



DYNAMIC

Steward

the power to live to submit to abide to give to serve

October-December, 2005

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Faithful Finances 101

Volume 9 Number 4

An Education in Money

*Erika F. Puni, Director
General Conference Stewardship*

I grew up in the Ellice Islands—now the State of Tuvalu in the South Pacific. As the son of missionaries, I had a limited understanding and appreciation of money, its value and influence on society. In some remote places of the world you do not need money to survive, because these communities are not market driven.

My first experience with money occurred when my mother rewarded us children on Sunday with pennies to buy candy for reciting our memory verses in church. In this situation, money was a means to an end, and it certainly provided good motivation for us to learn Bible passages!

During those early years, I had another experience with money that I still remember to this day. In fact, it made such an impact on my mind that it continues to influence my Christian development in the area of financial stewardship.

In our home—a simple thatched hut appropriate for tropical conditions—were two empty cans with labels my mother pasted on them. One can had the word “Tithe” on it, and the other, “Offerings.” For us children, these two cans clearly showed that tithe and offerings were holy to God—money set aside for His purpose. This family practice of visibly identifying something for God was good Christian education for my siblings and me. It was a powerful object lesson that constantly reminded us of God and the things that are His.

On Friday afternoon, I was often given an extra chore along with my regular responsibilities. This assignment was to take the money—a note or coin with a higher value—that was inside the “Offering” can to the local store. My task was to change it to pennies so that each member of my family would have offerings to give God when we went to church to worship the next day. For this special run to the store, my mother would always say, “Son, you’re in charge of God’s money from here to the store and back. Don’t lose it, and don’t ever give it to anybody except to the shopkeeper for change. Jesus will look after you!” And so, for those few moments, I had the privilege of being the courier and steward of God’s money.

This issue of *Dynamic Steward* focuses on our partnership with God as we take up our privilege of being His courier and steward of the money He has placed in our hands.

Setting Financial Goals

This chart of financial goals is taken from the pre-work pages of the Good Sense Budget Course.

The Budget Course is a practical financial plan designed to help Christians find financial freedom. Available in English and Spanish

See goodsenseministry.com for more information.

Give serious consideration to your financial goals. Carefully considered, realistic goals—that flow out of what is really important to you—are powerful motivators. That motivation will be very helpful to you in following through on the steps necessary to achieve your goals.

Specific Goals to Achieve

Check the appropriate boxes and write in any details on the lines to the right of each item:

- Pay off debt: _____
- Save for a major purchase: _____
- Save for a vacation: _____
- Save for emergencies: _____
- Save to replace items that may wear out (major appliances, car): _____
- Save for college expenses: _____
- Save for retirement: _____
- Increase my giving to the church: _____
- Increase other giving: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____



A Good Description of Inflation ...

“A good description of the effects of inflation is found in Haggai 1:6:

“You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”—*The New Master Your Money* by Ron Blue, p. 51 (See Book Reviews, p. 14, for more information).

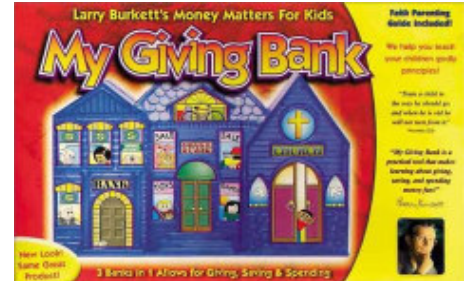
My Giving Bank

My Giving Bank is a practical tool to help children learn about giving, saving, and spending money. As you help your child decide how much money should go to the church, the bank, and the store, you will be assisting him or her in developing important habits that he can carry with him for a lifetime.

The durable plastic bank is molded in the shape of a colorful building with three sections—bank, store, and church. It comes with colorful stickers that your child will enjoy placing on the buildings. Each of the three sections has its own opening for coins and can be opened and reopened at the base for removing money.

The biblical principle that God invites us to partner with Him in the care and managing of His resources is a concept that children need to be taught early in life. Also included is a Faith Parenting Guide that will give parents valuable tips and suggestions on how to make money management a rewarding adventure from childhood through adulthood.

