

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 9 Your Financial Questions

Wendell Anderson, Stewardship Pastor

Weekend 12.05-06.09

Well good morning Crossroads. I'm Wendell Anderson, one of the teaching pastors here at the church and as many of you know about a year ago I made a career transition. I left General Motors and joined the staff here at the church. I've been reflecting here in the past month on how my last year has went and all in all it's been really a great transition for me. The staff here and the Elders have very graciously accepted me as have the congregation here. That has made my transition very enjoyable. There have been a couple of things as I've made this change that I've been slower to get used to. For over twenty years, while I was a GM I drove a company car and I'm not been able to find my keys to my company car here at the church. Still looking for them but they haven't turned up. And the other thing is, when I came on board I didn't realize that coming on as the senior member age-wise that I was going to take so much age abuse constantly. I guess it's good to provide some comic relief for the rest of the folks.

Our message this morning in finishing the Answers series that we've been in for a weeks and we're going to look at Answer to Your Financial Questions. Now I have to complain right up front. You didn't ask any financial questions. But, I'm going to answer them anyhow. You know, you should have asked some financial questions and I wonder why is that? I do believe that one of the reasons that we sometimes don't want to know the answer but we also, sometimes, don't realize how much scripture talks about our finances and how we deal with our money - providing practical guidance to everyday life for us. Something of on the order of over twenty-two hundred scriptures that speak to money and possessions and our attitude and actions in how we deal with them.

So, today we're going to explore the answer to the question what are some scriptural principles that should guide how I handle money. I have to tell you I'm excited about this message because it's been about two years ago since Pastor Tim taught a financial series, during the winter of 2008 and I worked with him on that weekend and then during midweek taught a companion series as well in the winter of 2008. We've heard some stories back from people who have actually applied those principles in the last two years and how they are benefiting from them. So this morning, what I'm going to do is I'm going to talk to you about scriptural principles and marry them together with some stories from some folks right here from among us that are realizing the benefit of God's wisdom.

As has been the case with really all the messages here we've reminded you of a passage that's familiar to most of us, 2 Timothy 3:16 which says that all scripture is breathed out by God or God-breathed and it's profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training in righteousness; that all of God's Word provides us with insight and wisdom to live this life. It provides insight and wisdom to live in the here and now, as well as, guide us into eternity as well. Sometimes we only think about well, this is only for way out there but it's for the here and now as well.

Well, David Lettermen has his top ten. Today I'm going to cover Wendell's top six. Wendell's' top six. My desire is, again, to share a few of these principles; marrying them

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

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together with some stories to help you filter out, maybe some financial advice that might come from the world or your friends even that is inconsistent with biblical guidelines.

Romans 12:2 says do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And, I've always had this mental image when I've meditated on that passage of by applying and memorizing and meditating on God's Word form a filter in my mind. Just like we might have a filter in our furnace that will clean out air particles or impurities that would come and go through our house that I want to form a filter through scripture meditation in my mind so that as things come to me that are inconsistent with God's Word that I can filter them out and say that's not an action that I want to take. And, I want to give you some of those filtering scriptures today relative to finances.

Now, I realize some of you are already nervous when a pastor starts to talk about money but I really do encourage you to relax and see how God wants to bless you today. My desire is for you to achieve and realize peace and freedom like you're going to see from some of the stories that I'm going to share with you. That may seem to be a monumental task since we're in the season of Black Friday and Cyber Monday and the time when all of us tend to not live according to a spending plan and overspend. But I do encourage you to watch your spending and keep yourself within whatever plan you develop during the holiday season as well. I just saw on the news this week a report, you know there's been news on how shopping is going on the news almost every night and one of the reports I saw was how credit use, in fact, was down; more and more people are going into the store this year and they are using cash only to buy their gifts. That would be a good move for each and every one of us as well, to begin a plan here as we continue through the holiday season and then into the 2010 calendar year.

So without further adieu here is Wendell's top six scriptural principles that should guide how we handle our money. Number six is to enjoy God has given. Enjoy what God has given. Now, I'm going to count down just like David Letterman. I'm going from six to one. Enjoyment does not come first if we want to reach the biblical objective of having peace and freedom in the financial realm of our lives. It comes sixth in the countdown. Number six is enjoy what God has given. Now, we can see from 1 Timothy 6:17 as for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty nor to set their riches or their hopes on the uncertainty of riches but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. God desires for us to realize that He provides resources to us for enjoyment. Now, hand in hand with enjoyment is the necessity to cultivate an attitude of contentment and Paul writing to Timothy earlier in that very same chapter, beginning in verse 6 writes now there is great pain in godliness with contentment for we've brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out of this world but if we have food and clothing with these we shall be content. Our enjoyment of what we have will grow as we also grow in contentment.

