go? Recreation, house, clothes, cars, possessions... making more money? Does your spending parallel what you love and are interested in? You will begin to be attracted to and more interested in God's work or good works when you start investing in them.

The Ugly: Prosperity never decreases need

Ecclesiastes 5:11 - When goods increase, They increase who eat them; So what profit have the owners Except to see them with their eyes? (NKJV)

It's just one of those facts everyone knows is true. "The more you have, the more you need." It's like building a garage twice as big as the one you have. "If you build it, they will come" ("they" being more stuff to fill it up).

The more money you have, the more needs there will be, the more hands that will be held out for it, the more someone will be trying to take it from you. It seems to be completely contrary to logic, but it's almost universally true. The more you have, the more you need to take care of what you have, and the cycle just keeps feeding on itself.

Notice the phrase, "They increase who eat them." How long does it take someone who was dirt poor last week and world famous this week to have an entire entourage on the payroll? Lottery winners and the very rich are constantly barraged by people with "deals" and "ideas" and who need "help."

I have a friend who is a millionaire, and he confided with me how suspicious he had become of any “new friends” because inevitably they ended up wanting money from him in some form. He found out he had more “friends” than he had ever dreamed about. He came to the point where it was hard to tell who really needed help and was worthy of it.

What's a good mentality about money? John

Wesley: “Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can”

A good revision of that for us today is “work hard, spend as little as possible, give as much as possible.”

The Bad: Prosperity brings stimulation and sensation, but at a price

*Proverbs 13:7 - The leech has two daughters - Give and Give!
(NKJV)*

The more things we have, the more we can enjoy the sensations and stimulation of worldly pleasures and luxury. The problem is there is always more pleasure, more sensation, more money and more luxury. Like sex, drugs or adrenaline, it always takes nicer, newer and more things to satisfy that stimulation you get.

Stimulation becomes addictive, and boredom quickly comes home to roost when our life is filled with the wheels, thrills and deals of our modern lifestyle.

- Boredom is remedied with electronic entertainment or adrenaline-producing “extreme” activities.
- Over-stimulation results in decreased intellect, vocabulary, abstract thinking skills and the ability to “dream.”
- An increase of stimulation is always necessary to continue getting the “satisfaction” or pleasurable feeling that is desired.
- Prosperity endears us to this world and makes the glory of heaven diminished.
- We don’t long for the better things of heaven because we have the “better” things now and not enough time to learn that heaven is actually better.
- We’re too busy pursuing the “good” earthly things to think about heaven.
- We are simply incapable of conceiving of the better heavenly things because we have not exercised the skill.

God wants us to enjoy life. He wants us to experience the wonders of His creation. But not at the cost of our fellowship and longing for Him.

The Good: Get your mind off money, and on to God

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 - Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil. (NKJV)

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of

good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (NKJV)

If you get your mind focused on God, the importance of money and the accompanying anxieties will diminish. Easy to understand, hard to do.

God did not create us to be consumed with His creation.

God created "things" for us. He is quite capable of giving us exactly what we need to do His will. God created us to be consumed with thoughts about getting more of Him, not more of what He created. God has always meant for us to think about Him, meditate on Him, wonder at Him and talk about Him. An impartial observer of most of our lives would probably conclude that we continually meditate on our material possessions, issues concerning money and our ever increasing lifestyle, not God.

Get your mind off money, and on to God, and see how quickly "things" fall in to their proper place.

The Ugly: The richest & wisest man who ever lived hated life because his wealth was powerless to bring happiness

Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 - Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind. Then I hated all my labor in which I had

toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity. (NKJV, emphasis mine)

King Solomon gives 3 reasons for “hating his wealth”:

- Earthly speaking, you can’t keep it; so either spend it, send it or lose it.
- Money is a tool; unless you put the tool to work (spending), it does nothing for you.
- So the real question is HOW you spend it or send it: on eternal things, or temporal things?

Money won’t keep you warm, but it will buy a heater; you can’t eat money, but you can buy food; money won’t save anyone, but it will help spread the message of salvation.

Solomon hated the fact that someone else would end up with his wealth who had not earned it. No one appreciates what they didn’t work for as much as the person who did.

He knew from his wisdom and experience that everything he had built and earned would probably be wasted by someone who took it for granted. The inheritance he would leave would be squandered (which indeed Rehoboam did!)

That is why it is good parenting not to “give” everything to our children; let them learn to work for things; earn them; then they will appreciate it more (example: cars, money, college educations, recreation, etc.)

Money is a blessing you can use in three ways:

Lose it, spend it,

or send it

You can store up for yourself treasures on earth where moth, rust and thieves will get it; spend it on temporal things that will give you a very short moment of satisfaction in this life; OR, send it on ahead to heaven where it will reap exponential returns for all eternity!

The Bad: Prosperity can cause our material possessions to become “statements” instead of tools or simply blessings

1 Thessalonians 4:11 ...that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you... (NKJV)

As prosperity increases, our possessions become statements of our so-called success. No longer are they simple functional tools that provide transportation, shelter and clothing. Now our possessions must make a statement about our style, our success and our income level. We get respect, attention and admiration because of our "things", not because of our sacrificial life for Christ.

*It's no longer a blessing simply to have "things"...
we must now have nice things, new things and
stylish things that tell people how successful we
are.*

Prosperity moves us from functionality and adequacy to image and status.

- A car that gets us reliably from Point A to Point B isn't good enough anymore.
- Cars are now statements of who we are, how much money we make and how "cool" we are.
- Our cars are so nice it gives us an ulcer to actually let someone use them.
- Houses that shelter us and allow us to show Christian hospitality are no longer adequate.
- Now they have to be big, new, stylishly decorated homes in the "right" neighborhood with manicured and landscaped lawns.
- Clothes that keep us warm, modest and comfortable aren't good enough unless they are also fashionable and give the right image.

Think about it... what makes clothing "out of style?" Who says? What's the criteria? What is "style" anyway? Who say which "style" looks good? The companies who stand to profit from clothing, that's who!

Every year your clothing is no longer any good because the companies who sell clothes say they aren't! And guess what? They just happen to have some new ones that ARE in "style." Imagine that. MADNESS!

And we're ALL suckered into this scam to the degree that we can afford it!

How our heart deceives us into thinking "that's not me!". How embarrassed would you be to drive a "junky" (but reliable) car; wear inexpensive, clearance-rack, out-of-date (but adequate) clothing; live in a "dumpy" (but safe) neighborhood and use a \$10 garage-sale set of golf clubs (with which you get the same score as your new \$2000.00 set of clubs)?

If you can truly say to God that it wouldn't bother you, good for you. If you can't, like most of us, then "image" is important to you to some degree. Only you and God know how much.

The Good: God prospers us not to raise our standard of living, but to raise our standard of good works and giving

1 Timothy 6:17-19 - Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the

living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (NKJV)

Don't get prideful and arrogant about what God has given you, the key word being "given." What do you have that God didn't give to you? If you think there is ANY thing, then you are very mistaken. You didn't create you. You don't give you health, strength, talent and opportunity. You don't protect you or bless your efforts. God does, not you.

You will give an account for what you did with your material blessings, and it will affect you for all eternity. If you are rich, then God expects you to be rich in good works. And remember the Biblical definition of rich: having more than you need for one day. We will have no excuse for not having laid up much treasure in heaven!

The Ugly: Life is risky and uncertain; invest your blessings and time wisely on things that matter eternally

Galatians 6:7 - Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (NKJV)

Ecclesiastes 11:1 - Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.

- “Send out your grain in many ships” is a paraphrase of this verse.
- In Solomon’s time it would be months before the income from a shipment was realized; the owner had no way to control what would happen to the ships; many things could happen bad.
- Life is a risk, an adventure; have faith in God and take a risk to live for God.
- We can’t control what happens in life; don’t live scared; “cast your bread.”

Ecclesiastes 11:2 - Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, For you do not know what evil will be on the earth.

- Know why you work and how to use it wisely – know where to “give a serving” – know how to use what God has given you to make the best eternal investment.
- “Don’t put your eggs in one basket.”
- Diversify your efforts and be good to as many people as you can.
- What comes around goes around.
- Relationships are what count, so put your wealth to good use by being good to people and helping them because you never know what will happen in this life.

Ecclesiastes 11:3 - If the clouds are full of rain, They empty themselves upon the earth; And if a tree falls to the south or the north, In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie.

- There are some things in life that WILL occur... good WILL happen; bad WILL happen – we just do not know when or where or what.
- Life happens to everyone, no one is exempt or protected.

- The clouds here speak of the future, and the trees speak of the past.
- The future is uncertain: will it rain or not? You can't really tell from the clouds. You can make a good guess, but still a guess... trust God!
- Learn to let the past go... if a tree falls, it lies; you can't change it. Just move on and trust God!

Ecclesiastes 11:4-6 - He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know what is the way of the wind, Or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do not know the works of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, And in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike will be good.

- Live life now; don't wait; don't look for the "perfect time" or you will never do anything; being over-cautious (truly overly-cautious) keeps us from ever attempting to do anything.
- We don't know what God will do, how He will do it or why He does it; so just step out in faith and do SOMETHING.
- God is concerned about our motives, attitudes and faith.
- Right decisions will follow a right heart.
- Learn to live in trust and faith in God.

The Bad: Prosperity solves some problems while creating others

Material prosperity brings a mixed bag of blessings. Many things in life are made easier, cured, fixed or solved... but often times it creates a new problem unknown before that time. For example:

- Many physical diseases have been cured, but the diseases of the prosperous (stress, depression, boredom, covetousness, etc.) are at all time highs.
- Superstitions and pagan religious fear has decreased but so has our trust in anything that is not physical (medicine, science, etc).
- Our labor is easier but laziness and idleness are epidemic.
- Transportation is amazing now, but extended family communities don't exist anymore which helps erode the family unit as God created it.
- We can get away from each other, relationships and problems at record speed as well as pursue opportunities that take us far away from our support group and accountability.
- Daily tasks are done faster and easier, but our lives are busier and more overloaded than ever.
- We do each task faster, thereby freeing up more time to add more tasks.
- Most people claim to be very busy and have no time for rest or God even though very few people do without TV, movies, sports, etc.
- Information is at our finger tips, but it brings ungodliness and filth to every home via TV and the Internet as well as consumes our lives with trivial, ever-changing information.
- Communication is instant to anyone anywhere, and now we are all robbed of any peace or privacy or solitude.
- We are dying of "easy accessibility;" how many times has someone gotten mad at you because you had the audacity to turn off your cell phone?

Material possessions, wealth, technology and progress are all gifts from God when viewed in Godly perspective. We must be aware of the "price" that comes attached and counter it appropriately with spiritual safeguards.

The Good: Everything we have is God's

Psalm 24:1 - The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein. (NKJV)

I remember the day that this principle hit home with me. Through an unfair and unjust act, a person was going to be getting a fairly large amount of money from me that they neither deserved nor had been truthful about. One of my mentors reminded me that it was God's money, and if He allowed them to have it, who was I too question it?

Oh, how the anxiety of the situation melted when I brought my perspective in line with God. It WAS all God's money! And guess what? He is quite big enough to take care of it Himself. So if God was allowing His money to be moved from me to someone else, why was I worried about it? About two seconds after getting my spiritual perspective straight, the "unfairness" of the situation became irrelevant. I didn't have to be discouraged, upset or worried about God's money... it's His money and He can well do with it as He pleases!

God can decide what to do with His stuff quite nicely without me, thank you very much.

Deuteronomy 8:18 - And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (NKJV)

- Everything we have is God's; not 10%, not what's left over, not what you decide to give Him.
- Even the power to earn money in the first place comes from God!