The only downside is the list price of the bank. However, it can be purchased for US \$12.99 at Christianbook.com and at Amazon.com for US \$13.99.



by Faith Kids
Cook Communications Ministries
Colorado Springs, Colorado
2000 US \$19.99

quotes

Money . . .

God can have our money and not our hearts, but he cannot have our hearts without having our money.—*R. Kent Hughes*

Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.—*P. T. Barnum*

Good money management is not bondage; it is freedom from the “right” to do what we want, giving us instead the power to do what we should!—*Bob and Emilie Barnes*

If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area of his life.—*Billy Graham*

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.—*Jesus Christ*

What is unique to modern consumerism is the idealization and constant encouragement of insatiability—the deification of dissatisfaction.—*Tricia McCary Rhodes*

A man’s treatment of money is the most decisive test of his character—how he makes it and how he spends it.—*Moffat*

Inflation is the one form of taxation that can be imposed without legislation.—*Milton Friedman*

Money management is basically self-control, for unless one learns to control himself, he is no more likely to control his money than he is to discipline his habits, his time, or his temper. Undisciplined money usually spells undisciplined persons.—*Robert J. Hastings*

What some people mistake for the high cost of living is really the cost of high living.—*Doug Larson*

Money as Religion

Jean-Luc Lézeau, Associate Director
General Conference Stewardship

Christians often have a wrong relationship to money. For some, money is a source of evil and getting rich is under suspicion, especially when most of us try to live an honest life, paying our “dues” to Caesar, and not much is left. For others, prosperity theology advocates exactly the opposite: when you are faithful, God will bless you with material things. Material wealth, they say, is irrevocably linked and is a sign of mature and growing faith. To be otherwise is a sign of spiritual weakness. We may wonder if the 1.2 billion people who live on \$1 a day are without faith.

When Malachi 3:10 is quoted, it nearly always is used for making a strong connection between our faithfulness and the material blessings God promises to give. Since we have quite a number of poor in our church, don't we make God a liar by explaining it this way? Aren't we actually limiting God's blessings to the material arena?

Religion and narcissism

The Prayer of Jabez, by Bruce Wilkinson, appears to reinforce this ambiguity. When Jabez prayed, “enlarge my territory,” according to the author, he meant material things (p. 31). In contrast, Jesus taught us to ask for our daily bread. It is no wonder that a *New York Times* review of May 8, 2001 quoted Dr. Jeffrey Mahan, Professor of Ministry at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, as saying, “It fits with the narcissism of the age. Religious life is focused on me and my needs.” And our prayers are reflecting the same egotistic thoughts.

Mother Teresa used to say that God does not call us to success, but to faithfulness. It is true, but is it enough? A Lebanese Christian, recently interviewed on the radio, said: “At the beginning, Christianity was about relationship, when it went to Greece it became a religion, when it went to Rome it became an organization, when it went to Europe it became cultural, when it went to North America it became commercial. It is high time to go back to what it was in the Middle East.”

Relationship, the core

Our Lebanese friend goes to the core of our Christian experience: the relationship. If our relationship with God is OK, then our relationship with money cannot be wrong. To his dismay, the rich young ruler failed the acid test of relationship, even though he had kept the commandments from youth. What a tragedy; to do all the good things for the wrong reason!

Psychologists tell us that people think more about money than sex. Saunders, an Australian researcher, found that there is a positive correlation between materialism and depression, anxiety and anger. Material things may give a person a sense of control, but materialism is negatively correlated to life satisfaction. In today's culture, it is difficult to accept the fact that money is just a commodity. It simply replaces shells that were once used for currency, and later, paper currency, before trade began.

Addiction to money

The problem with money is that it can become addictive. Today, everything is converted into numbers: the cost of 9/11, the delayed departures of space shuttles, the number of highway accidents due to alcoholism, et cetera. So-called born again Christians are forecasting an economic Armageddon because of government debt



and are giving counsel on how to invest in Treasury bonds rather than in Wall Street. Treasury bonds are supposed to be more secure in protecting our assets for the future. In reading the Scriptures, these brothers and sisters have probably forgotten Matthew 6, where Jesus tells us that only pagans worry about their economic future.