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 9 Your Financial Questions

Wendell Anderson, Stewardship Pastor

Weekend 12.05-06.09

Let me share a story from one of our Crossroads' families that illustrates enjoying what God has given to them. I want to introduce you to Terry and Debbie Baker. They are members here at Crossroads. They're very involved in a number of areas. They volunteer in the Family Ministry. They volunteer with the Greeting Team and they also volunteer with the Cleaning Team. They shared their story going back two years ago. Said, we paid for groceries with cash and we wanted to go someplace special for our 30th anniversary so we decided almost a year in advance we wanted to go to a Rose Bowl game in California. We put three empty coffee cans in our kitchen and put our grocery money in one, spending money in another and an empty can. Debbie told me that they "Wendellized". Now, I'm not sure exactly what that means. You'll have to check with them. Ok, back to their story. We watched what we spent on groceries and took out only the spending money when we really needed it. At the end of each pay period we took the left over from the grocery can, the left over that was in the spending can and put it into the third can. At the end of the year we had half of money that we needed to take our trip to California. We used our tax refund to cover the rest and our trip was paid for and we had money to have fun while we were in California. As Terry and Debbie explained through their story – they enjoyed what God has given them.

Well, they gave me an update to their story just recently here about using wisdom in their spending and how they practice and marry contentment together with that. They said this past May our van was totaled in an accident. Now, we have always bought new cars but we remembered being taught the wisdom of buying a used care instead of a new car so we did exactly that. Our van was paid for. We took what we got from the insurance company, what they gave us and bought a used car – no payments and we actually got a newer car. Financial peace and freedom come one step and one decision at a time.

Well, number five of the countdown is that giving is a secure investment. Giving is a secure investment. Matthew 6, verse 20 says store up for yourselves treasure in heaven. Jesus is speaking here on the Sermon on the Mount says store up for ourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. In the past if you've heard anybody hear talk about giving recently or myself at Crossroads, we give you three keys. We talk about making giving in your spending plan, your financial plan in your family a priority, giving the preeminent place; to make it a percentage – you decide in advance what percentage that it's going to be and over time it should progressively grow that. You make it a priority, you make it a percentage and progressively you grow that. Giving is a secure investment. Not only does Jesus say store up for yourself treasure in heaven but the wisdom writer in Proverbs 19 says whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord and He will repay him for his deed. Giving is a secure investment.

Number four is debt is slavery. Debt is slavery. Proverbs 22:7 says the rich rule over the poor and the borrower is the slave of the lender. So, next let me introduce you to Roger and Michelle Speck. Roger and Michelle are members here also. They lead a small group and they volunteer at the Connect Kiosk and they shared their story of escaping from the

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 9 Your Financial Questions

Wendell Anderson, Stewardship Pastor

Weekend 12.05-06.09

slavery of debt. Over the years Roger was working at GM seven days a week, nine to twelve hours a day, making a lot of money but also having a lot of debt. He said I wasn't concerned because this was the pattern of our lives for the last thirty years. We didn't realize the bondage that debt puts us in. The borrower is slave to the lender. The economy started to worsen and GM began to cut back but no big deal. We've been there before and everything seemed to work out. Well, after hearing the financial freedom message in the winter of 2008 we became convinced that it was God's will for us to be debt free so we set aside envelopes for emergencies, for entertainment, for good, for gas and so on. We kept track of all the money we spent for one month and listed off all of our debts which totaled thirty-nine hundred dollars per month. We began to pay off one debt at a time and then tried to use the money from that debt to pay off the next bill. That's what I've called in the past the debt snowball process. Our goal, Roger and Michelle's goal was to pay off everything, including their house and be completely debt free in four and a half years. It seemed like every time we would pay off one debt my hours would be cut. But we stuck with it and used any extra money we got from a tax return or vacation pay to go towards paying off debt. Well, with the announcement of the GM plant shutting down recently, four months ago Roger retired. He said, our income has been cut by one-fourth of what it was two years ago but we've paid off eighty percent of our original debt. We thank God for His perfect timing. We've seen His hand in our lives the entire time and each time our income was cut we were ok because we also had already eliminated debt. During the same period of time, this past two year time our tithes and offerings have increased and we've also been able to help our children. Unfortunately we will not make the goal of paying off the mortgage in four and a half years but we are convinced had we not started when we did we would be bankrupt. Roger and Michelle concluded, we wish we could have understood God's view on money and debt thirty years ago. It is our prayer that our story might help others to see God's will for their lives is to be debt free.

