



Lesson 1 – The Faith-Based Millionaire Mindset

Building Your Foundation for Wealth:

The what, why, and how of wealth building

7 Lessons to Change Your Financial Life

This course is broken into seven lessons over a span of seven hours. It was designed to help you better understand money, its effects on your life, and how to use it to help bless your family and others.

We will examine your finances inside and out looking at: how you earn money, spend it, give it, and invest it. We will look at the proper uses of investments, insurance, debt, estate planning, and planning for your financial freedom.

This first week is about building a proper foundation. Matthew 7:24-26 provides a good illustration:

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.”

So is your current financial house built on rock or sand?

Our goal over the next four weeks is to help you build your foundation on solid ground. This will begin to take place when you begin to shift your view of money, wealth, and possessions.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

1. Pray, give thanks, and seek His will for your life (finances included):
2. What is God revealing to you? Do you see a pattern?
3. What have you learned from past mistakes?
4. What are your next steps?
5. How can you take action today?

IT STARTS WITH YOU

Your habits will determine your success or failure. Most of us have learned bad habits. How do you end bad habits? The first step is recognizing your bad habits. The second step is replacing the bad habit with a good habit. You cannot keep doing the same thing expecting different results. After speaking to thousands of people over the past 10 years we find many who are stuck in neutral. Hopefully with a new attitude, a little education, and new skills you can take your finances to the next level... You can do this by replacing the world's way (bad habits) with the Lord's way (good habits).

THE SEVEN LESSONS:

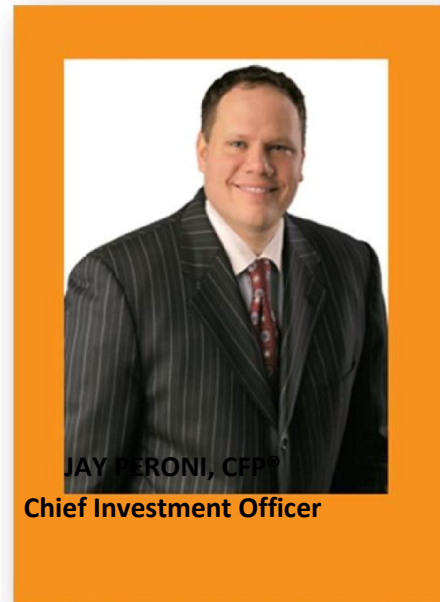
- 1) **Faith-Based Millionaire Mindset:** Learn the proper attitude and think of a faith-based millionaire. This is the what, why, and how of wealth building. Discontinue habits that are destroying wealth... Create habits that move you closer to financial freedom... Look at past, examine present, project your future... Look at abundance versus scarcity...
- 2) **Build a proper financial foundation:** Many believe “buy term and invest the difference” is the best way to go. Instead I will show you how the rich buy no/low commission dividend paying whole life insurance to maximize the cash value and retire tax free! How you can create your own banking system. We will examine how you can build wealth no matter what the stock and real estate markets do!
- 3) **Defeating debt:** We will look at strategies of how to properly use debt, how to get spending in line with your values, and how to restructure your finances to achieve financial freedom much sooner than your current pace.
- 4) **Investing in you:** We will look at how to build your own business – how to create a million dollar business doing what you love. Whether you are starting from scratch or trying to take your current business to the next level. How to find the ideal market, using the right message, communicated with the proper media, utilizing the correct measurement.
- 5) **Where to invest morally:** We will look at why mutual funds, IRA, 401Ks, and annuities are horrible investment vehicles and what you can do about it! How to align your faith, values, and morals in the investment process.
- 6) **Investing in alternative investments:** Why the dollar will go the way of the dinosaur and how you can take advantage of the greatest transfer of wealth ever! How to buy silver and gold. What to do before the dollar collapses. How to protect and grow your wealth. Why commodity prices will continue to soar...
- 7) **Creating your legacy:** It’s not just about building wealth. It’s about building wealth with a purpose. Leaving the world a better place. Helping fund charities and ministries close to your heart. Passing wealth and wisdom to the next generations. Maximizing and taking advantage of tax planning opportunities.