Scripture's balance

Neither approach is biblical. The Bible does not tell us that money is evil and that all debt is sin. What the Bible teaches us is to be balanced in everything we do. During the Creation in Eden, it was God, not humanity, who determined what was good and what was evil.

Abraham, who let Lot take the best land (Gn 13:9-12), Jesus, who did not have a place to lay His head (Lk 9:58), and Paul, who worked all through his ministry (1Cor 4:12), would have failed by today's standard. It is up to us to decide who best models what we want to follow in life: The investment czar of Wall Street, or the examples we have noted from the Bible?

The Bible does not tell us that money is evil and that all debt is sin. What the Bible teaches us is to be balanced in everything we do.

stewardship window

more from
the director's desk ...



Welcome to our New Director

Dr. Erika F. Puni was elected new director of our department at the last General Conference session. During the last quinquennium, Dr. Puni served as Stewardship, Sabbath School, and Personal Ministries Director for the South Pacific Division.

Erika began his ministry in the Youth Department of the North New Zealand Conference and later served as assistant secretary in that conference. Next, he studied at Loma Linda University, earning an MA in Religion. He continued his studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, where he received an MA in Missiology and a PhD in Intercultural Studies.

Dr Puni has an excellent understanding of biblical stewardship. We welcome the opportunity to work with him as he brings new insight and vision to the global needs of our church in the area of stewardship.

Who Said Impossible?

Is it possible to change circumstances in our lifetime? East-Central Africa Division has initiated and seen changes in just a few months! At the division's last Annual Council, President G. Mbwana challenged the executive committee to draw up a strategic plan to meet the needs of ECD. Three teams of division leaders took a portion of their territory and held four-day seminars at each union headquarters.

Training included Spiritual Leadership, Human Resource Management, Strategic Planning, Principles of Self-Support, and Financial Management. Biblical stewardship was presented, making a marked impact on the participants. In one conference, the tithe rose 30 percent! But this is only a first step. The division has produced a strong program to train pastors and leaders to be better equipped and better stewards. Who said impossible?

Finding God's Best: Managing Your Money

Ken W. Smith

President and Founder

Christian Stewardship Ministries

Contact Ken at: www.csmin.org

Not necessarily

God has a very best plan for each of our lives. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jr 29:11).

Part of that plan is a strategy for handling our money. When it comes to finances, we tend to assume that more is better. Perhaps, but not necessarily. To guarantee freedom from anxiety associated with financial affairs, we need only follow two basic biblical principles. First, we must give at the level the Lord wants us to give. Second, we must avoid borrowing.

In the parable of the talents Jesus said, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things...” (Mt 25:21). On the other hand, Jesus said, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Lk 12:48).

If we faithfully manage the money the Lord has entrusted to us, we can generally expect Him to entrust us with more. But the primary purpose for entrusting us with more is to further His kingdom on earth. In 2 Corinthians 9:11 we are told, “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us, your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”

Begin by tithing

The first step is to tithe. “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Mal 3:10).

Those who have tried it know the truth of this Scripture. God does not necessarily provide more and more money in response to increased giving. He may or may not. But He definitely provides more and more of His peace.

Today . . . many people have far more than enough to meet their own needs and have moved on to fulfill most of their desires as well. . . . Polls conducted by Gallup, Barna, and others reveal a terribly shameful truth, however. Most Christians not only do not tithe, they do not give even one percent of their income to the Lord and His work. In fact, the more money most Christians have, the less they give. . . .

Too many churches have failed to teach their people about giving in line with the guidance God has provided in Scripture. They are shortchanging their congregations and their ministries with this approach.

Avoid borrowing

The second biblical principle that guarantees freedom from anxiety in money matters is to avoid borrowing. Although borrowing is not forbidden, it is clearly to be discouraged. “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender,” says Proverbs 22:7.