So, what about you? If you didn't start thirty years ago what about now? Or if you didn't start in the winter of 2008? What about starting to pay off now? Debt is, in fact, slavery.

Well, number three is that savings is wise. In Proverbs 22:21-20 says the wise man saves for the future but the foolish man spends whatever he gets. Throughout scripture savings is always referred to as being wise. Let me next introduce you to Scott and Jane Yonally who shared a story that illustrates this wisdom in savings. They are also very involved members. Scott serves on the security team. Jane leads a small group and volunteers at the Connect Kiosk. They begin their story. During the financial series of 2008 everyone was asked to do a little experiment just to show each of us how much money we were actually spending every month. The experiment was nothing more than to keep very good track of your expenses for just one month to track normal expenses such as rent, food, utilities but also keep track of all of our out of pocket expenses, what we buy with pocket change – pop, coffee and so forth. This exercise would let us see how much money we were actually spending for absolutely everything. We were to place a receipt or a note with the amount of money we spend on it in a shoe box. Some of you may remember this assignment. Well, on

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 9 Your Financial Questions

Wendell Anderson, Stewardship Pastor

Weekend 12.05-06.09

a side note, one lady came up to me the week after they got that assignment and thanked me for that assignment because she had to go out and buy a new pair of shoes to get her shoe box. It's a good thing that wasn't the last message in the series. Scott continues with how he and Jane, at the end of the month used all their receipts to develop a spending plan and then work together to set some goals. In a short time we were starting to see a surplus of cash in our checking account. We decided to take half of this amount and put it in the savings account and put the other half to pay down our charge cards. After six months we were not only seeing the charge cards paid down but the emergency fund was growing progressively toward our goal of six month of living expenses. Then the day of reckoning came – the day that I, Scott lost my job. I was working as an engineer in a good paying job and like so many other folks in Richland County there was a management shake-up and my good job was gone. While in one day I went from making a good income to having my paycheck cut to a quarter of what it used to be. Well, that evening Janie and I went to work figuring out what we actually need to survived. As weeks moved to months we started to find that we could actually live on much less and our emergency savings allowed us to remain current on all of our bills without reverting to credit. The biggest credit is that we can live on less and still be happy. And Scott and Jane found our through real life experience that saving is wise.

Well, number two is to plan for the future. Plan for the future. Proverbs 21:5 says good planning and hard work lead to prosperity. Good planning and work lead to prosperity but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty. Well, right together with us putting together a spending plan is receiving counsel as we do that. And Proverbs 15:22 says without counsel our plans will fail but with many advisors they will succeed. So, it's wise to get many advisors, counsel from various sources as your putting together your spending plan. There are many ways that you can get counsel as you're developing a plan. We have financial counselors available here at the church. It's a free resource. You can find information our about that at the Financial Freedom Kiosk. There are some excellent websites that are referred to in your program. Crowne.org has a library of answers to questions, very specific questions that can help you. Generousgiving.org is another website that has a lot of answers to very specific questions that can help you. You can certainly ask your family, ask your friends. Even inquire or ask your cyber-friends. Here's where my colleague, Pastor Deering asked a cyber friend a question. He says – I just found out that my car needs \$700 in repair. At what point do you stop sinking cash into your old car with 110,000 miles? Well, he got back sixteen comments to help him with wisdom on that. Some of the wisdom was better than others but it was still input. One of the inputs that he said – keep the car. Pay to have it repaired. It is cheaper than a car payment for the next four years. She typed wwvs – what would Wendell say? I've never seen that before. Well, Deering concluded that conversation with I'm going to get it fixed. I don't think that buying is a viable option anyhow. We just have one more car payment on the other vehicle and then no car payments at all. And he told me last night that he just mailed out that final care payment on the other car.