Psalm 50:10-12 - For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field are Mine. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness. (NKJV)

- God doesn't need "our" money; He wants our hearts.
- If God were hungry (rhetorical) He would NOT tell us; He owns everything already!

Job 41:11 - Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine. (NKJV)

- God doesn't owe us anything; He owns it all.
- We have no right to think we deserve anything; we should simply be thankful for what we do have!

Here's a bullet point summary for "Money: the Good, the Bad & the Ugly" that you can return to and review when you need a reminder:

The Ugly:

- No amount of money will ever make an unhappy person happy or a discontented person content. If you are discontent right this moment, you are a discontented person, period.
- The pursuit of money never brings satisfaction and can consume your life.

- The writer of Ecclesiastes declares this to be a waste of time and a very sad tragedy.
- Wealth does not bring security.
- Wealth doesn't secure you from injustice, pestilence, wars, disease or adversaries. "Things" don't give you security. Being in God's will does.
- Wealth never brings peace of mind.
- The more you have, the harder it is to ever relax from the endless needs to maintain, organize, insure, protect, maintain and care for it all. The more you have, the more people will be trying to get you to give it up to them. Someone or something will always be trying to relieve you of your wealth.
- Prosperity never decreases need.
- The more money you have, the more needs there will be, the more hands that will be held out for it; the more someone will be trying to take it from you. It seems to be completely contrary to logic, but it's almost universally true. The more you have, the more you need to take care of what you have and the cycle just keeps feeding on itself.
- The richest & wisest man who ever lived hated life because his wealth was powerless to bring happiness.
- Money is a blessing you can use in three ways: Lose it, spend it, or send it.
- Life is risky and uncertain; invest your blessings and time wisely on things that matter eternally.

The Bad:

- Prosperity causes you to "need" what you never needed before. Increased prosperity causes us to "need" things we never needed before, whether individually or as a society.
- Prosperity causes us to believe that what we have we deserve.
- One of the most common advertising slogans now is "you deserve." This idea of "you deserve" appeals to the lowest

common denominator of man: pride and greed; which explains why it is such a successful marketing tool. We don't deserve anything. Everything we have is God's, and not only that, the very ability to earn wealth in the first place is a gift from God.

- Prosperity actually decreases true wealth for most people because we buy more than we need or can afford primarily due to advertising.
- The more things we have, the more things we have to have. Prosperity feeds itself and advertising is like pouring gas on a fire. Advertising has one purpose alone... to make you discontent with what you have, who you are and what others think of you.
- Prosperity brings the freedom and power to pursue idleness, pleasure, recreation and multitudinous choices rather than being focused on a few primary pursuits.
- Wealth brings CHOICE OVERLOAD in every area of our life: clothing, vacations, entertainment, pleasure, recreation, etc. The important things in life quickly become "boring:" God, family, work & ministry. The freedom and power that money brings can be every bit as addicting and intoxicating as drugs or sex. Don't underestimate its effects.
- Prosperity brings stimulation and sensation, but at a price.
- The more things we have, the more we can enjoy the sensations and stimulation of worldly pleasures and luxury. The problem is there is always more pleasure, more sensation, more money and more luxury. God wants us to enjoy life. He wants us to experience the wonders of His creation. But not at the cost of our fellowship and longing for Him.
- Prosperity can cause our material possessions to become "statements" instead of tools or simply blessings.
- As prosperity increases, our possessions become statements of our so-called success. It's no longer a blessing simply to have "things"... we must now have nice things, new things and stylish things that tell people how

successful we are. Prosperity moves us from functionality and adequacy to image and status.

- Prosperity solves some problems while creating others.
- Material prosperity brings a mixed bag of blessings. Many things in life are made easier, cured, fixed or solved... but often times it creates a new problem unknown before that time such as stress, depression, boredom, covetousness, etc. Material possessions, wealth, technology and progress are all gifts from God when viewed in Godly perspective. We must be aware of the "price" that comes attached and counter it appropriately with spiritual safeguards.
- Other hidden, potential dangers of prosperity that we should be on guard against:
- Prosperity can cause you to feel like what you do have is somehow less because of what you can see that you don't have.
- Prosperity can cause us to be stressed or bitter about being denied continued prosperous growth.
- Prosperity decreases deprivation and physical need but exponentially increases covetousness.
- Prosperity increases our lifestyle and comfort but decreases our ability to empathize or care about the truly poor.
- Prosperity can increase addictions of all sorts.
- Prosperity can cause an increase in human conflict in families, businesses, communities & nations.
- Prosperity can cause a society to cheat and distrust.
- Prosperity rampantly increases impulsiveness and the short-term gratification mentality.
- Prosperity can cause you to trust in, and find contentment in the blessings rather than the One who blesses.
- Prosperity can cause us to begin to believe that what we have is ours, not God's.
- Prosperity endears us to this world and makes the glory of heaven diminish.

- Prosperity can cause us to lose any cushion or reserves in our time, emotions and money to deal with life; and we become overloaded trying to maintain a lifestyle.

The Good:

- Ask God for just the right amount – not too much, not too little. Or in other words, "Lord, give me just the right amount of money to live a Godly life and do Your will; but not so much that material possessions hinder my need and love for You."
- Material blessings are a gift from God to be enjoyed as long as God remains on the Throne of our lives.
- There is nothing wrong with having money or having "things." It's when "things" have you that the problems begin. Never forget the Giver, and never allow the gifts to receive the adoration, desire and love that belongs only to God.
- Examine your life and be honest about what your real treasure is.
- It's easy to figure out where our "treasures" are in life. Look at a person's schedule and checkbook and the answer will be clear what is important to them. It is profitable for us to do a self-examination occasionally to see if our "treasure" is where it should be: in eternity.
- We love what we pay for or invest in.
- You are attracted to, and interested in, what you spend your time and money on. Don't believe me? Show me your checkbook or schedule and I will tell you exactly what you are most interested in. You will begin to be attracted to and more interested in God's work when you start investing in it.
- Get your mind off money and on to God.
- God did not create us to be consumed with His creation. Get your mind off money and on to God, and see how quickly "things" fall in to their proper place.

- God prospers us not to raise our standard of living, but to raise our standard of good works and giving.
- You will give an account for what you did with your material blessings, and it will affect you for all eternity. If you are rich, then God expects you to be rich in good works. And remember the Biblical definition of rich: having more than you need for one day. We will have no excuse for not having laid up much treasure in heaven!
- Everything we have is God's.
- God can decide what to do with His stuff quite nicely without me, thank you very much. Everything we have is God's; not 10%, not what's left over, not what you decide to give Him; Even the power to earn money in the first place comes from God! God doesn't owe us anything; He owns it all. We have no right to think we deserve anything; we should simply be thankful for what we do have!

For more detail about what the Bible says on money, I've included the following list. As you'll see, God understands that money is an important issue in our life, and He has not left us without plenty of wisdom on the topic:

- CHARGING INTEREST: Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-38; Deuteronomy 23:19-20; Proverbs 28:8; Nehemiah 5:7-11; Psalms 15:5; Ezekiel 18:1-19; 22:12
- GOD'S THOUGHTS ABOUT RICHES: Genesis 24:34-35; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; 1 Samuel 2:7-8; 1 Kings 3:10-13; 2 Chronicles 1:11-12; 17:5; Job 31:24-28; 34:18-19; Psalms 17:14-25; 37:13; 112:1-3; Proverbs 8:18-21; 10:22; 11:16; 13:22; 15:16; 22:1; 22:4; 28:6; 28:20; Ecclesiastes 2:26; 5:10; 4:7-8; Isaiah 3:14-25; 5:14-17; 10:1-4; 53:9; 55:1-2; Jeremiah 5:26-29; 7:5-7; 9:23-24; 17:11; 48:7; 49:4-5; 51:13; Ezekiel 16:49-50; Hosea 12:7-11; Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:10-15; 6:1-7

- LENDING: Deuteronomy 24:6; 24:10-13; 24:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-10
- UNTRUSTWORTHINESS OF WEALTH: Psalms 39:6; 49:1-20; 52:6-7; Proverbs 3:13-16; 8:17-19; 11:4; 11:28; 13:8; 22:16; 23:4-5; 28:22; 30:7-9; Ecclesiastes 5:10-12; 10:6; Ezekiel 28:4-10
- WEALTH HINDERS FELLOWSHIP: Genesis 13:5-7; 26:12-15; 31:1-21
- GODLY USE OF RICHES: Deuteronomy 14:22-29; Proverbs 3:9; 19:17; 22:9; Luke 3:10-14; 12:13-34; 16:1-15
- THE POOR, WIDOWS & ORPHANS: Exodus 6:5-7; 22:21-24; 23:6; 23:10-11; Leviticus 14:19-22; 19:9-10; 25:1-55; 27:8; Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:22-28; 15:1-18; 24:10-15; 24:17-22; 25:5-10; 25:19-21 26:5-8; 26:12-13; 27:19; 1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 14:6; 22:24-25; 34:6; 35:10; 68:5; 68:10; 69:32; 74:21; 82:3-4; 94:5-6 107:4-9 107:35-36; 112:9; 113:7; 132:15; 140:12; 146:8-9; Proverbs 14:31; 15:25; 17:5; 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; 22:16; 22:22-23; 25:21; 28:8; 28:27; 29:7; 29:14; 30:11-14; 31:8-9; 31:20; Isaiah 1:11-17; 3:14-26; 10:1-4; 11:1-4; 14:30; 25:3-4; 32:7; 41:7; 58:6-7; 61:1-3; Jeremiah 5:26-29; 7:5-7; 22:3; Ezekiel 16:49-51; 18:11-13; 22:1-12; Amos 2: 6-7; 4:1-3; 5:11-13; 8:4-8; Zechariah 7:10; Malachi 3:5; Matthew 8:20; Mark 10:21; Luke 1:53; 6:20-25; 6:33-36; 14:12-14; 14:15-24; 18:22; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32; 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 8:12-15; Philippians 4:10-14; James 2:5-8; Revelation 7:14-18; Romans 12:13; James 2:1-71; John 3:17-18
- DANGERS OF WEALTH: Matthew 6:19-34; 13:22; 19:16-30; 21:12-13; Mark 4:19; 10:17-27; Luke: 6:20-26; 8:14; 12:13-21; 15:11-31; 16:1-31; 18:18-30; John 6:1-8; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; 6:17-19; Titus 3:3; James 4:1-7; 5:1-5
- GREED: Romans 1:29; Ephesians 5:3; 5:5; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:3; 3:8; 2 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1:10-11; 1 Peter 5:2; 2 Peter 2:3; 2:14
- CHRISTIAN PROSPERITY: 2 Corinthians 3:3-10; Hebrews 10:32-36

- GIVING: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15; Galatians 2:10; Philippians 4:18-20; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; 1 John 3:17

Some Wise Words From Old Abe

Abraham Lincoln has some great advice for us. It's amazing that people never change from era to era, just the manner in which they mess things up.

During this time of politics, partisanship and "change we can believe in," it's important to flesh out truth from rhetoric. Here is the first of Honest Abe's advice:

You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich.

And yet, that is the primary goal of most of the world, while only a miniscule fraction of humans still see, and use, God's blessings of prosperity righteously.

Off the top of my head, here are a few people/groups that want to destroy anyone with wealth (unless that wealthy person is actually part of one of these groups): all of the

Democrat party; most of the Republican party; the environmental movement; European socialists; Canadian Socialists; race pimps; global warmers; the government and welfare dependent who are constantly inflamed with class envy; malicious lawyers; the Supreme Court and liberal judges all across the land... that's what



I thought of in 10 seconds. I'm sure we could double that list with a little thought.

You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.