Yet, in many cultures, borrowing is commonplace, not just for home mortgages but many other things as well. The case can be made for not borrowing—even to finance a home—but the point here is to determine whether God wants us to borrow. As a matter of principle, if we are committed to seeking God’s best, and if we believe

SCRIPTURE:
Luke 12:48

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that God's best does not include borrowing, then we should be committed to not borrowing. Then and only then will we be in a position to discover God's direction through our finances. If borrowing is considered an option, there will almost certainly come a time when we will borrow.

Other than a home mortgage, the most common reason for personal loans is to finance automobiles. But there is always a better way to deal with transportation needs, and we need to find solutions rather than incur debt. In some countries, another common form of borrowing is the use of credit cards. They can be a convenience, but anyone who does not pay off the entire balance monthly would do well to forego using the cards in order to avoid borrowing.

Should churches borrow?

Churches should also beware of borrowing. Larry Burkett, former director of Crown Financial Ministries, tells a story about a businessman who wanted to give a large donation to his church to build a youth center.

The man told Mr. Burkett that he would give the gift to the church, but only on the condition that the pastor commit to not borrowing to finance the expansion without knowing about the gift. Unfortunately, the pastor accepted the argument of another businessman who said that incurring debt was the only way to proceed, rather than listening to Burkett's plea for following the biblical prescription to avoid debt.

The pastor presented the case to the congregation for borrowing, and the potential donor, who was ready to underwrite the youth center, wrote a check for \$200,000 to another ministry.

If individuals and churches would just "hold the line" when it seems impossible to do so and remain faithful to the biblical principles for giving and borrowing, God's kingdom on earth would never lack for financial resources. In addition, individuals and churches would make better decisions in many other areas of their personal and corporate lives.

Commit yourself to giving at the level that represents obedience to God and to not borrowing. This is the sure way to position yourself to receive God's best in the area of your finances.



The Art of Managing Money

Christian Goltz, Treasurer
North German Union Conference

Please, help me!

One day a church member who was single and had no children, came to me and said, “I need financial counseling. For years, I have struggled with financial problems, but so far, I have not found the courage to ask somebody for help. You are a treasurer. Please, help me!”

I asked him, “How much do you spend monthly, after tithe, for your living expenses? You know—your rent, utilities, food, clothing, gasoline and repairs for your car, toiletries, insurances, miscellaneous newspapers, books, and donations?”

“Oh, I have no idea,” he replied.

“I knew it!” I thought. If he does not know where he spends his money, how can he live within his means? I explained to him the necessity of having a financial plan for every month. We started by preparing a plan for the next three months. He also had to write down all expenses, classified in ten columns, and headed as home, car, food, et cetera.

After analyzing his spending for two months, I realized what his problem was: He spent 20-25 percent of his net income for his car (gasoline, taxes, insurance, and garage expense, with no savings for depreciation). That was too much, of course. After understanding his problem, he sold his car and bought a more economical vehicle. Working together, and after some other adjustments, he learned how to get along on his income without piling up any more debt.

Skills for managing money

To manage one’s income is an art and a grace of God. It has to do with (among other things) our personality, demands, and the influence of television propaganda, friends and neighbors. It seems to me that in today’s society, every generation finds it more difficult to handle expenses than the generation before it.

We are tempted to compare our lifestyle with the lifestyle of well-to-do families in our neighborhoods, our church, or in soap-opera television series. The generation who experienced World War II is dying out and, with it, a people who experienced hard times. Since then, we have seen sixty years of prosperity in the West. On the horizon, we recognize the signs of having almost reached the limits of our prosperous society. What will help in planning the financial future of our families?

Economical enterprises use reference numbers to measure the success of certain products or services. Worldwide accounting regulations have defined standard numbers like EBIT (*earnings before interests and taxes*). In my experience, such figures could be useful within our families as well. I would like to suggest two standard reference numbers for families: *cost for housing to net income* and *cost for transportation to net income*.

Housing and transportation (car) are the two greatest expenses of a family. Bad investments in these areas may ruin the family financially, for the investment costs are high and maintenance costs are considerable. It is absolutely essential to calculate investment cost and maintenance cost before signing a contract or bill of sale. Families pay dearly for mistakes in these two areas.

