

WEEK 5: FINANCIAL PLANNING

“Live for the line not the dot” Randy Alcorn, The Treasure Principle

This week’s devotionals focus on God’s vision for us: living out a financial plan that puts us in a stable financial position and results in peace. This road includes many challenges – hard work, good advisors, wise choices, and following a plan. I recommended that you work closely with a financial advisor or take a proven, effective financial program such as Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University. The steps outlined here will be similar to the principles recommended by many effective financial advisors.

Learn from the Master: Memory Verse

Prov 27:23 *Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds*

- In Proverbs, Solomon, the richest man to ever live, shares much of his wisdom on how to manage finances. He challenges us to ask advice, espouses hard work, expects a plan, and promises reward for sticking to your convictions!
- These next devotionals are much more practical, so plan on spending whatever time you need in prayer so that you can get direction from God on carrying out the specific challenges.
- Prayerfully, all of the devotionals in this series have led you to see God’s plan, his will, his sovereignty and his belief that you can be a faithful steward of what he has entrusted you with.

Day 29: Commit First

Prov 16:3 *Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.*

- God assumes that you will make a plan!
- Pray over your finances and commit to God to be a faithful manager.

Prov 14:24 *A wise person’s reward is wealth, but a fool’s reward is foolishness. (ERB)*

- Expect success (reward) – if God is for us, who can be against us?
- There is a reward for sticking with a plan, even if it is painful at first – it will pay off!
- What reward are you looking for?
- What do you consider “wealth”?

Day 30: Get Advice

Prov 15:22 *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*

Prov 12:15 *The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.*

Prov 13:10 *Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

- Who is your financial counselor?
- Pray and select someone to disciple you in your finances.
- Determine to learn from spiritual men and women through discipling, reading books, and even participating in workshops (Financial Peace University, etc.) to get the advice you need.

Day 31: Work Diligently

Prov 14:23 *All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

Prov 21:5 *The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.*

- Pray for your financial behavior (spending habits) and not just your knowledge to change.
- Work with your advisor to identify all of the financial resources you need to make your plan including any books, budgeting resources, financial papers/records, and previous budgets and spending information.
- Commit to working your plan after it is in place. A budget without accountability will not help you manage the money that God entrusted you with.

Day 32: Make a Plan

Luke 14:28-30 *Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish."*

- There is a wise and a foolish way to approach your finances.
- Without a financial plan, you have a wish list, not a blueprint.
- Create or update your budget with the help your financial advisor. Balance your budget by categorizing every dollar – this is a zero-base budget where your income = expenses.
- If you need help, use the resources from Dave Ramsey, Crown Financial Ministries, or Mint.com

Day 33: Start Saving!

Prov 13:11 *Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.*
Prov 13:22 *A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.*

- Your financial plan must include saving!
- How do you get started? Have specific targets for every dollar saved. You are not saving to hoard, get rich, or selfishly spend but to be responsible, prepared, and make your money grow.

Dave Ramsey identifies three reasons for savings:

- Emergency Fund – immediately put \$1000 in the bank for “emergencies”
 - Learn what is/is not an emergency!
 - Build this reserve up to 3-6 months income after you kill your debt.
- Future purchases – car, furniture, vacation, luxury item, or house
 - Never lease or buy using debt, always save up and buy with cash.
- Wealth building
 - Save for retirement then save for your kid's college
 - Save for vacations, mission trips, money to give to others, pay off a house, etc.

Day 34: Snowball Your Debt

Prov 6:1-6 *My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you have been trapped ... Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter...*

- Dave Ramsey calls this “Gazelle intensity” – marketers hunt you and debt traps you, so you better run like a gazelle for your life! Debt chokes the life out of your walk with God, your financial peace, your relationships, and your hope!
- Follow a debt payment plan
 - Stop buying anything you don't absolutely need – No major purchases until you are out of debt!
 - Cut up your credit cards!
 - Pay off your smallest balance first (gives you a sense of accomplishment) then your next smallest, etc. until all of your consumer debt is gone!
- Seek advice from your financial counselor, Dave Ramsey's materials, or another source.

Day 35: Share the Wealth: Meeting the needs of the Church, Missions, and the Poor

The disciple's motivation to be faithful stewards of God's resources is so that we can “use all of God's resources God's way for God's glory!” God has a plan to bring the gospel to our communities and all nations. God also empowers us to be able to meet the needs of the poor in our communities and around the world.

1. The Church: Weekly Contribution.

1 Cor 9:14 *In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.*

- Your contribution helps put more people in the full-time ministry; people called by God to devote all of their time to building God's kingdom!
- Our weekly contribution empowers the church to provide a place to meet, funds for individual ministries (Singles, Teens, Campus, Marrieds), and specialized ministries to meet the needs in our church and around the community!

2 Cor 8:1-4 *The Macedonian churches... extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. They gave... first of all to the Lord... since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

- Excel in giving! Put aside your contribution as your “firstfruits” – first to God.

2 Cor 9:6 *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

- As God's money manager, we have the opportunity plan to be generous.
- Is there anything you want to change about your weekly contribution? Talk to your advisors.

2. Missions: Special Contribution.

Matt 28:19-20 *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* What does it take to make disciples of all nations?

- Our special missions contribution each year in June supports church plantings – ~5 new Indonesian churches each year, the European Missions Society, and ACR missions fund helps plant new churches and sustain churches including churches near the Virginia universities
- We also send our ministry staff to help disciple other church leaders, stay unified with sister churches, and preach the word where it is needed most!
- How can you help? “Stay and Pay or Go and Grow”
 - Some will go and plant a church; others give generously to support these missionaries
 - Everyone participates in world missions! Pray for God's direction for your role!

2 Cor. 8:13-14 *Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality.*

- Why do you think God has given so much to some and so little to others? Is it not for the affluent to give to those in need? What does Paul mean by “equality” and how does that affect you?
- We have the means to fund world missions – Pray for the heart to be involved in world missions!
- Is there anything you want to change about your missions contribution? Talk to your advisors.

3. Needy: Poor Contribution.

Deut 15:11 *There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward ... poor and needy in your land.*

Prov 21:13 *Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered.*

Jer 22:16 *He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?*

- Our affluence provides us with an opportunity to be “openhanded” toward those with less.
- The resources God has given us help us to give, not only once a month for the “Poor Contribution” but to meet needs in our families, local house churches, neighborhoods, communities, and wherever there is need. Pray for an open heart and an open hand!
- Is there anything you want to change about your poor contribution? Talk to your advisors.