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 9 Your Financial Questions

Wendell Anderson, Stewardship Pastor

Weekend 12.05-06.09

Well, this planning for the future really is a biggie on the road or the journey to financial freedom. It's best if it's a written plan not just some idea you have because if it's just some idea you have the next time that something comes along that gives you the temptation to spend on it that idea of a plan will be gone. But if you write it down in some format then you can administer and live to it. You can write it down with pencil and paper. You can use computer software or excel or Quicken or any type of program that might work for you. We've got some worksheets that you can download right from the churches website here that can help you develop a spending plan.

A spending plan doesn't have to be any more complicated than what works to help you achieve your objectives just like slicing up a pie so everybody gets a piece of pie. You know. You have a slice for everyone who's coming to dinner. You might have a slice when if you do your family budget – for the house payment, for transportation, slice for God and so forth. And you can do it again, in a lot of ways. For a lot of people using envelopes and some form of that works very well. You heard that from some of the stories. Scott and Jane mentioned using literal envelopes just like, you know, I've got a couple of examples. Right here – just using little envelopes and working with them. Terry and Debbie talked about using coffee cans to divide up a few categories and working with them. It's always more effective when you work with a plan that looks beyond just this paycheck but looks out for a month or longer – for more than just a week or always just be chasing yourself.

Well, let's see how this envelope process works. We've got a video story from Bill and Cindy Hill. Now, we know Bill is the announcement guy here and Bill affectionately refers to his wife, Cindy as the envelope queen. Watch with me.

Bill: Well, I'm here with my lovely bride to interview her concerning the envelope system because Wendell told me to and I think it's going to be a helpful story – just our experience using the envelope system and maybe you can get some benefit out of it as well. So, let me ask you just a few questions. When did you begin, when did we begin using the envelope system?

Cindy: I think it was about ten years ago I was listening to a talk radio show from Larry Burkett on the radio about envelopes and saving and thought maybe that would benefit our family so I decided to try it.

Bill: Would you say it was driven primarily by my poor financial management?

Cindy: No

Bill: Was there any significant event that was the event, kind of the jumping off point of where we began using envelopes? Was there anything said, in addition to the Larry Burkett show that said now we have to start using the envelopes?

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 9 Your Financial Questions

Wendell Anderson, Stewardship Pastor

Weekend 12.05-06.09

Cindy: No, I would just say it freed us and organized our finances in categories – freed us to spend in different areas.

Bill: How has using envelopes helped us?

Cindy: I would say it's organized our finances and putting it in categories has given us freedom in different areas to spend.

Bill: Give us an example.

Cindy: Maybe eating out envelope, you know, if we wanted to go to dinner and there was a little bit of money left in the envelope we didn't feel guilty that month going out because there was money in that envelope.

Bill: So, there's a specific envelope for eating out.

Cindy: Yes, when we started we started with a handful of envelopes. It was food, gas, entertainment, Christmas, just a handful of envelopes we started with. If we've gone over in an area or even if it was a month where maybe I had spent a little bit more on food then I would take money from a category that we could use like eating out that was a luxury.

Bill: Like the tithe envelope?

Cindy: No, never touch that one. Or entertainment envelope where we could take money from that to eat, maybe gas. Maybe we had more gas expenses on a car. We do not use envelopes for house payment or any fixed utilities, any fixed monthly expenses. And, after we took those aside from our income and our tithe we sat down with what we had left and tried to prioritize how much do you think we should spend on food. That's how we came up with our envelopes and how much we put in each month.

Bill: How many envelopes are we up to now?

Cindy: We're up to between 27 and 30.

Bill: But in each case it's not because we're getting wealthier and wealthier. It's because we're sub-dividing categories in definable areas. Do we really have a dog envelope?

Cindy: Yes. We have a dog envelope. And our kids have used the envelope system very superficially on basic things like they have an envelope for tithe, save and a Christmas envelope where they put a little bit money from each of their checks from working so they have money at Christmas for gifts. But, a funny story happened about a month ago. One of our college students was home on fall break and was on his computer with an ear bud hooked to the computer listening to a long homework assignment he had to do and he had

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 9 Your Financial Questions

Wendell Anderson, Stewardship Pastor

Weekend 12.05-06.09

left the house for awhile and one of our dogs decided to eat his ear piece, headsets. And, he came home. Was quite distraught when he found the chewed up ear piece. He had this huge assignment that was due Monday so he was real frustrated, didn't know what to do. All of a sudden I caught him walking through to the kitchen to the envelopes, grabbed the dog envelope, took twenty dollars out of the dog envelope, looked at the dog and said I'm sorry you're not getting heartwormed this month.