SCRIPTURE:
Luke 14:28-30

To manage one's income is an art and a grace of God. It has to do with (among other things) our personality, demands, and the influence of television propaganda, friends, and neighbors.

AIAHTT

Jesus took it for granted that if one wants to build a tower, he will first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it (Lk 14:28). If a family pays more than 50-60 percent of their net income for their home and transportation, they have created a major financial problem. In some instances, a family may temporarily pay higher percentages for these two major areas, and this might be acceptable because of certain circumstances. In the long run, however, an AIAHTT (*available income after housing, transportation and tithe*) of 30-40 percent is very little to survive on without going deeper in debt.

Sometimes a situation turns critical when a family has to adapt to less income. If a member of the family loses his or her position at work, the family income may drop significantly while its expenses remain the same. As the AIAHTT percentage was already very high before unemployment, it may increase to 100 percent in the new situation, and no money will be left for food and clothing. This problem will only be solved if the family moves to a less expensive house or apartment or, if possible, sells the family car. These actions can create a new financial balance.

The secret

If one is used to a certain standard of living, such a process of adapting to a lower level of room and comfort is a painful experience. Happy is the family who can say with the apostle Paul, “[We] have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. [We] know what it is to be in need, and [we] know what it is to have plenty. [We] have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (Php 4:11-12, *We* supplied).

Realistic and reasonable desires and objectives are signs of a family who has sanctified its life before God. This family will have a budget with a healthy financial structure. It is this simple: We can spend only what we earn, no more. Our earnings limit our desires. In this context, the family with an abundance of money may keep the biblical view of life in mind, “For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1 Tm 6:7). However, the family who complains about how little money they have may consider the subsequent verse, “But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that” (1 Tm 6:8).



How to Control Spending

Crown Financial Ministries

This article was originally published on December 2, 2004. It and other helpful financial resources may be found at Crown Financial Ministries' website: www.crown.org.

*Difficult but
necessary steps to
follow*

Spending is a habit

Does money burn a hole in your pocket? Does buyer's remorse set in after you have spent your money? If this sounds familiar, how can you manage your spending so you can buy the things you need now and also save for the things you need in the future?

In order to change spending habits, we must first understand how habits are shaped and the ways spending behavior can be changed. In essence, we must identify spending "leaks" that give us immediate satisfaction but do not help us reach financial goals and, instead, substitute desirable spending behavior that may not be immediately gratifying but will allow us to reach those financial goals.

How to change the habit

Luke 16:11 says, "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?" We need to learn to handle the smallest thing God has put under our authority—our money. Therefore, if we observe the following guidelines, it should help us control spending.

1 *Establish self-discipline.* Put all spending under God's control. By doing this, you become a manager of God's finances and all spending should then be from the vantage point of whether He would be pleased with your purchase. With God's guidance, any bad habit can be broken.

We need to learn to recognize the drive that places us in a spending situation and then, when we shop, we can avoid the spending pitfalls produced by that drive by having a purpose for our shopping, a time limit, and a written plan. It is important to make a list before you go shopping and then stick to it.

In addition, you should limit the number of trips to the store or mall and never shop when hungry or depressed.

2 *How far money goes usually depends on how much you want something.* As such, you need to be in control of the money, under God's direction, instead of having the money control you by limiting what you do.

Once spending has been brought under control, there should be a determination as to how much needs to be spent each month in every area of an implemented budget; and, since the basic idea behind budgeting is to save money up front for both known and unknown expenses, there must be a commitment to stick to the budget.

If you are having difficulty with income equaling outgo, you need to cut some of your outgo. As such, you should look at your budget realistically and see where you can start trimming.

A budget is a money plan. With it, people can organize and control their financial resources, set and realize goals, and decide in advance how money will work for the good of the family.

Therefore, because every purchase should be considered in light of the established budget, buying any nonbudgeted items on impulse should be avoided, especially if those nonbudgeted items are going to be purchased with a credit card.

SCRIPTURE:
Luke 16:11

Whenever you feel you need to buy something that is not budgeted, put it on the list, but then wait seven days and find two additional prices for the same item, to be sure you are getting a good buy.

