



COMMON CENT\$ FOR CHRISTIANS

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INTRODUCTION

The common sense shared on these pages is, unfortunately, found to be not very common in today's world. Even with the abundance of information at our fingertips, too many of us are continually making the same significant mistakes with our finances and are putting pressure on our lives where there should not be.

This booklet is not meant to be a long exhaustive volume on financial strategies, investments, or other such subjects. It is simply a short, helpful bullet-pointed guide meant to help you master your money and become a better steward of the resources with which God has blessed you. There exists a wealth of further information one can research regarding all the other financial issues you might need to address, i.e., investments, retirement planning, estate planning, etc. However, these pages are simply meant to target those fundamental issues on which all the other financial aspects of our lives rest.

These points must be mastered before anything else can occur. If you do master and execute these basic steps, you can and will lead a much improved and fruitful life...just as God intended. And they are ever so simple...but then, most of life's wisdom is. We have also included an abundance of quotations and thoughts from a variety of learned people and that we hope may be used as important and helpful reminders of what we should all be striving towards.

TITHING

Have you ever heard of the three most important rules of real estate...location, location, and location? Well, within a Christian's life of financial responsibility and good financial health, the three most important rules of handling one's money are tithing, tithing, and tithing! All other significant truths, as important as they are in managing your resources, are way down the list of importance compared to tithing.

"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." -Malachi 3:10 NIV

Always write your first check(s), 10% of your gross income (this amount used by many), to your home church and/or to other ministries or directly to those in need. However, it is important that this should be done, not out of a sense of "legalistic" obligation, but rather done in a spirit of cheerfulness and joy! God will bless you many times over regarding your financial wellbeing and you will find you will always have what you need. If you believe "you do not have enough to tithe," then it is that much more important to do so in prayerful worship to the Lord, thereby discovering how your remaining 90% will now go farther than what the whole amount used to!

*"God waits to win back his own flowers as gifts from man's hands."
-Rabindranath Tagore*

Although one-third of all born again adults claim to tithe their income, only 12% actually do so. -Barna Research

*"What do you think God gave you more wealth than is requisite to satisfy your rational wants for, when you look around and see how many are in absolute need of that which you do not need? Can you not take the hint?"
-J.G. Holland*

"I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditures excludes them." -C.S. Lewis

BUDGET

Set up a budget and try to stick to it. Everyone needs a financial plan or blueprint with which to manage his or her money. This budget needs to be written out and continually revised and used as a tool in keeping on track with one's financial goals and in succeeding with proper stewardship of one's resources. List all your current monthly expenses and financial outgo, etc., and then compare this total to your monthly income. Account for every penny, on both sides of the equation and make sure "Tithing" is at the top of your list of "Expenses."

"The best money you can make is what you save on living expenses."

-Joel Salatin

"Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen six, result happiness." -Charles Dickens

SPENDING HISTORY

In order to develop a wise and true budget and plan, go back over the past 3 months and list where the money has been going, examining your checking register & statements, credit card statements, cash you use, etc. It is usually very helpful to see where you guessed correctly on your monthly expenditures, and where you were surprised at your outgo of resources. Interest expense, fines and penalties, eating out, clothing purchases...all can become major recipients of your hard earned and limited resources. On a micro scale and on limited income, even small things like daily coffee & soft drinks, library fines, etc., can all add up and become areas for possible adjustment after one has a proper grasp of just where the money is going.

"Be ruthlessly realistic when it comes to your finances." -Unknown

"There is no dignity quite so impressive, and no independence quite so important, as living within your means." -Calvin Coolidge

SAVING

After your tithe, pay “yourself” next. Always establish a savings account, no matter how small (target 10% of your income) and contribute to this account regularly. You have heard you are what you eat...well, financially speaking, you are what your savings account is. Not what your income is, not what your house is worth, not the value of your stock portfolio, etc. Your savings is imperative for future needs, for future emergencies, and most important-when you have a savings account your mentality immediately changes for the better as you then begin to manage all your other resources and expenditures with greater focus and wisdom.

