

Our Core Beliefs

Principles of Financial Success - The principles of financial success are to:

- Realize that God owns everything. Determine to act on this belief, "seeking first" with every financial decision. Develop the habit of praying about financial decisions.
- Generously give to God, and to others in need, as a first priority.
- Develop a surplus. Live on less than earned.
- Be cautious and conservative regarding the use of debt.
- Set goals that are in line with God's call on your life. Be cautious about allowing our culture to sway you toward inappropriate goals. Deploy (God's) money toward long-term goals only as God directs.

Goals - Goals can help to focus certain aspects of a steward's life. The goals that a steward establishes should be based on God's priorities instead of self-centered priorities. Some goals can become more effective planning tools when they can be measured in terms of amount and time period. The attainment of a goal must never be an end in itself. The establishment of a goal, and the *continued* pursuit of that goal, must reflect our ongoing pursuit of Christ.

Lifestyle - The Bible does not specifically define an "appropriate lifestyle." Financial pressure is relieved by spending less than one makes – not based on how much one makes. Financial contentment results from the continued adjustment of our deployment of God's resources to progressively answer God's call in our lives. Since no one believes they live "high on the hog," spending and lifestyle decisions should be prayerfully determined, not based on discretionary income. Christians must manage their spending in light of the other Godly things that can be accomplished with that money.

Biblical Worldview - My worldview is my ultimate core belief and, as a Christian, I believe in a personal creator who created me to be in relationship with others for all eternity. It is an empowered others-centered life that requires my radical obedience to our Lord and Savior. I know that God always has my best interests at heart and ultimately it is all about God and not me. Everything I do while living on earth has an eternal consequence.

Charitable Giving - Charitable giving should be an integral part of any maturing Christian's life. Giving is commanded in scripture for the benefit of both the recipient and the giver. Giving generously - and increasingly - helps us to keep a proper perspective about money. Tithing (giving 10%) is a good starting goal in our giving but should not serve as an upper goal. Giving should be done regularly. Giving should be done cheerfully with the realization that we are participating with God in the administration of His grace (see 1 Peter 4:10).

Borrowing and Debt - Borrowing is not a sin but it may deny God an opportunity to work and always presumes upon the future. Consumptive borrowing will sentence one to a reduced lifestyle in the future and will limit current financial flexibility as well as future

financial freedom. Borrowing may be symptomatic of spiritual issues. A husband and wife should be in complete harmony with borrowing decisions. Many have found increased financial freedom by being totally out of debt.

Income Taxes - In Scripture, taxes are commanded to be paid. They should rarely be a source of cash-flow problems as they can almost always be adequately planned for. Tax planning should rarely be the most important objective with most financial decisions. In many ways income taxes are an indicator of God's blessings.

Life Insurance - For those with (financial) dependents, life insurance may play a vital part in one's financial plan. Life insurance planning (as well as decisions regarding other types of insurance) should not be driven by a fear of the future. Instead, they should be made as a steward tending to the Master's business. Having appropriate insurance is a part of one's responsibility to family and does not demonstrate a lack of faith in God.

Teaching Children About Money - A parent trains his children in the principles and skills of money management. Both money and wisdom can be left to children but wealth left without wisdom can have dire circumstances on future generations. Training children to manage money involves not only the skill of money management but also the Biblical truths and principles underlying all stewardship planning and decision making.

Work and Retirement - God created man to work his entire lifetime. Work is normative, not a result of the fall, and should be evidenced by a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment. Leisure is a part of God's plan but not the objective of His plan. Work should always be accompanied by a sense of calling. Retirement is neither good nor evil. We must seek God's direction about possible retirement. God did not create us to be idle.

Investments - Investments can be a tool one uses to accomplish God-given goals. They should not be an end in and of themselves. It is Biblical to have a surplus. One accumulates excess by spending and giving less than one earns over a long period of time. Long-term investments should be diversified. We should invest money in line with Biblical principles, avoiding investments into areas contrary to Biblical teaching.

Planning for Education Expenses – In the Old Testament, leaving an inheritance of livestock and land provided a way for the heirs to earn their own living. In today's American society, a proper education may serve the same purpose. It is proper for parents or grandparents to help provide for education expenses. This should be done to help the child develop their God-given talents, skills, and passions. Care should be taken to minimize the stereotypes that society provides in this area. Determining how much to save ahead for education, or to pay out-of-pocket at the time of need, should be determined prayerfully. Note: it is often beneficial to have the child pay some of their own higher education expenses.

Wealth Transfer - The transfer of one's accumulated assets after death may be the single most significant stewardship decision (dollar-wise) that one will make. The steward must consider God's priorities and leave bequests to charity, individuals, trusts, etc as

those priorities direct. For some, wealth transfer can begin during life. These lifetime transfers should be used to observe and teach and never used to buy favor or to manipulate. In leaving money to married children, the steward should consider the couple as "one" and not favor a child over a son/daughter-in-law. The probable use of the assets in the hands of the heir must be considered before bequests are planned.

Bankruptcy - The Bible clearly states in Psalm 37:21 that a believer should repay whatever he owes. As a result, bankruptcy with the aim of not repaying debts is not a legitimate alternative for a Christian. Bankruptcy may be used in certain situations to effectively provide equitable treatment for all personal creditors.

Building Net Worth - One cannot accumulate enough to feel financially secure, significant, or successful. However, everyone can answer the question as to "how much is enough"? It will differ for every family and is an amount that should be determined prayerfully and periodically. As our circumstances change, the "how much is enough" question should be revisited. Net worth is always and only a measurement of God's provision and never a measurement of significance or success.

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