3 You need to be accountable to other people for a specified period of time for everything you spend. Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10 says, “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.”

If there is accountability, you will be more inclined to be more cautious in your spending habits—more of a “look now, buy later” attitude. So, shop around before buying and learn to say no. Keep a record of spending and purchases and share these with the accountability partner.

4 *Establish a want-to-buy list.* Whenever you feel you need to buy something that is not budgeted, put it on the list, but then wait seven days and find two additional prices for the same item, to be sure you are getting a good buy.

If you still want the item after a week has passed, you will have thought about it and probably will be getting the best buy on the item. However, you still should not charge it.

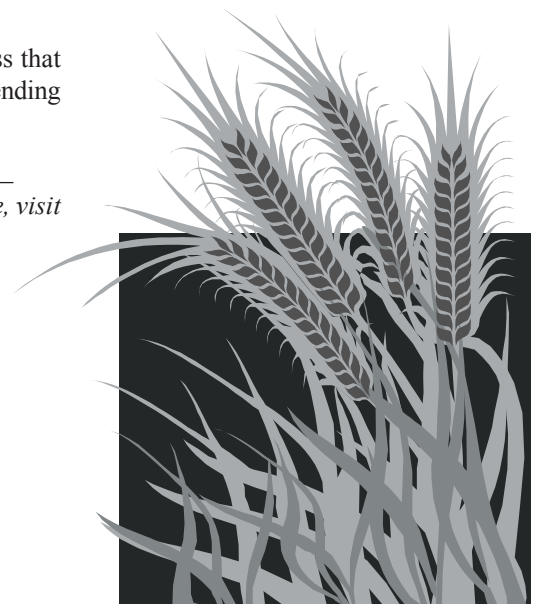
Finally, you can only have one item on the list at a time, so if you find a new “want” during the week, you will need to decide between the two.

Conclusion

A good way to reduce debt is to develop discipline in spending habits. That may include taking away any security that might be used in case of emergencies: credit cards or other avenues of borrowing.

By committing not to go further in debt, we begin to reverse the process that produced the debt. Then, we can develop a balanced budget that will control spending and will allow us to stay within the parameters of our financial means.

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Dollars and Sense for Children

*John Nardini, Personal Finance
Author, Advisor, and Publisher
Grand Rapids, Michigan*

*Take a step-by-step walk
with the author, through
the developmental stages
of money management in
childhood and youth.*

Never too late—or too early

What you teach your children about managing money will affect their entire lives. Children must handle money often, and from an early age, to become financially responsible adults. It is never too early—or too late—to begin.

Ages and concepts

At ages 3-5, children understand simple concepts, so start on the basics. Teach them to identify coins and their values. Take them banking, and explain that banks keep money safe until you want it. Discuss the grocery items you chose, and allow them to pay the cashier. Keep it simple and fun.

From ages 6-11, an allowance is an excellent way to show how to earn money. Simultaneously, help your child develop a simple budget to manage resources. Decide together what percentage he or she will spend, save, or give, then provide a container for each category.

A few tips:

- Allow a child to choose (within reason) how to spend her money. Experience is the greatest teacher, so allow mistakes.
- Encourage giving to foster a spirit of generosity.
- Add a few pennies of “interest” occasionally to the savings jar, showing that money can earn money.
- Focus on delayed gratification and the benefits of saving.

Early adolescence

During ages 12-15, increase your child’s allowance and responsibilities to prepare for independence. Create a more detailed budget. Add new savings categories for clothing, activities, and entertainment. Allow plenty of freedom, especially in shopping decisions; poor choices reinforce the importance of well-informed shopping. Also review advertisements and discuss what each ad is stating, and why.

Let your child see you paying bills, and show how to make out checks, bank deposits, and withdrawal slips. Explain stocks and bonds, and track a stock together from one of his favorite brands, such as Nike or McDonald’s.

Later teens

By age 16, your child is ready for complete financial training. Open up your budget to show how you plan for and manage saving, spending, and giving. Ask questions about your decisions, and solicit opinion. Use classified ads to discuss salaries, housing costs, and buying a car.