We will also have other experts and guest speakers to share insight into what’s working in the current financial environment...

So What Will We Cover in this lesson?

- Why aren't you dead yet?
- 4 ways God will not use money in your life
- 5 different purposes of worldly and biblical wealth
- What is your purpose?
- What are your goals?
- What does financial freedom mean to you?
- What will your wealth be used for?
- Why do you want financial freedom?
- Why should God bless you with wealth?
- How will you use your time, talents, and treasure?
- How will you get there?
- How will you measure success?
- Strategies to fuel your growth
- Setting goals that are S-M-A-R-T
- Evaluating your past, accessing your present, and setting up your future for success

Why Faith-Based Investor?



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- 16 years of financial services experience as a financial advisor and professional money manager.
- Author of two books *The Faith-Based Millionaire* and *The Faith-Based Investor* and 3 e-books.
- An expert authority on the subject of "Faith-Based Investing."
- Featured on Crosswalk, TheStreet.com, ABC News, ChristianPF, Master Your Money, Morning Show FamilyNet, and a host of other notable media.
- Master of Science in personal financial planning
- A Certified Financial Planner professional (CFP)
- A Qualified Kingdom Advisor from Kingdom Advisors
- Founder of FaithBasedInvestor.com

So Why Aren't You Dead Yet? (Shared by Michael Hyatt)

The Noticer by [Andy Andrews](#). Six points to Willow, a seventy-six year old lady, who had given up hope that she had anything left to contribute. (See chapter 6, pp. 83–85).

1. God has a purpose for every single person.
2. You won't die until that purpose is fulfilled.
3. If you are still alive, then you haven't completed what you were put on earth to do.
4. If you haven't completed what you were put on earth to do, then your very purpose hasn't been fulfilled.
5. If your purpose hasn't been fulfilled, then the most important part of your life is still ahead.
6. You have yet to make your most important contribution.

Jones goes on to say:

“If the most important part of your life is ahead of you, then even during the worst times, one can be assured that there is more laughter ahead, more success to look forward to, more children to teach and help, more friends to touch and influence. There is proof of hope . . . for more.” (p. 85)

You may be old. You may be sick. You may be divorced. Your kids may not be speaking to you. You may be out of work. You may be broke. You may be discouraged.

But you're not dead yet.

And that's proof that you still have not completed what you were put on earth to do.

God still has you here for a purpose

Are you living a self centered or Christ centered life? Do your finances reflect His purpose for your life or your purpose for your life? You know that God has a will, a plan, and a purpose for your life.

Sometimes God uses money to help bring about this will, plan or purpose.

Four Ways God Will Not Use Money in Your Life

Did you know that according to His Word, there are ways God will not use money in your life?

1) God will not use money in your life to cause fear and anxiety in your life.

Jesus tells you in Luke 12:22, "...do not worry about your life, what you'll eat; or about your body, what you'll wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes...."

Proverbs 10:22--"It's the blessing of the Lord that brings wealth and He adds no trouble to it."

If you have worry, fear, or anxiety about any part of your life, God is missing from that part of your life. If the material things in your life (including money) cause you anxiety, you have either a) denied His wisdom or b) moved out of His will.

2) God does not use money to divide spouses, family, or friends.

Money is still the number cause of fighting in marriages, families, friendships, and business. Too many divide over financial issues. Our world has seen far too many churches, ministries, families, friendships, and marriages sour over financial issues.

3) God does not use money to insulate you from problems.

If you believe God uses money to protect you then you are setting yourself up for disappointment and a challenge to your faith.

God instead use problems (especially finances) to mold and strengthen your character. He is testing you, stretching you, and trying to bring you closer to Him.

4) God does not use money to raise your standard of living or to look down upon others.

Far too many people who become wealthy become arrogant, self-centered, and look down upon those who have less (even Christians). Paul warned about this in 1Timothy 6:17 - "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

Five Different Purposes of Worldly and Biblical Wealth

The Worldly Purposes for Money

1. Buy whatever we want: Toys, toys, and toys!
2. Use it to measure our success over others.
3. Find security.
4. Gain independence - get out from under authority.
5. Simple acquisition - get as much as possible.