(Wendell) That's wonderful. Well, Cindy shared that story just recently and I thought I've got to have that one shared. Obviously it's very humorous but the thing I love about it is that it demonstrates that Bill and Cindy are seriously teaching their children how to handle finances as well. They've not only modeled it within their household but they're also trying to pass it on to their children and teaching them as well. You know, envelopes seem to be a very way too simple thing and yet the simplicity is what makes them work. Envelopes speak to us. You know, when an envelope is empty it says stop spending. If the envelope still has money in it then it's ok to go to Applebee's – is the illustration in the video show. That's when you know you have resources available. How many categories and envelopes you use is entirely up to you. If Bill was living in our house we might all need 27 to 30 envelopes but how many we need is up to us.

Well the number one item on our countdown is to dedicate it all to God. Dedicate it all to God. Psalm 24:1 says the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. God owns everything. This is really the stewardship principle. We start with realizing that God owns everything and we're managing his stuff. He gives us resources. We buy stuff it breaks, we fix it, we enjoy it and ultimately we leave it behind. It stays here. All the stuff that we get bothered about week in and week out all stays here. It's His stuff. So, we dedicate it all to Him. You know, all of these principles are comprehended and included in the Money Map which we talked about in detail in the past in different workshops. Copies of this Money Map are free at the Financial Freedom Kiosk if you'd like to pick one up at the end of the service. And, I certainly want to thank all of the individuals who submitted their written or video testimonies. I hope that they were encouraging to you. Obviously the folks were very transparent with their own finances – something we don't particularly want to share as openly as these folks did but they did it with a desire to see how they are working to apply these principles and then enjoy the freedom that God desires.

You know, one of my favorite misquoted scriptures comes from John 8, beginning in verse 31 and 32. We often misquote it starting halfway through the sentence there where Jesus says you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Any of you heard that before? Maybe even said that. You know, it's a half sentence. It's a half truth. You know what a half truth is don't you? Ok. It's not a truth if it's only a half truth. See, that sentence begins earlier. Jesus says if you abide in my word or if you remain in my word, if we develop this mind filter of renewing our mind through the Word of God and then we start to apply it, if you abide in my word and you are truly my disciples – meaning doers of the Word then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. It's the application of God's truth

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Answers

Pt. 9 Your Financial Questions

Wendell Anderson, Stewardship Pastor

Weekend 12.05-06.09

that will lead us to freedom. And, each of these individuals that shared their stories with us and opened themselves up are on that journey and enjoying some of the benefits of freedom.

Well, let's close with one last question and that is why do we give gifts at Christmas? Well, it's hard to imagine Christmas in the modern world without thinking about gift giving. But, have you ever thought about that question why do we do it? Well, in some ways gift giving is a very ancient tradition and in other ways it's a very recent, new development. The ancient tradition can be traced back to the birth of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew beginning in chapter 2, verse 1. It says now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea in the days of Herod the king the old wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying where is he who has been born king of the Jews; for we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. And then in verse 10, when they saw the star when it rose and have come to worship him. And then, in verse 10 when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy and going into the house they saw the child with Mary, his mother and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures they offered him gifts. They offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. So, on one hand it's an ancient tradition – wise men and wise women came to worship Jesus and also wise men and wise women brought gifts to Jesus. And they still do. They still come to worship Jesus and wise men and wise women still bring gifts to Jesus.

Well, certainly, on the other hand the commercialization and over spending at Christmas time is a relatively new development. And, I would encourage each and every one of you to spend within the limits of a spending plan and resources you have available that you have for this holiday season. Don't overspend and then have credit card bills that are going to be going well into the next year after those gifts are long forgotten or broken or lost. But, stay within the spending plan you have available. And, as you develop a spending plan for the holidays, you know, consider these last children on the Adopt A Child that we still need to include in gifts for them and as you may have noticed in your programs, if you've looked at it beginning next week we're going to be talking about the Red Envelope here to a special holiday gift to continue the mission here at Crossroads which we've done the last few years as well. So, I encourage you to pray together as a family about the remaining Adopt A Child families, as well as, a special gift to Crossroads to help continue the mission so that we can together continue our mission of turning irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ.

Join me in prayer.