SCRIPTURE:
Proverbs 22:6

Create scenarios for your teenager regarding possible career choices and the lifestyle each would afford.

If you get your child a credit card to teach responsible use of credit (and many believe this is a bad idea), I recommend that the first time a monthly payment cannot be made, the card should be destroyed.

Ultimately, the best way to teach your children about handling money is by example. As you live out good money practices, they will reproduce themselves in your children.

John Nardini is a Christian financial coach and has published over 130 articles on business and personal finance. He is the author of the popular www.FreeMoneyFinance.com blog.

Children must handle money often, and from an early age, to become financially responsible adults. It is never too early—or too late—to begin.



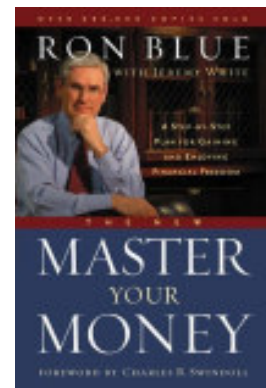
The New Master Your Money

Reviewed by *Claire L. Eva*, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department

If you would like to have a book among your financial resources that talks about any area of money management you can think of—for any stage of life—Ron Blue's *The New Master Your Money* would be our recommendation to you. The author's approach is profound, but easily understood. The back page states that the book will help you:

- Avoid the most common financial mistakes
- Apply biblical principles of money management
- Save, invest, and give wisely
- Create a long-term financial plan that works
- Plan for your taxes and estate needs
- Get out of debt

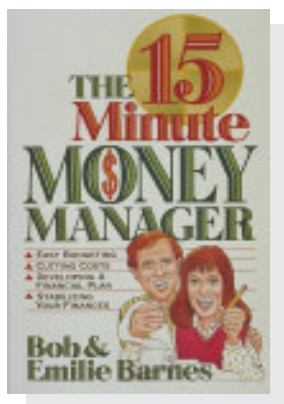
While we may differ with the author and say that those who choose to invest wisely in a home today can still find it a safe way to build personal net worth and equity (especially over time), there is wisdom in his counsel. A book packed with important practical information and sound financial principles.



by Ron Blue
Moody Publishers
Chicago, Illinois
2004 US \$16.99

The 15-Minute Money Manager

Reviewed by *Claire L. Eva*, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department



by Bob and Emilie Barnes
Harvest House Publishers
Eugene, Oregon
1993 US \$9.99

Bob and Emilie Barnes have written a number of volumes—from devotionals to ways to love your grandchildren, but *The 15-Minute Money Manager* is probably one of their most widely known books.

As it implies, the book comes in small doses—15-minute ones, that is. It begins with *Part One: A Plan for Your Life*. This section helps you to discover why you do what you do, to understand your goals and dreams, and to design a plan for success. Parts Two and Three discuss having the right priorities in good money management and organizing by creating a good system for financial records. Also included are the topics of investments, children's money management, and being a good consumer.

“Our goal as Christians should be to obtain financial freedom. This has four characteristics,” say the Barnes’: 1) Our assets exceed our liabilities, 2) We are able to pay our bills as they fall due, 3) We have no unpaid bills, and 4) We are content with where we are” (Introduction). The book is full of practical advice and resources.

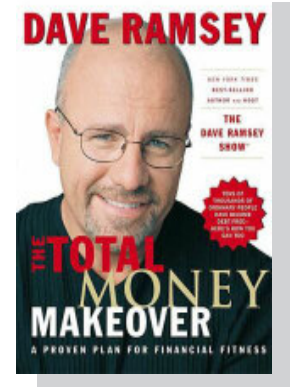
Total Money Makeover

*Reviewed by Jean-Luc Lézeau, Associate Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*

Almost half of Dave Ramsey's book is success stories of people who have been saved from bankruptcy due to the Total Money Makeover plan. It is nice to read, but does not bring anything new to your life.