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God' Purposes for Money

1. Provide for our needs.
2. Confirm direction to your life.
3. Fellowship to bring Christians together.
4. Demonstrating supernatural power.
5. Used for the Three T's: Tool, Test, Testimony



Four Bad Habits to Keep You off Track

BAD HABIT #1: Discontentment

“Content makes poor men rich; discontentment makes rich men poor.”

- Benjamin Franklin

- Needs versus wants: what you think about you become!
- Solomon said it best: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7)
- Are you preparing your finances to be blessed?
- God talks a lot about being faithful with small things before He will bless you with more
- Likewise, He cannot bless steps you never take

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BAD HABIT #2: No Budget/ No Plan

- In Matthew 25, the master gave each servant something to manage according to their ability. Those who were faithful were rewarded with more. The servant who buried his talent in the ground was considered lazy and gave his talent to the one more obedient.
- People who lack money often fail to handle the basics (set up a budget, spend less than you make, save for a rainy day, and planning for the future).
- Look at our Federal government. You can't spend more than you make. Our government chooses to spend more than it makes and is making up the difference with debt (borrowing from U.S. citizens and companies, and other national governments, etc.).

BAD HABIT #3: Failure to understand basic economics

- What about our economy? Our economy was built on a house of cards – a mirage. Easy credit and ability to use our homes as a piggy bank.
- We will go through more economic ups and downs. How you respond to the ups and downs is most important.

BAD HABIT #4: Too much debt

- Overconsumption leads to debt (spending from credit cards, loans, etc.).
- You get deeper into debt the longer you spend more than you make. The longer you spend more than you make the more debt becomes a habit, and habits (especially lifestyle habits) are hard to break.

Before we build wealth, we must understand what wealth is.

Wealth (according to dictionary.com):

–noun

1. A great quantity or store of money, valuable possessions, property, or other riches: the wealth of a city.
2. An abundance or profusion of anything; plentiful amount: a wealth of imagery.
3. Economics. a. all things that have a monetary or exchange value. b. anything that has utility and is capable of being appropriated or exchanged.
4. Rich or valuable contents or produce: the wealth of the soil.
5. The state of being rich; prosperity; affluence: persons of wealth and standing.
6. Obsolete. [Happiness](#).

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How do you view wealth?

The definition of wealth as evidenced above is usually based on a set of worldly principles. How do you view wealth? When you hear the word “wealth” what comes to mind? When someone describes someone as “wealthy” what do you picture? Lots of money, expensive cars, supersized homes and such... That is how the world looks at wealth... these are worldly concerns. These are not God’s concerns.

How does God view wealth?

1. God wants you to remember that all wealth belongs to Him. Psalms 24:1 says, “The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” He owns it all. He allows you to use what He has entrusted into your care. He is the owner.
2. When God discusses wealth, He does not mean just your money and material things. Why? Because one day you will leave all those things behind. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6, “...we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.” How much you have (the amount, value, or authority, etc.) is not important to God because you’re going to leave every bit of it behind when you go home.
3. Your attitude is far more important to God than how much wealth . If what you are doing with your current wealth is not going to be relevant to God 1000 years from now, it’s not very relevant to God today. It is not the amount of material things you have, your abundance or lack that really matters to God. What really matters to God is your attitude and how you use them—how they are invested, reinvested and put back into the Kingdom of God.

What else does wealth mean to God?

If wealth to God means more than just money (and it does) what else does it mean?

To God, wealth includes:

- Your time, talents, abilities, skills
- Your health and family
- Your salvation and even your profession!

Do you realize that your profession is part of the “wealth” God entrusts into your care? This is where God gives you unique abilities to work and produce wealth.

Deut. 1-18 outlines this: “You may say to yourself, ‘my power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.”

Work is like punishment for many people. How many do you know who loathe Mondays? You may be one of them! God views work as part of your reward and a portion of your fulfillment here on earth. It is part of your wealth according to God’s definition of wealth.

God's Wealth Comes Without Trouble

Proverbs 10:22 tells you that “It is the blessing of the Lord that brings wealth, and He adds no trouble to it.” This proverb is full of wisdom. God speaks that wealth from Him comes with material things of this world yet without the anger, frustration, worry, fear, and sorrow. This is why your attitude is so important!