Again, same principle and same assailants. The government continues to increase its control over individual citizens by ever expanding regulation and constraints on free market and creative business. On a larger scale, America allows itself to be weakened more and more every day by other countries who have NEVER accomplished what we have... and yet instead of insisting they do things OUR WAY (proven to be successful), we hang our heads in "white-Protestant-America" GUILT and apologize that we aren't just like them. Insanity....

You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift.

For all you young folks out there, THRIFT means saving money, living a more frugal lifestyle and not wasting money frivolously. America is destroying its historical prosperity by discouraging thrift. How?

Purchasing "lifestyle" on credit is the biggest culprit. The average credit card debt for Americans is \$14,000 each (I would bet it's more than that). We have "stuff" coming out our ears: multiple cars, TVs, electronic gadgets, clothing, etc. We live a lifestyle of voracious consumption, entertainment and leisure, always wanting newer, faster, better and more expensive so that we can show off our "status." Ironically, the average person who displays a high level of wealth visually is usually the one who is in the most debt. People who develop financial discipline, have no debt, and

use money wisely typically have very modest looking levels of lifestyle. The former LOOKS wealthy, the latter actually is. It would seem in America that “image over substance” reigns supreme.

You cannot lift the wage earner up by pulling the wage payer down.

It is insanity to keep taxing the “evil rich” and the “evil corporations” into oblivion when it is those very same people who provide the jobs and benefits to the people who are screaming “tax them.” This is class envy and wealth envy at its worst. People are chopping off their own heads. Look to Europe and Canada to see the result of this. Generations of people have the largest and highest amounts of benefits in world history, all paid for by the people who actually work, the corporations who actually produce, and yet... their populations are dying, unemployment is rampant, abuse of “benefits,” particularly disability, is epidemic, and NONE of them are economic powerhouses. And still, America is enthralled with Europe/Canada and the media sets them up as the model of choice. Insanity...

You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred.

Class hatred of all types is raging: race hate, wealth hate, class hate, political hate. People like Jeremiah Wright have encouraged an entire generation of blacks to see themselves as victims and to hate their white “oppressors.” Below the surface, white people get sick of constantly being vilified and accused of being racists. Whites don’t say it publicly because they will be crushed for even implying they are NOT racists.

The truth is, the VAST majority of white people are not racist, and the same for blacks, Hispanics and Asians. The overwhelming majority of average people recognize true equality in all skin colors, but the government, the race lords, and the race fanatics (black, white and other) would be out of business if they didn't constantly pound the drumbeat of racism.

The world is a boiling cauldron of class hatred, and the power-elite stir the pot because they know that it is easier to control, manipulate and enrage the masses if they are soaking in hatred towards others, feeling both victimized and entitled.

You cannot build character and courage by taking away men's initiative and independence.

Which is why we see an alarming decrease in courage, integrity and personal character in America (and any other socialized country). This is the reason why primitive, violent cultures like Islam are invading and transforming entire nations like France, Spain, England, Canada, and more and more in America... those countries do not have the courage or the motivation to keep it from occurring.

The government promises more "benefits" and programs to remove the need for personal responsibility (health care, welfare, day care, education, vacation, holidays, salary levels, etc) and lazy, greedy and gullible people JUMP at the opportunity to get something "free" at the cost of their freedom. Personal courage and character plummets in direct proportion to our abdication of personal responsibility and individual independence.

You cannot help men permanently by doing for them, what they could and should do for themselves.

What are some of things we should do for ourselves? Pretty much everything except the few things our wise Founding Fathers knew that we needed to collectively achieve: those things that only benefit the country as a whole that cannot be accomplished by the States or individuals, such as an Army to secure and defend the Nation. If we would adhere to this principle, about 90% of the current government would disappear.

America was warned by Alex De Tocqueville in the early 1800's that she would remain "great" until the day that politicians and citizens figured out they could enrich themselves by voting from the public piggy bank. How true that was. Now we have politicians buying votes by promising to give money from the "public trough," and we have citizens voting for the politician who can deliver the most "goodies." The result? Corrupt politics, and weak masses of people who see the government as their provider and security.

For every single thing the government pretends to do for the people, the people abdicate their personal responsibility and thus freedom which in turn permanently weakens America both individually and nationally.

Is American too far down the socialistic road and doomed to join the Europeans our elite are so enamored with? Probably. That's not very optimistic, but probably pretty realistic especially looking ahead at our choices in this year's elections.

But there are still plenty of good, God-fearing, personally-responsible people in America. Maybe we can make a long-term difference if we teach others and teach our kids these principles.

How To Stay Out Of Debt Forever

You may be wondering why this next section is about “how to STAY out of debt” rather than “how to GET out of debt.” First, I believe that you have to know why you want to stay out of debt forever before you waste your time trying to actually get out of debt now. You need to start with the end-goal in mind and already be committed to the reasons that you will stay out of debt for the rest of your life.

Determine that getting out of debt and staying out of debt is not only the smart thing, it is the right thing. There is a big difference between the two. Getting out of debt is smart because it will decrease the stress in your life, decrease the stress in your marriage, give you more freedom to enjoy life and more resources to help other people. Those are all great reasons.

However, I believe that it is important for you to also realize that getting out of debt is the right thing to do. If getting out of debt is right, then getting into debt must be wrong. Why? Apart from religious reasons (God says it is wrong to be in debt), I believe that debt is also wrong because it contributes to the disintegration of the family by causing stress on marriages and relationships. It is

no secret that argument over money is the primary cause of divorce. Divorce destroys families; disintegrating families destroy communities and nations.

TRUE STORY

I've clawed my way out of debt more than once. I can tell you that marriage and family are tremendously more enjoyable when you are not in constant stress and turmoil over money and debt. When you do not have to worry about paying bills, you can take that same emotional energy and pour it into your relationships.

Every person has a finite emotional capacity. You either spend that capacity on dealing with stress and negatives, or you can use it to cultivate your marriage and family.

I've experienced marriage under a load of debt and stress, and I've experienced marriage and family with financial freedom. NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES, no matter how much "lifestyle" you have to give up, it is worth it! Life, marriage, family, and all your relationships are so much more rewarding when the crush of debt is not squeezing the life out of them.

Nationally speaking, debt is a sickness in America as it is in many Western societies. We are living on a fragile bubble of financial

illusion propped up by an appearance of wealth built on debt. This is a house of cards that will, and must, come tumbling down at some point in the future. If you are not aware of this and are not prepared for it, you will suffer the same fate as everyone else who is ignoring this plain truth.

Another critical part of staying out of debt forever is to simply determine that debt will no longer be an option or part of your life. If you don't have the money, don't buy it.

At this point I can hear the objections about car loans, mortgages, and so-called emergencies. Only a home mortgage can be considered, in any sense of the word, a smart debt option on the personal level. Houses have become so ridiculously expensive that it is realistically out of the reach of most people to save up enough money to buy a house with cash. A properly structured mortgage can quickly become a valuable asset, so it remains the one exception in my mind to using debt personally. I have a 10 year mortgage at a low interest rate. The balance is about 1/3 of the value of the house and the payments are well below the acceptable percentage of monthly expense compared to income. With no other debt, we are able to make large payments towards the mortgage which will shorten the terms and decrease the amount of interest paid even further.

For all other debt products, you should have one rule and one rule only:

**If you can't put cash on the table,
don't buy it.**

Simply commit and vow to yourself that you will not violate this rule. Have the right reasons for wanting to live by it, and you will stay out of debt forever.

Of course, to stay out of debt forever, you have to start getting out of debt now...

How to Pay off Your Debt Using the Debt Steamroll

The method that I am about to teach you is not new or original. It has been around for a long time and has been presented under



various names and titles. The reason it keeps showing up and why different authors teach it with their own spin and style is simply because it is a great technique.

In summary, you start with your smallest debt. Pay it off with the largest payments possible, and once that debt is paid off, roll the amount of that payment up to the next debt. Pay minimum

monthly payments on all other debts. By rolling the payment amount of each paid off debt up to the next larger debt, you steamroll or snowball the size of the payments that you're making on a given debt. You gain momentum and pretty soon you are paying off debts very quickly.

At this point, I often have people say, "Isn't it smarter to pay off the highest interest debt first?" Technically, yes, but if you were that disciplined, you probably wouldn't be in debt in the first place. The debt steamroll method allows you to quickly build momentum and enjoy rapid success which energizes you to stay the course. Here is the method explained:

1. List all your debts by the amount owed.
2. Sort that list from the SMALLEST amount to the largest.
3. Pay the minimum amounts on the whole list except for the one with the smallest amount owed.
4. Pay the MAX you can pay on the smallest debt until that debt is paid.
5. Then, add the amount you were paying on the first debt to the minimum payment you were paying for the next smallest debt.
6. Continue this process adding the previously paid MAX amount to the next minimum payment for the next debt.
7. Pretty soon, you'll be sending large payments and paying off debts rapidly.

Now, let me show you a real example so you can understand what's going on.

Example

- Current **monthly payments** on your debts that have been sorted from SMALLEST amount owed to largest:

- Loan 1: \$50
 - Credit Card 1: \$75
 - Loan 2: \$120
 - Credit Card 2: \$200
 - Credit Card 3: \$225
 - Auto 1: \$325
 - Auto 2: \$410
- Pay the MINIMUM PAYMENT on all except Loan 1.
 - Pay the MAX on Loan 1 until it's paid off.

Once you have paid off your smallest debt which, in this example, is “Loan 1,” you then take the amount you were paying towards Loan 1 and add it to the payment you’re making for the next debt in line which, in our example, is “Credit Card 1.” We will assume you are paying \$100 a month (the maximum payment you could scrape up) towards the first debt. Now, your monthly payments look like this:

- Credit Card 1: \$75 – Now paying \$175 a month (adding the \$100 you now have free from the first debt being paid off).
- Loan 2: \$120
- Credit Card 2: \$200
- Credit Card 3: \$225
- Auto 1: \$325
- Auto 2: \$410

Adding the \$100 you were paying on Loan 1 to the \$75 payment you are making on the next smallest debt in line (Credit Card 1), you now begin making \$175 payments each month for Credit Card 1.

At this point, if you can scrape up even more money to pay towards Credit Card 1, all the better. For this example, we will assume \$175 is the most you can come up with each month. Make the minimum payments on all other debts, while making the \$175 payment on Credit Card 1 until it is paid off. Once you have paid off Credit Card 1, then take the \$175 and add it to the minimum payment of the next debt in line which, in our example, is Loan 2. Given that, your monthly payments will now look like this:



- Loan 2: \$295
- Credit Card 2: \$200
- Credit Card 3: \$225
- Auto 1: \$325
- Auto 2: \$410

Taking the previous \$175 payment and adding it to the \$120 payment for Loan 2, you are now making \$295 a month payments on Loan 2 rather than \$120 a month. See how the steamroller works?

You not only have paid off two of your debts, you have now more than doubled your monthly payment on the next debt. Continuing this process, let's look at what your eventual payments will be on each debt and notice how quickly they grow:

- Credit Card 2: \$495
- Credit Card 3: \$720
- Auto 1: \$1045
- Auto 2: \$1455

Look at the size of those payments! Did you ever dream you could make those kind of payments on your debts? Remember, we are using the same income you've always made. Amazing, isn't it?

When you are making \$1000 or \$2000 payments on your automobiles, how quickly do you think you can pay them off? When you're making \$3,000, \$4,000, or \$5,000 payments on your mortgage, how much time and money do you think you'll save? Imagine the excitement and motivation you will experience when you are chunking out large payments and knocking these debts out rapid-fire!

