

## A PLAN FOR FINANCIAL FREEDOM

### Introduction

Money the last Stronghold for many believers--Having been delivered from many other sins and weaknesses, many of us still struggle with money and money management issues. Those of us who do not struggle with money and money management issues still need to be empowered and taught how to further maximize our financial resources. A saved heart does not automatically translate into knowledge about giving or skill of money and how to manage it.

Money management issues then do not mean that we are bad people. There is no mystique in making and managing money. These skills can be taught and learned like any other skill such as riding a bicycle, driving a car and playing a piano. God's will is that we learn how to manage money for the following reasons: Christ did not die on the cross for us to be in any bondage, including the money stronghold.

God has a vision for our lives that is greater than any vision that we can have for ourselves or that others can have for us but we will not be able to walk in that vision if we cannot manage money because all visions from God have financial implications. God will not give us blessings and increase that we cannot manage because mismanaged blessings end up either in the devil's hands (Matthew 4: 8-10) or as waste. "Jesus had more to say about the right use of our possessions than any other single subject. There are 1565 references to giving in the Bible. At least twenty of Jesus major parables, and one out of seven in the four gospels relate to [a person's] attitude to property." (Bennett W. Smith, Jr. Handbook on Tithing, p.15)

"Jesus spoke five times more often about earthly possessions than about prayer." (Wallace E. Fisher, A New Climate for Stewardship, p. 23) We will be confronting and making money decisions for the rest of our lives. Even after we die people will be making money decisions regarding us--the funeral and the disposition of whatever assets we leave behind.

Pastor's heart and vision:

God has given the pastor a heart and vision for the financial freedom of the people of God, which includes not only the acquisition of prosperity but the management of the blessings we receive. As the pastor has worked through financial mistakes and challenges in his own life, he has followed certain principles that has lead to his financial freedom and that will help others do the same. These principles are not theory; they work in real life.

The challenges and crises we face:

- Debt is cultural.
- Debt for some of us is inherited.
- The debt challenge threatens to undermine the generations of young people who come after us.

## Scope of plan

We will present principles over a period of several weeks.

Those who desire will be encouraged to commit to the plan by signing the commitment card.

We will have monthly classes and sessions on Financial Wholeness Purposes:

- To answer questions and address issues that arise as persons attempt to keep their pledges.
- To offer guidance regarding money management.
- To offer guidance whenever possible to persons for whom money is a stronghold and managing money is a serious challenge.
- To assist persons who need direction in financial planning by directing them to various sources.
- To help in the development of investment groups.
- To increase knowledge regarding all kinds of financial issues through various classes, speakers, books, seminars, conferences, etc...

## Goals:

### 1. Tithing:

Our church like most churches and other organizations operates on the 80/20 Principle, which is that 20% of the people do 80% of the giving and 80% of the work. Our year end goal is to reverse this principle. By the end of the year we would like to see our tithing move to our membership. We recognize that this is an ambitious goal, but we believe that our plan makes this goal attainable.

### 2. For persons who have not done so, we also encourage you to give God more of your time and talent also. What time can you give to the Lord that you are not giving now? What talent can you give to the Lord that you are not giving now? You know your time commitments or what sacrifice of time you can make. You also know your talents, gifts, skills, training and areas of expertise. Our ministry leaders will be happy to speak with you about ways that you can volunteer your time, talents, skills, gifts and training to the service of the Lord and the church.

### 3. Savings:

We would also like to see our membership become disciplined and systematic savers. For those who can, we are encouraging everyone to increase their savings by \$1000 - \$5000 by the end of the year. We recognize that this amount is no problem for some of our members and if you can save more we encourage you to do so.

We also recognize that for some of our members \$1000-\$2000 is too ambitious of a goal to reach by the end of the year. We encourage you to pick a goal whether \$500, \$300 or \$200, (or \$100, \$50 or \$25 for young people), that you will save towards. However by year's end we want everyone to have something saved.

### 4. Debt Reduction:

Our goal is also that by the end of the year, each of us will have made some progress in terms of reducing whatever outstanding debt we have in our lives.

Those who already have eliminated debt from their lives are encouraged to make progress towards establishing new financial goals and increasing their savings and investments. As we walk through this process we will be encouraged by the promises of the word of God: “The Lord will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. The Lord will make you the head, and not the tail; you shall be only at the top, and not at the bottom---if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today, by diligently observing them, and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I am commanding you today, either to the right or to the left, following other gods to serve them.” Deuteronomy 28: 12-14

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4: 13

“...for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” II Timothy 1: 7

“Little children you are from God and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” I John 4: 4

## ***THE PLAN***

***“The Lord will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings...”*** (Memory verse for the week)

1. I will Tithe to the Lord and give beyond the tithe as the Holy Spirit leads.

Scripture Reference: *“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.” Malachi 3: 10*

### *Summary of teaching on the tithe:*

To tithe is to give ten percent of all that we have and all that we are as a minimum expression of praise and thanksgiving to God. The tithe is the biblical standard for giving (Leviticus 27: 30) and is based upon gross income, the total yield of the field (Deuteronomy 14:22). The tithe does not comprise the sum total of giving, but is the foundation. In addition to the tithe, the scriptures call for offerings beyond the tithe (Deuteronomy 12:

10-11; Nehemiah 10: 32-33). Tithing is consistent with both the Old and New Testament standards of giving and is commended by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 23: 23). Nowhere in the New Testament is the practice of tithing ever revoked or refuted. New Testament believers or those who were under grace usually went beyond the tithe in terms of their giving (Luke 19: 8; Acts 2: 42-45; Acts 4: 34-37). Tithing is not just about money but time and talent as well. It is not only the giving of all that we have but all that we are as a minimum expression of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ I will save a tithe (10%) of my income and more as the Lord blesses me.  
Scripture Reference: *“Go to the ant...consider its ways and be wise. Without having any chief or officer or ruler, it prepares its food in summer, and gathers its sustenance in harvest.” Proverbs 6:6*

Notes on the savings habits of ants:

Ants have foresight.