The world can give you material things. How often do you see wealthy people who are miserable? In fact studies have been done on the wealthiest people in the world and they reveal those with money often are no happier.

God wants to give you His riches...but with no sorrow. But, you must first begin to view wealth through a biblical lens rather than through your earthly perspective.

The Biblical Principle of Stewardship

Wealth includes so much more than you may imagine. That is because He owns it all. If He is the owner, what is your role? Do you look at money and material possessions as if they are being loaned to you from God?

If you rent or lease property or become a trustee of an estate, what is your job? You are required to take care of and properly handle that which is entrusted to you. As children of God, we are called to be managers or a steward of all God chooses to bless us with – material and non-material gifts.

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What Is A Steward?

True stewardship begins when you properly acknowledge that God owns everything. This includes the sum of all your wealth (time, talents, abilities, skills, money, resources, etc.). You thus commit to manage the wealth entrusted to you for His glory.

Financial difficulties often arise from two major issues:

- 1) You assume God's job and view yourself as the owner.
- 2) You fail to take the proper responsibility as a manager or steward.

Let's look at a mutual fund

A portfolio manager or team of managers is hired to select investments for hundreds, thousands, or even millions of investors. They don't own the money they control. They manage it. They can and should invest (put to good use) the wealth they manage. They are accountable to the owners. This means, among other things as well, the owners can take back or take away wealth from the mutual fund if they do not seek and follow the owners' directions.

Next week we will talk about why most mutual funds fail to be good stewards of the wealth entrusted to you...

What Does Jesus Teach About Stewardship?

In Luke 12:16-20, Jesus spoke a parable, saying, “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth abundantly. He reasoned within himself, saying, ‘What will I do, because I don’t have room to store my crops?’ He said, ‘This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns, and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. I will tell my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.”’ “But God said to him, ‘You foolish one, tonight your soul is required of you. The things which you have prepared—whose will they be?’

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What is He saying?

1. **God does not condemn the farmer for having wealth or the wealth itself (crops).** Notice it is the ground, of which God created that produces the crops. Money is morally neutral (neither good nor bad). Your attitude toward money is central! Wealth is not pleasing or displeasing to Him. He cares about your attitude.
2. **The attitude of the farmer was what Jesus was condemning.** The farmer assumed he was the owner and that is why he was condemned by God.

How do you apply this Parable to your own life?

You are “rich” when you consider all the wealth God is providing. If you have never visited www.globalrichlist.com, it is eye opening!

We all have “good crops” come in (education, jobs, family, time, etc.). If you stood before God today would you fare any better than the farmer? Do you treat God as the owner and ask how to use all that He gives you to manage? Or do you try to act the part of the owner and plan to hide it away in your “barns.” Your “barns” may be your checking accounts, savings accounts, homes, cars, clothing, etc. If you are acting like a steward, He will bless you. Yet if you act as an owner, He will condemn.

Quick check up

Here are four beliefs that will see if you are on the right path toward wealth:

- 1) You understand “wealth” from God’s perspective
- 2) You acknowledge Him as owner
- 3) You accept your responsibility as steward
- 4) You are at peace with your finances

Is the World Corrupting Your Thoughts?

The world has a way of packaging spirituality and many buy into it. Not everything that sounds spiritual is scriptural. Here are five lies that sound spiritual yet lack biblical evidence. How many of these have you hear?

1) “Money is the root of all evil.” Is this what God says? This unfortunately is one of the most misquoted verses in the Bible. Paul didn’t say money was the root of all evil. It was “the love” of money which caused all the problems.

2) “God helps those who help themselves.” Many assume those who are poor are lazy or unwilling to help themselves so they deserve to stay poor. God says, “I delight in helping those who can never help themselves” Ecclesiastes 9:10).

3) “Being poor brings me closer to God” I hear this one a lot. “Lord, keep me humble, keep me poor.” Yet most crimes come from a lack of money not from abundance. There are no verses claiming poverty is spiritual. Do you sabotage your wealth on purpose?