TRUE STORY

This method works. I personally have paid off thousands of dollars of debt quickly with this technique. There are many prominent finance teachers that promote this method and all told, thousands of people have rid themselves of debt using this technique.

I can personally testify to the motivation and thrill you get knocking out debt after debt quickly. That's why you start with the smallest debt first. You want quick results that you can celebrate and use to motivate you to keep going.

Getting Serious!

The debt steamroll is the basic building block of getting out of debt. Now, let's talk about getting even more serious and consider several ways to attack your debt more intensely.

You do not have to use all or even any of these additional techniques. You can pick and choose the ones that fit your personality and reflect the degree to which you are willing to sacrifice and work hard to pay your debt off even faster.

Get a Second or Third Job

Obviously, having more income will allow you to pay off your debts faster. You do not want to live your entire life working three or four jobs. This is a temporary situation that will allow you to pay your debt off faster, especially if you have an extreme level of debt.



Warning: Do not use this extra income for anything except paying off debt!

Do not be tempted to get further into debt or to raise your level of lifestyle using this extra income.

Also, do not allow extra jobs to dictate things that have higher priority. You should take off a day each week to rest, and in my opinion, to attend church. Your spiritual health being ruined is not worth the extra income.

There are endless opportunities for second and third jobs: delivery, cleaning services, retail stores, grocery stores, restaurants, and night shift work.

Is it hard? Yes. Do you have to sacrifice and give up your social life? Yes. Will you be tired? Yes. Aren't you more tired of being in debt though?

Sell, Sell, Sell!

You know all that junk you bought that helped you get into debt? Instead of spending even more time and money storing, insuring, maintaining, cleaning, organizing, and taking care of it, sell it all and use the funds to pay off your debt.

Yes, I know you're not going to get nearly

If you have to
take a loss
selling all that
stuff you
bought,
**LEARN YOUR
LESSON!**

as much as you paid for it. Learn your lesson. Getting rid of all that stuff will also remove the reminders of your consumerism sickness.

Go through your house, closets, attic, and storage and sell so much stuff that you scare yourself. Sell everything in sight. Sell so many things that your pets and kids get nervous that they might be next!

Make nothing off-limits: clothing, dishes, electronics, collections, hobbies... be brutal, daring, and fearless! Sell, sell, sell, and then sell some more.

Downsize, Trade, Minimize!

A lot of times our debt mentality also means that we own a lot of things we shouldn't own. Do you have more car than what is appropriate for your income? Sell it, trade, downsize.

Are you living in a nice big house that you have no business living in on your salary? Downsize.

Do you have a garage and yard full of big boy toys, gadgets, and all the latest techno-whiz? Sell them. Learn to minimize your lifestyle and quit being a willing victim of consumerism gone mad and materialism run amok.

Cut Your Expenses!

Until you have all your debt paid off, cut your expenses to the bare bones. Examine every penny you spend, and cancel, unsubscribe, quit, and turn off every possible expense:

- Magazine subscriptions, cable TV, Internet (unless you genuinely need it to produce income)
- Get rid of all but one phone
- Minimize eating out and entertainment
- Minimize “casual expense” - coffee, drinks, snacks, impulse buying
- Cancel any and all monthly subscriptions, clubs, memberships, etc. until your debt is paid off

That doesn't sound like a very fun life does it? Nope, but I can tell you something that is a lot less fun: being up to your eyeballs in debt and stressed out of your mind about money.

104 Ways to Save Money, Reduce Your Personal Expenses, & Eliminate Debt

1. Quit drinking expensive coffee. Do you really need to pay five dollars for a cup of coffee? The overwhelming majority of people cannot tell the difference between an inexpensive coffee and expensive name brand from coffee shops. The truth that no one wants to admit is that expensive coffee is a fad, and drinking it is just going along with the crowd.

2. Shop around for auto insurance. The average person can save anywhere between \$65 and \$85 a month on their car insurance if they spend a little time researching different companies and different prices.
3. Pay off your credit cards. The interest rates on credit cards will eat your budget alive. You are simply throwing money in the toilet when you buy on credit and hand over free cash to the credit card companies.
4. Shop around for better cell phone plans and make sure you cancel features you are not using or that you can live without.
5. If you're paying any sort of bank fees, you shouldn't. Take time to find a bank who offers free checking, free online banking and just about free everything when it comes to the bank services.
6. Quit buying prepackaged food. Bite sized, prepackaged, and conveniently-portioned-already-prepared foods are many times more expensive than regular foods that you prepare yourself.
7. When you enter a parking lot, park near the street and far away from the building. This not only saves gas from driving around the parking lot, it also gives you a little exercise, which in turn will cut down on your food and medical expenses.
8. Befriend your neighbors and learn to borrow and share items with each other. There is really no sense in every person having their own seldom used items or tools. Make a list of the items that you would like to have but are rarely used and see if you can't get a group of friends to divide up the list and each one buy a separate item and then share them.



9. Stop drinking soda pop. It costs money when you buy, it costs money when you lose productivity because of it, and it costs money and increased health care when it makes you fat and sick. Result: soft drinks cost you LOTS of money.
10. Don't put a light bulb in every socket of a multi-light fixture. Often half the lights or even less will give you plenty of illumination.
11. Slice food very thin. Foods like cheese, breads, fruits and anything else you can slice go a lot further if you're eating lots of little slices instead of big chunks.
12. Call all your credit card companies and ask them, no beg them, for a lower interest rate. Do not take no for an answer and request to speak to many different people before giving up. Often you will be able to get your credit card interest reduced to varying degrees.
13. Buy classic clothing that does not go out of style rather than spending top dollar for current fads. The most current and popular styles are always significantly more expensive than clothing that is simply classic in style but not on the cover of Hollywood magazines.
14. Have a list and a budget when you go shopping for food. If you know what you're going to buy, you're much more likely to control the cost of your grocery bill.
15. Be sure you go grocery shopping on a full stomach. If you start walking the aisles and your belly is growling, everything will look appetizing and you will buy twice as much as you intended.
16. Just get rid of all those stinking credit cards. Don't make up excuses about why you need one for emergencies or to build your credit or to get airline miles. Use a bank card instead of credit cards and quit flushing your money down the interest rate toilet.
17. If you can't get lower interest rates and haven't paid off your credit cards, try to consolidate all your credit cards to the lowest interest card.

18. Pay off the smallest debts first, and roll that payment into the next smallest debt. By doing this you see quick results and gain momentum in paying off your debt.
19. Before buying software, check the Internet for free or open source versions. Most common software like word processors, spreadsheets, calculators or finance programs all have three versions available on the Internet. There are also many graphics and business programs available for free.
20. Do not buy magazines off the rack. Either get a subscription which is usually heavily discounted or go to the library. Another way to read fresh magazine material is to read it online.
21. Buy used books, go to the library or again choose reading material online. Any of these choices are a fraction of the cost of new.
22. Quit smoking. It is hard to exaggerate not only the cost of cigarettes but also the long-term costs in health and productivity. This one choice alone can save hundreds of dollars a month.
23. Find someplace cheaper to get haircuts. You can sneak around so your friends won't see you go into the Supercuts, but using expensive salons and name brand hair care products is unnecessarily expensive.
24. Cancel the gym membership. Full body workouts at home or at the park are not only just as effective, they are free.
25. Sell all your home gym equipment. Forget treadmills, ellipticals, BowFlex and weight sets. Wind sprints, push-ups and pull-ups are better than anything you can do on a piece of equipment.
26. Get to know your neighbors, share rides, not just to work but also to the store or out for recreational activity.
27. A Deep Freeze. A freezer full of frozen vegetables, bulk prepared meals and left-overs uses very little electricity because it's full of frozen food, and rarely changes temperature. It's a great way to save by buying bulk meats and veggies.

28. Thermostats. Programmable thermostats that allow you to set a room temperature and benefit from cool nights when windows can allow the breeze to cool a room during the warm months.
29. With gas prices going haywire, it now pays to plan trips carefully. We live about 20 miles away from any real shopping areas, so it now costs us \$10 every time we want to “run to town.” Turning several casual trips into one can save \$20-40/week, or about \$100/month... not exactly chump change.
30. Left-overs. Gas goes up, food prices go up. Being more diligent and creative with left-overs can make a significant impact on your food budget. Cooking batches of meats (hamburger, sausage, chicken, etc) then freezing for later use can save both time and money.
31. Old Fashioned Fun. Reading, going for walks, rocking on the porch, doing crafts... old fashioned fun saves lots of money over movies, dining out and shopping, AND it’s a lot healthier for your family (physically and spiritually).
32. Find some friends either at work or neighbors who work in the same general vicinity as you and set up a rotating car pool. You can use email or classified ads to find people, as well as posting flyers in your neighborhood. Be creative. Someone might not live next door, but they might be PASSING BY your neighborhood on the way to work. On days you drive, they can leave their car at your house. Or you can just pay them for the gas.
33. Keep your car tuned up, oil changed, and tires properly inflated so that you can get the maximum gas mileage at all times. Proper air pressure in tires can have a great effect on mileage.
34. Run your A/C less. Save it for genuinely hot days or when you’re stuck in hot, slow moving traffic. When you have a little speed, open the windows and use your “4x60 air conditioning” (four windows down at 60 miles per hour).

35. Drive like “a little old man” - slow starts, easy stops, reasonable speed, don’t “gun” the gas pedal. This will greatly increase your gas mileage.
36. Don’t waste your time or money or risk your car on gimmicks. Most additives are worthless, and outrageous claims of gas mileage are nonsense.
37. Combine trips when possible. My wife and I plan to take care of other errands whenever we know we are forced to drive anyway. For example, we leave early (or go after) for some scheduled event to take care of a few quick shopping needs as well. Whenever you are forced to travel to a certain area of town, take a minute to consider if there are other things that are going to pop up soon that will cause you to drive to the same area.
38. Call home before going home... my wife and I always try to call each other when we are already “out” somewhere. Frequently, this saves a trip. “Honey, I’m on the way home, do you need me to stop anywhere on the way home?” or “I had to run by Walmart, is there anything you need while I’m here?”
39. Consider pooling trips with friends. Why drive to shop for groceries alone? Arrange with a neighbor to take turns driving every other time.
40. Buy and sell at consignment stores and garage sales. It is amazing the bargains you can find and the nice things that others cannot use. Pare down your closets and you will feel better knowing you have only what you need and what you use.
41. Stay out of the mall and stores except when you have a plan and need to be there. Shopping shouldn't be a hobby. It's much easier to not waste money when you aren't bombarded by a mall full of ads.
42. Use CASH when mall shopping, grocery shopping, and for other entertainment like bowling, movies, golf, etc. It's much easier psychologically to part with a piece of paper (check) or plastic (credit card) than to actual relinquish cold hard cash. It

will make you most cost conscious and help you to budget better as you see funds dwindle.

43. "Craigslist" those items that are sitting in storage which you never use. They take up space which ultimately costs money. On Craigslist you can either charge a flat fee or offer to give it away to the first person willing and able to come pick it up.
44. Garage sales, estate sales and resale shops offer quality merchandise at extremely low prices. Clothing, furniture, games, home decorations, CDs... just about anything can be found.
45. Save your change when you make a purchase. At the end of the year, you can accumulate a nice little chunk of money to help with Christmas shopping or other needs such as the heat bill.
46. Use automatic and online bill pay systems. You not only save money with postage and envelopes, you save time which is money also.
47. Use debit cards, not credit cards. Debit cards take the money directly out of your bank account, and you do not pay interest on borrowed money, in fact, you probably make a little bit of interest on your money in the bank.
48. Use the ATMs from your bank system which typically do not charge fees for withdrawals.
49. If you must use an ATM outside of your system that charges fees, think into the future and determine if you're going to need more money. If yes, withdraw it then to save from paying more fees in the future.
50. Look into computer Internet-based phones like Vonage or Skype. Both services can be significantly cheaper than traditional or cell phone-based services.
51. Consider dropping cable or satellite services or at least cancelling the extra channels and movie channels. Even basic cable has more choices than any person should waste their time trying to watch.
52. Give serious thought to times that you can buy, walk or even ride public transportation. Not only does it save a lot of

money in gas and maintenance, it will save you money as you increase your health and get more exercise.