Ants keep working and saving as long as they can.

Ants are nourished and enjoy life as they prepare for winter.

Ants are members of community. **Do not become a weak link in the chain.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Experienced savers:

I will continue to save at least 10% of my income and more.

Beginning savers:

\_\_\_\_\_ I will save a tithe of my income

\_\_\_\_\_ I will learn to save by increments

June: 2%

July: 3%

Aug: 4%

Sept. 6%

Oct. 8%

Nov. 10%

Not all savings are the same.

A good biblical example of saver is Jesus. That is why we call him Savior.

Jesus saved us purposely.

Jesus saved us prayerfully.

Jesus saved us persistently. No saving without sacrifice.

3. Unless I am saving for a specific reason such as a home, or an automobile or education or to start a business, I will only touch my savings and investments in cases of dire emergencies such as medical or other situations that are beyond my control. Scripture Foundation: *“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to want.” Proverbs 21:5*

4. I will pay off existing debt by paying off the lowest credit card balance first. When that bill is paid, I will use the same money and pay off the next credit card until all of them are paid. I will then save the money I have been using to pay off debt. Scripture Reference: *“Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” Romans 13: 8.* More than one system has been used for implementing this step. Some financial advisers recommend that you pay off the credit card that has the highest interest rates. There is nothing wrong with this method. It may even save some persons money, depending upon the balances that are on their credit cards. We are recommending paying off credit cards with lowest balances rather than highest interest rates first for the simple reason that paying off lowest credit card balances can serve as a visible concrete sign of progress and encourage one to continue working on paying down the other credit card balances. Each person is encouraged to select the system that works best for him or her, whether those with lowest credit card balances or those

with highest interest rates. The important thing is to choose one of them and begin paying off credit card balances right away. As you select to pay off a particular credit card, don't forget to pay on the other ones, even if you have to pay the minimum. You do not want to create more debt on the others as you work to eliminate debt on one. Secondly, do not forget not to add debt as you work on clearing up debt. As the old preachers used to say, "You don't want to dig a bigger hole in the back yard trying to fill up the hole in the front yard. I also want to remind us as we work on the issue of clearing away credit card and other debt to be patient. We did not get in this position overnight and we will not get out overnight. Some of us are working against family traditions of debt, poor money management and skewed and erroneous perceptions of money. Traditions and lifestyles that have been built up over the years are not broken over night. There will be times when you will not feel as if you are making progress and that the little things you are doing are not making any difference. However we would do well to remember that everything we have learned to do has been done overtime and in small steps. We learned to speak not by sentences and paragraphs but by gurgling, sound, syllables and small steps.

5. As God continues to bless me I will specifically pray that God will not only give me wisdom but also that God will give me a spirit of generosity. Scripture Reference: *"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work."* II Corinthians 9: 6-8

This point addresses the issue of what we become once we have become financially free. The fact of the matter is that we can pay off all of our debts and accumulate wealth and still be in bondage. Bondage is a matter of the heart and the head. We can be financially free and still be bound in spirit to money. When our self-worth is defined by money we are in bondage. When our happiness is defined by money we are in bondage. When our security is defined by money we are in bondage. When money becomes our god and the goal of our striving we are in bondage to money. When money and the acquisition of money becomes more important than our word or promises to others or to our relationships and friendships we are still in bondage to money. There are persons who are rich and lonely and poor and lonely because their devotion to money and their bitterness over the lack of money has driven a wedge between them and their family, their friends and everyone else who has tried to love them. When money becomes more important than health we are in bondage to money. There are persons who are in poor health and cannot enjoy the money at their disposal because they worked so hard to get more money that they broke their health. There is such a thing as being rich and miserable. The word miser and the word misery are separated by the letter "y." People who try to hold on to every dollar with little to no regard for much of anything or anyone else lead miserable lives. One can have much and still be in trouble. Luke 12 tells the parable of a very successful farmer who had so much abundance that his barns could not hold it all. He made a decision to tear them down and build bigger ones and then lead a life of self-indulgence. However God called him a fool and told him that that very night his soul would be required of him and who would get the things he had reserved for self but would never enjoy. Jesus ended this story by commenting, "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God." (vs.21) Before telling this parable Jesus said, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life

does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” (vs.15) The antidote for greed is giving, the antidote for grabbing is generosity, and the antidote for stinginess is sowing. One cannot reap a harvest by holding on to seed, one must cast it away and spread it around. *“The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.” II Corinthians 9: 6-8* As we give generously and sow into the kingdom of God and into the lives of others the word of God has said that our God who is able to provide us with every abundance will enrich our lives so that we can continue to be a blessing even as we are blessed. In this way we follow the example of the Lord Jesus. Everything he did was a gift. When he walked on water, he gave faith to those who were frightened. When he calmed the raging seas, he gave hope to those who thought that life was over. When he healed the sick and raised the dead he gave a new future to those whose present circumstances said that they had none. When he rebuked demons he gave assurance of victory to those whose lives are being dominated by evil. When he died on Calvary he gave salvation to a world lost in sin. When he rose he gave power to all who believe in his name that not even death can keep us from the destiny and the vision that God has for us. Even now as he intercedes in heaven on our behalf he gives strength for the journey and faith for our continuing fight.