“Saving is greater than earning.” -German proverb

“Learn to save on even the most modest salary. If you do, you're almost assured of financial success.” -Unknown

“In life, it's not how much money you make, it's how much money you keep.” -Robert Kiyosaki

AVOID DEBT

*“The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”
-Proverbs 22:7 NIV*

Stay away from credit. Buy your house with a loan, maybe your car, but you should only have one credit card that you use for emergencies...which you might use only occasionally as long as you have the discipline of paying off the balance in full by the end of the month. Also, use a debit card instead of a credit card for daily convenience and make sure to enter all such transactions into your checking register.

“Of all the freedoms a man may enjoy, none can quite match that which comes from being completely free of debt.” -Unknown

“Never spend your money before you have it.” -Thomas Jefferson

AVOID RISK

Be conservative. When listening to friends or so-called “experts,” it is in everyone’s nature to share their successes, but rarely their mistakes and failures. Thus, when someone is touting the next best high-yield investment they just made, remember, you never go broke keeping your money in CD’s, money market instruments, or even just simple savings! It may sound boring and even unwise compared to all the excitement and potential of the higher yields you are being pitched, but more often than not, those who have been seduced into those higher risk “investments” are later worrying about their principal...and at that point, higher yields are the least of their problem and concern! Instead, they could have and should have had the security and safety of principal while earning some guaranteed interest. Don’t get caught in the trap and temptation of worrying about say, inflation, as those strategies all fall apart if you begin losing your principal.

“The easiest way to make \$5000 in the stock market [or insert the “money-making opportunity” of your choice]...is to start with \$10,000 and stop when it gets to \$5000!” -Unknown

“Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.” –P. T. Barnum

LESS IS MORE

“Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.” -Ecclesiastes 5:10 NIV

“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” -1Timothy 6:9-10 NIV

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” -Hebrews 13:5 NIV

Continually work at simplifying your life. All of the great minds of history have come to the conclusion that life is so much more enriched by seeking simplicity in regards to our wants and needs. This road of simplification should be a continual process throughout our lives.

“I chose to be rich by making my wants few.” –Henry David Thoreau

“He who buys what he does not need steal's from himself.” –Unknown

“Wealth is the smallest thing on earth, the least gift that God has bestowed on mankind.” -Martin Luther

“I am happy in having learned to distinguish between ownership and possession. Books, pictures, and all the beauty of the world belong to those who love and understand them- not usually to those who possess them. All of those things that I am entitled to have- I own by divine right. So I care not a bit who possesses them.” –James Kehler

“80% of what we own, we never use. 20% of our clothing, we never wear.” –Dave Ramsey

“If you cultivate a healthy poverty and simplicity, so that finding a penny will literally make your day, then, since the world is in fact planted in pennies, you have with your poverty bought a lifetime of days.” -Annie Dillard

“The best riches is poverty of desires.” -Alexandria of Clement

“We are stripped bare by the curse of plenty.” -Winston Churchill

CONCLUSION

“...The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results.” -James 5:16 LB

Always go to prayer over your finances, for the Lord will provide His wisdom and guidance.

“How we handle money matters. It matters to God, who sees it as one indicator of our personal maturity and our obedience to Christ. It matters to our children, who learn how to handle money from watching how we handle it. It matters to the poor, whose state of health and wellbeing may hinge on our generosity. It matters to the church, whose God-honoring purposes will be either thwarted or facilitated by the giving of God's people. We cannot afford, you see, to be lazy when it comes to money matters. There is too much at stake.” -Unknown

“Save some before you spend, spend less than you earn, and please the Lord by your tithing.” -R. R. Ball

“Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” -John Wesley

By handling our money properly, we can then be freed up to help others as the Lord instructs us to do.

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