53. Break your "brand name" addiction. Whether it's clothes, food or coffee, the truth is most name brands are no different or better than the discount brands. If people are honest, most of the time they want name brands so that other people will notice. It makes us look more in style and successful.
54. Don't be fooled into buying something because it's on sale or there is a limited supply or offer. Marketers know that putting something on sale or implying you have a limited opportunity to purchase something creates an urgency to buy. People do not stop to thoroughly consider whether they really need it or not, and marketers hope people will forget that the very same items will turn right around and be in another urgent sale in the near future. It's all marketing hype, and you have to learn not to be affected by.
55. Don't buy anything that you do not have the cash currently to buy. That means don't borrow money from friends or family to buy consumer goods, and don't buy them on credit cards. This one discipline alone will save you countless thousands of dollars per year.
56. Do things for yourself like lawn care, simple car maintenance, basic handyman work and common manual labor. Not only do you save a lot of money, you also get good exercise and learn new skills.
57. Actually use a budget. I know everyone hates this, but having a budget would keep you from spending money that you do not plan to spend. You either plan to spend your money, or it will disappear on its own.
58. This one may sound funny, but learn to use the toilet at your job or school, or a public restroom before you go home. You save on toilet paper, water and electricity.
59. Cancel magazine subscriptions, cable TV, even Internet if you aren't genuinely getting your money's worth. For occasional use of all of these, you can go to the library, restaurants and other places that offer them for free.

60. Get rid of all but one phone, unless you need extra for business purposes. This whole thing we've got going today where every single member of the family has their own cell phone on top of a landline at home can be very expensive.
61. Always try to bargain and get more than you paid for. The worst that can happen is someone can tell you "NO." Learn to ask for a discount, learn to ask for extra items with your purchase and try to see if buying multiple items can get you a volume discount.
62. Cancel your landline telephone if you use a cell phone. If your home Internet is dependent on purchasing a landline as well, which is often the case with DSL, consider going to a cable Internet service.
63. Depending on your living situation, if you have a free room, consider having a housemate or roommate. If you find a good match, it can significantly reduce both parties' household expenses.
64. Try automatic savings. Automatically transfer or deposit regular amounts of your income into a savings account. This is an especially good idea for unannounced bonuses or gifts of money. This money becomes more out of sight, out of mind, and you're less likely to spend it before choosing to save it.
65. Stay current and educated on your credit score. While I discourage the use of credit cards, it is important that you pay other bills on time such as medical bills and utilities so that you will not have a negative effect on your credit score. This can save you a truckload of money on a mortgage interest rate.
66. Become disciplined about going through your house and selling the stuff you don't really genuinely use or need. Not only can you bring in extra income, but it helps you develop a greater resistance to buying new things, and you save money not maintaining, insuring, cleaning and organizing stuff you don't need.
67. Do not purchase shipping or mailing supplies. The USPS has just about every type of box, envelope, padding and shipping

materials that you could ever need and they will give it to you free.

68. Did you know there is a place, actually two, where endless amounts of books, magazines, even movies and software are available? They even have free Internet service and oftentimes music for free. Have you ever heard of this place? It's called the community Library.
69. Make your own household cleaners. It doesn't matter what name brand they are, they are usually made up of the same effective ingredients. Learn how to make cleaners with vinegar, baking soda or ammonia. Buy your own plastic spray bottles and mix them up for a fraction of what you buy name brand cleaners for.
70. Do most of your laundry using cold water. This will save a bucket load of money and almost all of your clothes will come out just as clean.
71. Keep your car tires properly inflated. This has a big impact on your fuel efficiency as well as being a safety issue.
72. Be flexible on flight arrangements and you can save a heap of money using services like Priceline and Hotwire.
73. Use the Internet to research car repairs. Often something can be fixed with an inexpensive part whereas a car mechanic may give you a more elaborate solution. For example, recently our van would not shift out of park. My first inclination was to go to a dealer to have it fixed because "obviously" something major was wrong. I took a few minutes to research it on the Internet and found out that it was a four dollar brake light switch that needed to be changed which took me five minutes.
74. Use Restaurant.com to buy certificates for meals at participating restaurants at discounted rates.
75. When eating out, try to get in before the evening dinner hour price increases occur, which is usually around four o'clock. Most of the time you can still get lunch prices before the dinner rush begins.

76. Take your own snacks to work. Bringing a few Ziploc bags of snacks from home is a fraction of the cost of vending machines or concession stores.
77. Take your lunch to work. Creating a new brown bag lunch is probably a pain in the butt every day, but learn to cook a little extra for dinner the night before and you'll have a quick and nice meal to take for lunch the next day.
78. Unplug and turn off lights, electronics, appliances, chargers and equipment when they are not in use. All those little fans, computer chips and lights use up electricity.
79. Instead of buying expensive coffee at Starbucks, by a \$10 coffee pot and keep coffee and creamer at your office.
80. If you just have to have a more expensive coffee like Starbucks, those coffee brands can often be bought in bulk at places like Cosco and Sam's which are still butt loads cheaper than buying them from the coffee shop.
81. Brew coffee at home and invest in a high-quality coffee mug which you can take with you.
82. Investigate mortgage refinancing. Depending on the terms and your plans for the house you're in, the right refinancing situation can save thousands of dollars over the years.
83. Make sure you're maximizing the amount of money you are putting into things like 401(k)s, especially if your employer is matching. Not only are you getting a great return on your money, but it is also money that you're not blowing on needless and impulsive purchases.
84. Plan to have a baby. If you know you're planning a family and going to have babies in the next two to three years, begin to look for the items you will need and carefully purchase them now at garage sales and clearance sales. You can save a ton of money if you don't simply run out one Saturday morning and quickly buy everything you need for the new baby. This also gives you time to put the word out to people who might want to give away things like cribs, high chairs, strollers and baby clothes. People have so much of this kind of stuff, if they know you need it, you may not ever have to buy any of it.

85. Now I know there are some of us who just can't live without it, but if you can learn to drink water, you will save a lot of money giving up flavored beverages.
86. If you're fighting the urge to cut back on dining out in restaurants, don't forget to add in the expense of gasoline in use of your transportation. Maybe realizing that restaurant food is 10 to 20 times more expensive than home prepared food will give you the motivation you need to cut back.
87. Plan for holiday spending. Make a budget months ahead of time, list out exactly what you're going to buy and stick to that list. If you holiday shop impulsively at the last minute you'll always spend many times more than you would have if you make a list and a plan.
88. Good health saves money. Drink plenty of water and stop drinking anything with sugar in it immediately.
89. Good health saves money. Get off your butt and go out and do some work in the yard, go for a walk, learn to spend most of your time being active. The savings in health care and increased productivity will amount to tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars in your life.
90. Good health saves money. Reduce the stress in your life, slow down and do a little less. Most of all, get out of debt because financial stress is the number one stress in most families and marriages.
91. Good health saves money. Eat real food like raw vegetables, chicken and fish. Prepackaged, convenience and fast foods are pure junk and whatever time and money you save now you'll pay for many times over in health costs and lack of productivity.
92. Look into bundling services like Internet, phone and cable. You can often get a lower bundled rate than what you are paying separately for each.
93. Cancel extra phone features that you are honestly not using like conference calling, three way calling or caller ID.
94. Learn to use coupons, but be smart about using them. Don't drive 12 miles across town to save \$.50 on a can of beans.

95. Keep your eyes out for free entertainment. Often there are free concerts, shows and events going on that will reduce your budget spent on movies and dining out.
96. Make sure you pay your bills on time so that you are not getting hit with late fees or increased interest rates.
97. Make sure you are only purchasing the exact amount or a little less of perishable items. Throwing away meat and vegetables can greatly increase your food budget. It never costs you money to run out of those and choose to eat something else.
98. Purchase bulk items when appropriate. You can save a lot of money buying a case of something at a discount club if they are stored properly and you will actually use them. However if you buy a case of an item and throw out half of it, you're obviously costing yourself money.
99. Learn to eat foods that genuinely increase both your energy and your health levels. Increased energy means increased productivity, which translates into increased income. Increased health results in decreased medical bills and health-related expenses. Together both of these can have a very high positive net result.
100. Have a set time to manage your bills once or twice a month. By having a disciplined routine to manage paying bills and tracking your budget, you'll save a lot of money by not making mistakes, forgetting to pay something, or losing track of your finances.
101. Regularly view either your online bank ledger or your credit card statements to make sure you are not being charged for things you didn't purchase and to keep a realistic view of how much money you're spending and what you're spending it on.
102. Regularly review your statements to make sure you're not being charged for fees or services that are incorrect or that you have not applied for. This is especially true for credit cards and phone bills where lots of little fees show up and hopefully go unnoticed.

103. Set aside some money for impulse purchases and to just simply blow. There's nothing wrong with just having some money to go shopping or to spend on whatever you want as long as you have planned that amount of money and don't exceed it. It's when you do not have a plan for impulse buying that you end up spending a lot more than you should have.
104. Check to see if you can get a discount, reduced rate or some sort of reward or paying off a bill, charge or loan early.

Learn to Bargain!

You can make your money go a lot farther if you will learn the art of bargaining. Learn to make offers on anything and everything you can possibly wheel and deal.

You have to get over being embarrassed or thinking that only tightwads bargain with people. America is one of the few countries where bargaining is not simply a way of life.

The worst thing that can happen when you bargain is you will be told “no” or be ridiculed. What’s worse? Paying an extra 30% because you were too scared to bargain or risk being snickered at?

After you get used to bargaining, you’ll actually find that it’s quite a lot of fun. It becomes a challenge to see how



much and what kind of deals you can talk people into. However, you have to be prepared to walk away. You have to learn to turn your back and move on if you don't get your asking price, no matter how badly you want something. You have to wait for another day.

Why? It is easy to sense when a person already has their mind set on buying something. Once you give off that vibe, they've got you. You can forget any bargains.

Never pay ticket price for any large item. If you are in a major chain store, ask for a manager. They often have the authority to give on-the-spot discounts, especially on things like appliances, furniture, and other large ticket items.

Learn to wave your cash around, especially if it is a private seller. Usually a private seller is extremely motivated, and the sight of a few \$100 bills waving around in front of his nose will make him even more motivated. Make an offer, count out the bills in front of him, and if the offer is not immediately accepted, simply pick up your cash and tell the seller to call you if he changes his mind. You'll find it humorous how many times you won't get three steps away from him before he has changed his mind and wants to accept your offer.

TRUE STORY

I first started learning and observing this from my father, Mr. Super Bargaining Shopper of the Universe!

We have always laughed at him and made jokes about his ability to make apparently ridiculous offers and then walk away “insulted” when they weren’t accepted.

I can remember countless stories of Dad making offers on cars, then walking away saying, “Call me if you change your mind.” Sometimes it was five minutes, sometimes a month, but often, he would get a call later on telling him, “We really had to do a special deal, but we can meet your price.”

My dad didn’t play games either. If he went back to buy a \$20,000 car after they had accepted his offer, he would get up and walk if they so much as tried to tag on a \$100 fee above the price. Why? Because sales people don’t think anyone will walk away from saving thousands of dollars if the dealership insists on some “required processing and administrative fees.” That didn’t fly with Dad. He would walk if the price ended up being one dollar over the agreed price.