What is more interesting are all the "baby steps" that you must go through in order to pay your debt and then live with what you have. This is a challenge for many people today! To live in contentment and have some savings for the children's education, illnesses, or simply paying cash for your next car—have you tried that?—it makes you feel as though you are on top of the world!

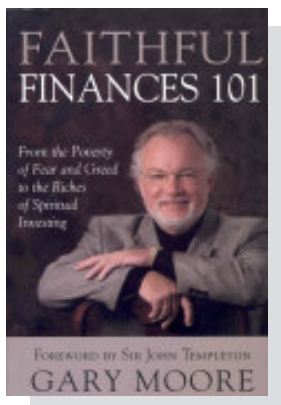
Nothing very new, but good reading. This book is especially for those who are in debt and are not yet convinced that mastering that thing called "finance" goes through another thing called "budget."



by Dave Ramsey
Thomas Nelson Publishers
Nashville, Tennessee
2003 US \$24.99

Faithful Finances 101

*Reviewed by Jean-Luc Lézeau, Associate Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*



by Gary Moore
Templeton Foundation Press
West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania
2003 US \$24.95

Gary Moore is an interesting character in the world of Christian finance. Contrary to many self-proclaimed experts, he has decades of experience as a fund manager. In the 1980's he wrote a book that *Christianity Today* called "the first book of ethical investing."

Stewardship leaders are suspected to have only one goal: devise means for more funds to come into the church to balance the budget. Gary takes a different approach: before you tell your members how to spend their money, you should tell them how to earn it!

He is not talking here about the kind of job a Christian should have, although a lot could be said about that subject. No, Moore is talking about the kind of investment a Christian should make. And there, he does not agree at all with what famed Christian counselors are saying today. Can we be, should we be, selective as to where we put our money? Certainly. It should not be the higher interest rate that attracts us, but the nature of the business and the management style should be determining factors in our choice.

Moore uses biblical examples to illustrate his position. A book worth reading. Especially for those who have a little money left to invest!

New—2006 Offering Readings

The 2006 Tithes and Offering Readings are now on our website! Dr. Erika F. Puni, newly elected General Conference Stewardship Department Director, authored the readings.

Dr. Puni comes to the General Conference from the South Pacific Division, where he served as director of Stewardship, Sabbath School, and Personal Ministries (see STW Window). His chosen title and theme for the comments is *Messages from the Old Testament*.

Each year the General Conference Stewardship Department produces offering comments for the world divisions, but anyone may download one or all of the readings from our website at adventiststewardship.com.

If you would like to find some new inspiration for making the offering appeal, you will appreciate the many readings you will find there.

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Exploring partnership with God

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editorial

Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department

When I was small, lack taught me to be resourceful. I would gather soda bottles to take to Mr. Green's store. Two cents deposit per bottle. Several bottles in arm would be like having the purchase power of a queen! I could buy candy—three pieces per penny. There were always ways to find a few cents to buy a treat or a gift. I could run to the store for Mrs. Duffy or sell candy apples for the nearby "apple ladies"—sell nine, get one free!

That was then. Today, a penny has little value. I seldom stop to pick up the stray one mindlessly dropped on the sidewalk. Nuisances in the desk drawer or in your pocket!

Inventor, philosopher, ambassador, Benjamin Franklin, once said, "A penny saved is a penny earned." Let's modify what Mr. Franklin said and update to a dollar. Does even a dollar saved make a difference?

According to Ron Blue, author of *The New Master Your Money* (See review on page 14), "A dollar spent today does not take a dollar out of the future; it takes multiple dollars. Only \$2.74 per day spent on nonproductive purchases results in an overspending of \$1,000 per year. If that \$1,000 . . . were invested to earn 12.5 percent compounded annually (such as an IRA), then the \$2.74 per day cost me the \$1,000,000 that I could have had. The next time you make a spontaneous purchase, ask yourself, what does this really cost me?" (p. 47)

The key in this quote is "nonproductive." We need little rewards from time to time, but how often do we spend without really counting the cost? That one million dollars or whatever amount we wisely put aside could one day give us financial freedom and enable us to share God's blessings with a world truly in need.

It's something to think about, especially since we are predominantly God's stewards and heaven investors.