The result? My Dad is financially secure for the rest of his life and enjoys a nice lifestyle, not because he was CHEAP, but because he was NOT IMPULSIVE. There’s a HUGE difference. He would sometimes do this bargaining game for MONTHS when buying a car. It always paid off.

Learn to bargain. Learn to walk away. Learn to control your IMPULSIVENESS. You do NOT have to have 99% of all the things you THINK you MUST have –RIGHT NOW.

Oh yeah, one last thing. That “deal of the century” you just can’t pass up? Doesn’t exist. There are “deals of the century” every day. With rare exceptions, you will never find a TRUE “once in a life time deal.” That’s just your impulsiveness working on you. Don’t fall for it. If you have your eyes open, you’ll find a “deal of a lifetime” on a regular basis.

Coupons, Specials, and Shopping



Learn to use coupons and keep an eye out for loss leader promotions. Loss leaders are where stores offer a promotion on a certain product and actually take a loss because of the low price, knowing that it will bring people to their stores.

Coupons are good way to chop 10% to 30% off your

household expenses. However, be smart about coupons. Don't spend \$10 in gas and time to save two dollars on a box of cereal. To save yourself travel time going to other stores, ask the store you normally shop at to honor the coupons from other stores. Most of the time, they will.

Learn to shop the "dollar stores" and clearance aisles. Almost all of your household items and school supplies can be bought at dollar stores for a fraction of the cost you would pay in the normal shopping center. Wherever you're at, keep an eye out for clearance racks or displays. You can save some serious money if you happen to come across the right clearance at the right time for something you actually need (clothing is a great example).

Buy Used!

Let's start with automobiles. Buying a brand-new car is a whole lot of fun, but it is also a whole lot of dumb. As soon as the tires hit the street in front of the dealer's lot, you can kiss off 10-20% of the value.

Buying a new car is a whole lot of fun... it's also a whole lot of DUMB!

Don't believe me? Go buy a new car, drive it one mile away, and then turn around and go trade it in on another new car. You will find that your "deal of the century, once in a lifetime bargain" is now worth about 20% less than it was 15 minutes ago.

Save your money, get your cash in hand, find a private seller of a good, single owner, two or three year old used car and be amazed at how much more car you can get for your buck. Never, never, never buy a new car again. It is simply one of the dumbest mistakes you can make.

Check out garage sales, consignment stores, and overstock stores for new clothing. It is amazing the amount of clothes people buy that they either never wear, or hardly wear, and then put in a garage sale for \$.10 on the dollar.

This is especially true of babies' and children's clothing. You can have the very nicest and best name-brand clothes for your children for a fraction of the cost without ever stepping into a clothing store.

Garage sales are also a great place for electronics, as are pawn shops. Used sporting good equipment stores are popping up all over the place too.

Whenever you want to buy something new, ask yourself if the equivalent can be found in new, or almost new condition, at a garage sale, pawn shop, consignment store, or used equipment store.

Garage Sales

While we're on the subject of garage sales... have you been to any lately? Have you been to any in more affluent neighborhoods? It's like Wal-Mart on steroids.

You can find anything: clothes, toys, tools, equipment, sports gear, electronics, kitchen items, baby stuff, and anything else you can dream up. Not only can you find all these things in like-new condition, garage sales are the perfect environment for your bargaining skills. Garage sale operators are usually tired, bored, and extremely motivated to get rid of all that stuff and get back in the house to watch the football game. Never underestimate the quality, selection, or price you can find at a garage sale.

Get Rid Of Stuff!

We already talked about selling things, so what's the idea here? I'm trying to teach you two things:

1. Stuff is a constant reminder of the consumer mentality and keeps you always wanting to get more stuff.
2. Stuff is expensive to keep around.

When you have lots of "stuff", it costs you time, money, and emotional energy. You have to maintain it, clean it, organize it, worry about it, insure it, and store it.

Rid yourself of the consumer mentality that drives you to have the newest, the latest, the fastest, and the most goodies. You can cure yourself of “affluenza” by minimizing the consumerism traps in your life.

TRUE STORY

Every so often, two or three times a year, we try to go through our house, garage, attic, and storage and give away, sell, or get rid of everything that 1) hasn't been used in several months and 2) is not truly seasonal like Christmas decorations or 3) is not a keepsake like photos or heirlooms.

No matter how big your house is, you WILL fill it up over time if you aren't actively clearing things out.

Remember, you have to manage, clean, organize, store, insure, and spend your emotional energy to keep all that “stuff.” It is a very good feeling to look around your house and garage and know that you aren't loaded down with a bunch of junk you don't need.

There is a spiritual principle here that drives us to do this too. There are people who have nothing-missionaries who scrape by month to month, countless children who are destitute and poor in other countries... How weird is it for us to have two or three or four times the amount of material possessions we actually need when there are fellow humans who live in squalor and want? What does it say about us?

It's not wrong to have things and often, other people are poor because of their own laziness. That's a fact. However, there is something spiritually gratifying to selling or giving away things we don't really need in order to help those who are TRULY less fortunate. Try it out and see what I mean.

Lower Your Rates and Balances

Even though you've already run up credit card and consumer loan debt, there are possible ways to minimize the interest expense and maybe even lower the balances.

Call the credit card companies and ask for a lower interest rate. All they can do is say "no". Tell them you're working hard to pay the balances and that you're having difficulty meeting your monthly minimum payments. Ask them to give you a lower rate for 90 days. Often, they will, and you can save a significant amount of money on interest payments while you're paying off debt.

Occasionally, you can ask the credit card company if they will accept a lump sum payment that is less than the balance. Depending on how much interest they have already made off of you, they will sometimes agree to this. I have known people that have made arrangements for as much as 50% off of the balance in

exchange for a one-time lump sum payment. Be careful though, often this will be reported to the credit bureau as a judgment or settlement which is a big ding on your credit. Since we are more concerned about paying off debt than we are building a credit, I consider it a good trade-off.

A warning here about personal ethics: don't use this technique to simply avoid paying what you owe. I have known people that simply threaten credit card companies with nonpayment or bankruptcy unless they accept a deal. There may be times when this is legitimately true, but if you're simply exaggerating or making up this kind of story to get out of paying what you owe, you are being dishonest.

Avoid Scams, Gimmicks and Sucker Deals

Rent-To-Own

"Rent To Own" is where you pay a company to rent furniture, appliances or electronics. The "to own" part is where, at the end of the contract, if you make all your payments, you either have "bought" the items, or you get to purchase them at some predetermined lower price.

It is a rip off and a waste of money from all aspects. The offering takes advantage of the "gotta have it now, even if I can't afford it"

mentality that is rampant in credit-laden countries like America.

Let me see if I can make this plain:

- Smart people don't rent-to-own.
- People who want to be financially free don't rent-to-own.
- People who want to get out of debt don't rent-to-own.
- People who want to set a good example for their family and friends don't rent-to-own.

It's a poor man's solution. It is a sucker opportunity. If you've made the mistake innocently in the past, so be it. Now you know. If you do it now, be sure to take a Sharpie and write "SUCKER" across your forehead.

Rent-to-own is almost a 7 billion dollar a year industry. That's BILLION, with a "b". People are suckered in with "no money down, low monthly payments" offers. If you haven't figured it out yet, any time you hear that phrase, get ready to get suckered out of a LOT of money. There is only one type of payment plan for the financially wise: 100% down, no payments.

With rent-to-own, you can expect to pay SEVERAL TIMES the original price for the privilege of owning it. You might rent-to-own a flat screen TV for \$1500 and end up paying \$5500 by the time you "own it." (The only thing being "owned" is YOU... by the rent-to-own company.) You can count on actual interest rates well over 100%. Would you buy something on credit if they advertised it as "no money down, low monthly payments, 130% interest?"

Industry spokesmen say they are not selling the items on credit, but "renting." Sorry... if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and

quacks like a duck.... Guess what? The reason for this “renting” vocabulary is to avoid the regulations about interest rates that apply to credit cards allowing them to set rates that in reality range from 50-400%. Even with all the credit card “fees,” it’s hard to get your hands on that kind of consumer rip off.

Unlike some popular authors, I don’t say that the rent-to-own industry is VICTIMIZING people. Nobody twists your arm to go get new furniture and a 72” flat screen that you can’t afford. You do that because of lack of self-control, or even in ignorance. But once you know better, you have no one to blame but yourself.

So what do you do?

Have some self-control, save up for the items first, then go purchase them with CASH. For example, let’s say that new furniture and TV is \$2000 cash and the payment is \$150/month. Make those payments to YOURSELF for about 13 months, and go pay cash for them... and you own them immediately. Or, you can rent-to-own and end up paying over \$6000 for the privilege of “owning” a year earlier than if you saved first.

Rent-to-own should be changed to “you rent, we own you.”

Payday Loans

While I don’t deny that there are legitimate and true emergencies that could cause a person to NEED a payday loan, I would still tell them to beg, borrow and scrape every way possible to get help

somewhere else before jumping into the black hole known as “payday loans” or “payroll cash advances.”

Payday loans are typically small loans where you give them a post-dated check to repay the loan. If you are unable to repay the principle, you are “loaned” the money again for another pay period with renewed fees and interest. This is known as “flipping.”

A lot of people get into a vicious cycle where they have to take a payday loan just to pay the previous loan, plus a new loan amount to get them by because they are now short on money again.

Pretty soon, their entire paycheck is gone before they ever get it.

Payday lenders raked in about 4.2 billion a year by charging 300-1000%+ interest. The average person flips the loan over and over (taking out a loan to pay the previous loan) five times.

While every single person who ever used payday loans will say they are the exception, the reality is that payday loans satisfy the need for instant gratification, are usually accompanied (or made necessary) by other impulsive habits, and are almost always a symptom of a lack of financial discipline. Payday loans are a ridiculous waste of money.

If you are TRULY in dire straits, turn to friends, family and Christians for help. If you are serious about getting your financial house in order, people will help. If you just want rescued so you can return to poor spending habits, then people will be less likely to invest in your life.

If you are simply undisciplined with your money, ignorant about how to handle money, or clueless on how to go about getting out of debt and managing your personal finances, there are plenty of people and resources to teach you how. Learn how to budget, learn how to pay off debt, learn how to avoid impulse spending, learn to recognize credit traps.

Payday loans, credit cards, monthly payment plans... calling all suckers. You will be a SLAVE to the people who offer these things if you do not make the disciplined choice to avoid them.

Low Down, Low Payments

Low down payment, low monthly payments. Nothing down, minimum monthly payments. No money down, no payments until next year.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think retailers and dealers make these offers because they care about you and just want you to pay as little as possible for their goods? Do you think there is a reason they structure financing in such a way so that it makes it “affordable” to you RIGHT NOW? Do you think they have a profitable reason to allow you a low down payment and minimum monthly payments?

Low or No Down Payment

Why do you suppose they offer this? Because they want you to get the best deal, right? Puh-leeze. C’mon... how many times have

you walked away from a salesman convinced you got a “great deal?”

Offering low, or no, down payment is a way to get people to buy impulsively when they simply do not have the financial means on hand. It is a way to get people to COMMIT their FUTURE to the creditor. “We can’t get yesterday or today’s money... but we can get what you make tomorrow.”

Low Monthly Payments

Out of the goodness of their heart, we are offered the lowest monthly payments possible, right? The terms are extended to longer periods of time, years and years. Payments are delayed for months or even a year. Why?

By allowing you to have “low monthly payments” you are more likely to buy NOW, more likely to buy MORE, and more likely to buy something without really thinking about the long term.

By allowing you to have “low monthly payments” creditors are assuring that the principle amount of the loan is paid off very slowly, thus maximizing the amount of interest you pay (as well as late fees, service charges and other penalties).

The Overall Effect

Because you are using very little down payment, the creditor will probably charge you a higher interest rate right out of the gate. Not only will you start with a higher interest rate, you will be

paying it on a LARGER beginning principle amount. Even if you don't get charged a higher rate, you're still taking out a bigger loan which is more profitable to the creditor.

By making the smallest monthly payments possible, you maximize the amount of interest you are paying while making sure the principle is paid off as slowly as humanly possible, if at all. It's not uncommon after interest charges, late fees, and other penalties to have your principle stay the same, or even grow.

The overall purpose is clear:

- Attract people to buy regardless of their ability to afford it or financial discipline.
- Make it easy to buy even when you don't have the cash in hand.
- Get people to buy NOW rather than waiting (giving them time to reconsider).
- Get people to commit FUTURE INCOME to the creditor.
- Maximize the size of the loan.
- Maximize the interest rate, fees and penalties.
- Minimize the amount of repayment so that the principle is slowly or never reduced.

Folks, learn this lesson: CREDITORS DON'T OFFER YOU A "DEAL" BECAUSE THEY GIVE A CRUD ABOUT YOU. THEY OFFER YOU A "DEAL" BECAUSE IT MAKES THEM MONEY... LOTS AND LOTS OF MONEY. You are committing your future income production to them. They are HAPPY to give you something NOW in trade for a lucrative portion of your income LATER.

There is only one good plan:
100% down, no monthly payments.

College Loan & Scholarship Scams

As parents and students you have to keep your eyes OPEN, and be really alert, even skeptical about federal and private college loans, and scholarships. There are countless cons, rip-offs and scams to avoid.

The tale-tell sign of a rip-off is any college financial arrangement that requires you to give THEM money up front (and any name: fees, service charge, processing charges, etc.), or disclose your financial/personal information (bank accounts, social security, etc). Much of the time this will be in some form of “service” where you pay someone to help you get grants, loans and “freebies” for college.

Since the individual amounts that are scammed range from \$50-\$1000, most of time the victim just moves on in embarrassment, and it’s not enough money to fight for (and next to impossible to get back anyway). Those small amounts add up to over a HUNDRED MILLION dollars annually, though, so it’s a big business ripping off college bound kids.

Look out for: offers with no contact information, poorly worded letters (a sign of a foreign scam), requests for money or personal information, or anything else that looks suspicious. When in doubt, CONSIDER IT A SCAM.

The typical scam will start with a letter offering different types of loans and financial assistance which requires you to pay a

“processing” fee. Legitimate lenders do NOT ask for any fees up front as they take them from the actual disbursed funds.

Also be wary of letters that LOOK LIKE official government agency letterhead. The Government doesn’t solicit new customers so this is an automatic sign of a scam.

Be careful of emails that originate in countries like Nigeria. A common scam is to send a check for MORE than the loan amount and then ask the recipient to send the difference back. Be especially suspicious of offers of unclaimed or unused loan funds that require a fee to make sure your student gets their “share.” There is also no need to pay money to have a scholarship search of a database or report prepared. All that information can be easily obtained free of charge.

Parents should use well-known organizations like Sallie Mae, or utilize legitimate sites like Finaid.org. Federal loans have lower interest rates, and there are lots of grants and scholarships available. The “free money” is harder to get and takes a little more effort but obviously should be sought first before loans.

Of course, the BEST way to go is to work your way through college and have no debt or loans. This should be the FIRST choice for most students and parents, although I realize that educations like medical school are as expensive as buying a house, and sometimes it is just not possible to do it debt free.

Hard-Core Budgeting

The last thing I want to talk about is budgeting. Don't stop listening now. I know budgeting is a dirty word to most people. You have to change your thinking about budgeting.

Budgeting is simply telling your money what to do and being in control of where it goes.

It's your money; spend it how you want, but at least be in control of it. If you want to have a \$500 a month "eating out" category, then do it – it's your money. At the end of the month, don't be confused and in the dark about where your money went. If you want to spend \$500 on McDonald's, go right ahead, but do it with a budget so you know exactly where everything went.

Budgeting is telling your money what to do, so other people don't tell it what to do.

Use a "zero based budgeting system." That means that you tell every penny where it's going to go and how it's going to be used. That includes money that you simply want to blow on impulse. Again, it doesn't matter what you spend your money on, it's the fact that you know where every penny was spent.

Why is this important? Because, if you do not plan how your money will be spent, it will simply disappear and you will have nothing to show for it or any explanation as to how it slipped from your grasp. Remember, if you don't have a plan on how to spend

your money, you can bet other people have a plan on how to get it from you.

TRUE STORY

Budgeting has always been hard for me. I think it's just the time it takes combined with a natural tendency towards being lazy in this area. However, it's a great feeling at the end of the month to know where your hard-earned money went, rather than having it slip through your fingers, leaving you another month from financial peace.

There is also a danger to QUIT budgeting after you've become debt-free and financially sound. However, there are two negatives to consider: 1) it's easy to slip back into impulsive spending and bad habits, and 2) it keeps you from BUILDING WEALTH as effectively as you can when you budget. No matter how you feel about budgeting, DO IT ANYWAY.

One note for all you control freaks out there: I know it's easy for you to do a budget because it is in your nature. If you use the budget to micro-control your spouse or family and use it as your way to be a tyrant, then don't even bother. The benefits of budgeting will not outweigh the damage you will do to your relationships.

*DO NOT USE BUDGETING AS A WAY TO CONTROL PEOPLE. Use a budget to control **money**, not **people**.*

Setting Goals & Keeping Them

Financial goals seem to be as fragile as weight loss or fitness goals, but goals are goals. It doesn't matter if they are financial, or losing weight or setting priorities. Learn how to set, and keep, a goal, and any realistic goal becomes attainable. I included this section last because it is not specifically directed at financial goals, but the discipline is applicable.

If you are like most people, you can look back down the road of your life and find a long trail of goals and dreams scattered along the roadside and laying in the ditches.

With the very best of intentions, we go through cycle after cycle (can you say New Year's resolutions?) of coming up with plans, goals, and waves of willpower that will finally have us "hanging ten" on the big one that will surf us into our dreams.

Then, after a few weeks, months, and for some people only days, we realize that we are right back to doing what we were doing before and another set of hopeful wishes has joined the junk pile.

We don't mean for it to be that way, and we are 100% sure the day we write down our goals this is the one time, the final time, the mother of all goal setting that will surely be the one we finally stick to. Alas, here we are again. The last resolution, the last set of

goals are behind you wondering where their master has gone, and here you are reading about how to keep that from happening next time.

The good news is, YOU CAN! How do I know that? How can I promise you this? How can I guarantee it? Because I've been down that road.

I've done that, and like you, have been through the same pattern over and over and over. Not anymore though... well, not nearly as often, that's for sure. I can't say "never," but I can say "rarely."

I cannot say that I honestly keep every goal and every resolution, but I can tell you that for the most part I set goals, take action, and do what it takes to make sure they come to fruition.

I'm going to share with you 10 secrets on how you can set goals whether financial, personal or spiritual... and keep them from crumbling into failure yet again.

Secret One: Set Goals You Can Actually Achieve

Have you ever seen those people who put great big disks in their lip and stretch them out? How about the ones who stretch their necks out by ring after ring, one on top of each other? How about those dudes who stick swords down their throats?

Do you think they just wake up one day and decide to take the biggest disk, the most rings, or the longest sword and get down to business?

No. They start with the smallest first and work their way up.

One of the major reasons people fail at keeping their goals is because they come up with grandiose, earth shattering, mountain moving, life-changing epiphanies instead of devising realistic and achievable goals. We are predisposed because of all of the self-esteem nonsense today to not think realistically about either our abilities or our current level of discipline.

If you have spent 10 years putting on 150 pounds, don't think you're going to lose it all in six months and keep it all off.

If you have never developed good eating habits, don't make a goal that you will never eat sugar again starting today because it will take about three days to blow that one.

If you've never kept a rigid schedule or developed any kind of habits concerning goals, don't think you're going to change your entire life in one day. You won't. You have to work up to big change by setting achievable goals of small change.

Let's say you're final goal is to earn and save \$200,000 in one year and do 200 push-ups in one sitting. If you've never worked hard, educated yourself about business and been disciplined, you aren't going to have the ability to just go out and make \$200 grand. In the same way, you are not going to plop down on the ground tomorrow and whip out 200 push-ups.

If you want to get to 200 push-ups in one sitting, start with a goal of being able to do two. Once you can do a couple of push-ups,

then set a goal of five. After you proven to yourself you can do five, shoot for 10, then 20, then 50. Plan achievable goals that will motivate you and keep you enthusiastic. Set goals that you know you can reach and that you know you'll keep rather than trying to impress everyone with your super goals that always fail.

If you've never made or saved \$200,000, start with \$20. Then make a hundred and save a hundred. Get out of debt, quit spending, stop playing the lottery and eating out five times a week. Set an achievable goal of saving \$500. Then, shoot for a thousand and then \$5000.

Baby steps, friend, that's the secret. Underpromising and overachieving, that's what will keep you motivated and feeling successful rather than constantly failing to reach unrealistic expectations. Do you know how you walk from New York City to Los Angeles? One step at a time. You may have to start with one step A DAY. Have the same mentality about your goals.

Secret Two: They Aren't Real Goals If They Aren't Real Goals.

People set goals for many different reasons, but far too often it is to impress other people, get recognition, or something you've been convinced to do that you aren't really convinced you should do.

In other words, make sure the goals that you choose are really the goals that matter to you. Do your financial goals reflect the

income you want to make to fulfill the purpose that you truly believe you have in life? Or are your financial goals simply to obtain a lifestyle that other people and Madison Ave. say you must have?

A lot of times we choose goals to appease other people: parents, co-workers, friends and family and sometimes even our spouse. If we do not believe wholeheartedly and aren't fully committed to the goals that we set, it doesn't matter what you do - even if you achieve them, it won't matter.

Be honest with yourself. Do you want to make more money to help other people and have more time with your family? Or, have you set a goal for more income because you think it will result in a life of being lazy and indulging your every fantasy?

Is your goal to pray and read the Bible so that other people will think you're more spiritual? Is your goal to lose weight made for reasons other than health and discipline?

Lip service, fake goals, goals for show or any other type of image-over-substance will never result in any sort of achievement or fulfillment. Self-evaluation and complete honesty is a prerequisite for setting goals that are actually meaningful and achievable.

Secret Three: Ridiculous Control Over Your Schedule Is Necessary.

Extreme control over your day via scheduling, goal setting, and scripting has just the opposite effect that most people think. It is liberating and freedom producing, not restrictive and tedious.

Most people think that anal control over every minute of your day constrains you, robs you of fun and spontaneity, and turns you into a rigid freak.

They couldn't be more wrong. By controlling your time, your schedule and your actions, you gain total freedom by accomplishing what YOU need to accomplish, doing what YOU need to do, spending your time the way YOU need to spend it. All those "you" statements may sound selfish, but they're not when you are doing what YOU know is the right thing to do given the right priorities.

What's the alternative? Waking up and just "letting life happen" which typically includes other people and circumstances interrupting you constantly, allowing what other people declare as "urgent" to keep you from doing what is important... and finally allowing haphazard laziness and time wasting habits (TV anyone?) to steal away your most precious commodity: TIME.

What did you do with your time yesterday? How about last week this time? If you can't tell me, I can tell you: you wasted it. Threw it away. Gave it away. Blew it. Lost it.

Rigid control over your day gives you the freedom to do what YOU know is truly important, instead of what other people or "life" throws at you with total disregard for your priorities. We aren't just talking business... I'm talking about everything that is important to you.

I get the GREATEST FREEDOM knowing that I have planned my day to meet the needs, goals, and desires dictated by my priorities: God, marriage, kids, business.

The biggest result of not controlling your schedule is stress.

Stress will be the leading factor in causing you to get off track with your goals and to weaken the resolve to keep them. Control your schedule, control your stress, keep your goals.

Secret Four: Don't Set Goals You Don't Make Time For.

Closely related to controlling your schedule is the very simple fact that you must have time to achieve your goals. If your schedule currently does not have the margin of time needed to achieve a goal, it doesn't matter how much resolve or willpower you have, you simply will not have an opportunity to pursue it.

I have all sorts of goals I would like to set that I simply know I do not have time for. I would love to set goals to practice guitar 30 minutes a day, to work out in tennis one hour a day, to practice learning Spanish one hour a day, to write three hours a day, to study two hours a day, to work out one hour a day, to practice

piano one hour a day, to play with my kids several hours a day, and spend 20 hours a day with my wife.

It doesn't matter how sincere or resolved I am about all those goals, I simply cannot allocate time to achieve them all. Of course, I'm exaggerating and trying to make a point that many people are guilty of just this when it comes to their goals.

Every January 1, we are bound and determined that we are going to work out two hours a day and run 10 miles, knowing that we realistically can only carve out a half hour to 45 minutes for exercise.

Whatever goals you make, be realistic that you actually have time and can make time to achieve them. Drop less important things from your schedule and learn to prioritize. Learn to ward off, block out, guard against and fend off people, circumstances and interruptions that will inevitably do their best to ruin your schedule and crumble your goals.

Secret Five: Priorities Not Interruptions, Important Not Urgent.

If you ever want to consistently achieve your goals whether financial or personal, you must learn that your priorities take precedence over interruptions. You must structure your day around the important while guarding against letting the urgent take over.

This may seem redundant because we've talked about your schedule already, but it goes much deeper than that. If your goals are not truly high priorities, then they do not deserve to have your day built around them. If your goals are not truly important, then they will not withstand the onslaught of all the urgent circumstances that will arise.

You must have the mentality of a leader and owner, not a worker and employee. A worker or employee responds to what others tell him to do. The instructions and priorities of someone else dictate his day. A leader or owner should be the person setting priorities and everyone else conforms their schedule and activities to him. Whether this is personal or business, have a leader mentality that recognizes what is high-priority/important and build your day around those things. When other people or circumstances threaten to derail your schedule or goals, you must take decisive action to prevent that from happening.

I'm not talking about being one of those people who cannot respond to other people in true need or cannot drop their entire plans for the day when the circumstances genuinely call for it. Those situations are rare - unimportant urgent interruptions are not.

You must learn to selfishly guard your time against those who would selfishly waste it and keep you from achieving your goals.

You must learn to recognize what is truly important and valuable enough to cause you to change your schedule versus those things

that other people simply impose on you because they do not respect their time or yours.

Secret Six: Quantify And Measure Daily Progress.

Are you doing something every day to reach your goals? Do you know specifically what you would do each day to take one step toward your goals? Are you able to measure whether or not you took that one step? Here's how I do it and teach others to do it:

The Top Three

Each day, list three things, action items, that you will complete which will take you closer to your goals (ie. get out of debt, create a passive income, spend more time with family, etc).

The first item is your **MUST DO**. The other two are "bonus" items if you can make time. At the end of the day, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done at least one thing, one tangible action item to get you to your dreams. You will not have the guilt or frustration that accompanies the "didn't have time" syndrome. You will be amazed at how satisfying and motivating it is to know that you are **ACTUALLY DOING SOMETHING** about your life.

The number one reason very few people live the life they **WISH** they were living (financial peace, well balanced, spiritually fulfilling) is because they never actually **DO ANYTHING** to make it happen.

Folks, listen up. I'm not known for sugar coating things, so I won't start now. Whatever you do NOT discipline yourself to do routinely and daily will never get done, and you will never improve or be good at it. PERIOD.

No shortcuts, no tricks, no gimmicks. You must practice the daily discipline of being a DO-ER of those things that will help you take one step towards your goals. You must be able to identify, measure, and explain what those things are in order to discipline yourself to do it.

You can't just "wake up" every day... you have to choose to "live everyday." If you cannot tell me where your time went and how it was spent yesterday, specifically, I can tell you: it was wasted.

A life of disciplined action is a life well spent. A life lived with no plan, no purpose, and no action is a life, just a wasted one. Use the TOP THREE technique every day, and see how fast you start moving towards the life you've always wanted and achieving your goals on a consistent basis.

Secret Seven: Make Sure You Have The Resources To Achieve Your Goals.

If you set a goal that requires a certain amount of time to achieve and you do not have the time, guess what? You set yourself up for failure.

If you set a goal that requires a certain amount of money and you don't make sure you have that money, it doesn't take a rocket

scientist to figure out you'll never reach that goal. If you set a goal for yourself that requires the help of other people and yet you know those people are not within your ability to solicit help from, then it is a goal you cannot attain.

The Bible says that a wise man evaluates his plans to build a house and counts the cost before setting the goal to build it. Why?

Because if he does not have the money, time, resources, and information lined up and available when he starts to build, the house will be in ruins before it ever gets started. The same is true about our goals.

You cannot be truly serious and realistic about any goal whether financial or personal if you do not count the cost and make sure the resources, situation, and environment are going to be truly available for you to achieve it.

Secret Eight: Quit Being Normal.

Quit being normal. Normal means you'll keep procrastinating and making excuses about TAKING ACTION and CHANGING YOUR LIFE. Normal means you'll run comfortably with the herd, always thinking in "When.. Then" terms ("When I know enough, I'll take action." - "When I'm confident enough, I'll start my business." - "When I make enough money, I'll help others.")

Normal means you'll read this, and think "Wow, that's good stuff..." and then do absolutely NOTHING in response to it. Normal

means you'll have all the excuses you'll ever need to explain why you "can't," why you "won't," and why you "didn't" - and you'll get lots of empathy from all the other "normal" people.

Normal means you'll set goals, make no real plans to achieve them and whine about it when you get exactly just that.

Folks, listen... this is not about me trying to convince you to buy my products or join my VIP Group. My joy in life comes from motivating, coaching, teaching, and mentoring. The rewards (financially and emotionally) take care of themselves.

JUST DO SOMETHING! Take ACTION! Join a business group, attend a seminar, buy a book... just don't do any of those things if they are simply another reason to avoid real action. Do one of those things, THEN TAKE THAT KNOWLEDGE AND CONVERT IT TO ACTION. ACTION WILL LEAD YOU TO ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS.

About ninety-nine percent of people never do anything but talk about achieving a goal or improving their life, and they spend their days complaining about how unhappy they are. Are you a 99%-er or a 1%-er? If a 99%-er, for heaven's sake, WHY?

If a 1%-er, then what specific ACTION are you taking today to reach your goals? SPECIFIC ACTION? Not some nebulous concept.

What tangible, measurable, quantifiable action are you taking today to reach your financial, life, or spiritual goals?

Don't say you are a 1%-er and then not be a person of ACTION.

That would make you simply a hypocrite, deceived, or both. If you are a 99%-er, you can change that TODAY. Write down one ACTION you will accomplish today that will take you one step toward your goals. It might be simply determining what real goals are for the first time in your life.

Quit procrastinating. Quit talking, wishing, and whining, and start DOING SOMETHING.

Secret Nine: Accountability and Peer Pressure

If you are truly a part of the 1% of the people who actually take action, you'll often find yourself the motivator and rarely find those who will motivate you. However, it is still important that we all have accountability and a motivating peer pressure.

You are not Superman or Wonder Woman. Having accountability and the positive peer pressure of knowing that others are going to hold your feet to the fire helps you to make and achieve realistic goals.

Every person should have these three types of people in their life:

- A student or mentoree
- A professional equal or peer
- A mentor or parent figure

Each of these three types of persons gives you a difference aspect of accountability and positive peer pressure. Having a student or other people that you mentor means that there are other people looking up to you and what you do. By teaching other people, you

reinforce what you already know. By instructing them on how to live their lives, it helps you not to be hypocritical about your own.

When you're teaching others to set goals and keep them, it forces you to be accountable to keep your own goals.

You should also have several professional equals or peers who hold you accountable to the goals that you have set. You should give them permission to evaluate your efforts and give you honest feedback about what you are doing well, where you're missing the mark, and at times, if you are simply being lazy and undisciplined. Having accountability from your equals and knowing that you are being watched by those you respect from the same stage of life you are in, provides a great deal of positive peer pressure which is very helpful in staying on track.

If you have no accountability of any type, don't claim you are the strong "go it alone" type person. It most likely means that you don't want other people seeing how you really live your life.

You should also have a mentor or a parent type figure in your life that you look up to and share your goals with. There is a lot of healthy pressure in knowing that you are accountable to those you hold in high esteem and do not want to disappoint.

Secret Ten: Never Quit Starting Over.

No matter how many times you've set goals and failed miserably, don't ever give up doing it one more time. It is tempting to

become discouraged and think you can never break the cycle, but you can.

The only real failure is when you quit risking failure. Just because you fail at a goal doesn't mean that goal is foolish or unattainable.

Be honest with yourself and evaluate why you failed. Identify those things that caused the failure. Implement the secrets that I'm telling you in these lessons.

Above all, never quit trying. Even if you failed again after studying the lessons, study them again and try again.

I've lost track of the number of goals and promises I've made myself that quickly went by the wayside. It would be easy to wallow in the difficulty and disappointments, but all that does is delay ever making real changes in my life.

If you fail today, wake up tomorrow and start over. Every single day is a new chance to start over and get it right. It's only when we quit starting over that we truly are failures.

Remember, underpromise and overachieve. If you find yourself still consistently failing and your goals crumbling, then choose a fewer number of goals of lesser difficulty. Set a goal that you know you can achieve quickly. Riding the success of that achievement, set a goal that is a bit more aggressive but still a sure thing and use that motivation as a launch pad to get a bigger goal.

Summary:

- Set goals you know you can achieve and achieve quickly.
- Make sure the goals really matter to you and are made for the right reasons.
- Control your schedule and you will control your goals.
- Don't set goals you don't actually have time to achieve.
- Build your day around priorities and limit interruptions; learn the difference between urgent and important.
- Be able to quantify and measure at least one step each day toward your goals; use the Top Three Method.
- Make sure you have the available resources needed to achieve the goal.
- Quit being normal because normal people procrastinate and whine.
- Line up accountability and use positive peer pressure to keep you on track.
- Never give up and never quit starting over.

Final Thoughts

Be intense about paying off your debt! Be extreme, make sacrifices. It's worth it. There is nothing like the peace and freedom of being debt-free – no more bill collectors, no more stress about whether or not you can pay your bills.

Before, during, and after you are getting out of debt, be committed to never use debt again. EVER! If you don't, like the overweight person who finds themselves fatter than ever after a record-setting weight loss diet, you will look up a few months after getting out of debt only to find you are right back where you started and probably worse.

Finally, teach these principles to other people so they will stay fresh in your mind and keep you motivated. By teaching them to other people, you will be recognized as someone who promotes staying out of debt. This is a form of accountability and positive peer pressure, because if you get back in debt, you will be seen as a hypocrite, and we can't have that now, can we?

Most of all, remember the life principle that governs this whole idea of being out of debt: the borrower is slave to the lender.

Proverbs 22:7

**The rich rules over the poor,
And the borrower is SLAVE to the lender.**