4) “Riches provide evidence for God’s blessing.” Riches are not worldly evidence of your faithfulness. They may be a piece of the evidence of God’s blessing. Jesus was not “rich” in that he never accumulated material wealth. In fact, the scripture says other men and women helped supply His way. However, don’t ever think that money wasn’t important to Jesus. Think about it. Jesus and His disciples had to have money to buy the essentials of life and to give to the poor as they traveled around the countryside. Money was important enough that Jesus had a treasurer...remember Judas (Ecclesiastes 5:10)?

5) “Problems are the evidence of sin in your life” Isn’t it sad that many Christians have the freedom to stand up in their churches and ask others to pray for physical healings but not for financial problems?

This is often because financial problems are associated with sin. But James 1:2-3 says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” Problems are not the evidence of sin in your life. God will use problems, including financial problems, to help strengthen you to be a greater blessing to Him and others.

What is God Teaching You?

If you really want your faith in God to grow and to start living His Way financially, God must allow problems in your life. These problems help prove and test your faith. God has a way of working through ordinary people to help them do extraordinary things!

How does He use ordinary people?

- 1) They recognize God's voice.
- 2) They understand what God has said in His Word and what He is revealing today.
- 3) They know what they are called to do and work toward His will.

You can be the same way. If you are, you will recognize that God can work through your good times as well as your hard times.

Some questions to get you thinking:

What past mistakes have you made?
Which mistakes do you keep making?
Have you learned from your past mistakes?
What problems are keeping you back?

God may use problems to:

- 1) God may use money to allow you to determine your trust in Him.
- 2) God uses money to demonstrate His power.
- 3) God can use money to unify the body of Christ.

God wants to demonstrate his power in your finances.

One way to help put you in a position to receive this power is to step out in faith.

How? Start tithing. Get help to get on and stay on a spending plan. Decide, NO MORE DEBT. Cut up those credit cards. Step out in faith believing, and expect to see God's power working in your finances.

How to Move Away from Financial Bondage

Many of you are deep in debt so let's spend a few moments talking about bondage. If this doesn't apply to you, please bear keep in mind, this is an area that imprisons so many Christians.

What Is Financial Bondage?

Financial bondage is more an attitude than a condition. It has little to do with the amount of money you owe. You have heard the warnings "the servant becomes a slave to the lender". Even if you are in debt, you don't have to be a slave!

We counsel many folks who are deep in debt because of poor prior spending habits or "unplanned emergencies." They still give to their church and have a repayment plan for their creditors. They go on vacations, send their children to good schools, drive older but safe cars, and have the proper insurance, etc.

The biggest reason most people get into financial bondage is due to one reason: "DISCIPLINE." Often a person, who lacks discipline in finances, also lacks discipline in other areas of life. Getting into debt does not require a decision. Instead, it represents a lack of decision. Think about this: why would you purposefully enslave yourself with thousands of dollars at 15-20+% interest?

Bondage Checklist: How To You Know If You Are Experiencing Financial Bondage

What are some of the “things” you might see operating in your material life that leads to financial bondage?

Bondage Symptom #1: WORRY

Uncontrolled anxiety over retirement, job security, old age, total health, etc. is unhealthy.

Bondage Symptom #2: ANGER

Do you have periodic emotional flare-ups linked to periodic financial flare-ups? Or perhaps you get angry over what others have and you don't have?

Bondage Symptom #3: GREED

Do you find yourself wanting the “most,” the “biggest,” the “best, or what someone else has?

Bondage Symptom #4: RESENTMENT

This is when you blame someone else for your financial situation.

Bondage Symptom #5: SELF-INDULGENCE

Do you buy things with little or no utility?

Bondage Symptom #6: POOR RECORD-KEEPING

Not balancing your checkbook and not living on a budget is a symptom of financial bondage.

How many of these apply to you?

Recognizing Symptoms Is Not Enough, You Need Spiritual Insight

Knowing the symptoms of financial bondage is helpful. But just like a major sickness, fever and headache may be symptoms but they are not the root cause of your problem. What are some problems that send you off course?

1) FINANCIAL IGNORANCE

Proverbs 24:3-4 says, “By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.”

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2) MATERIALISM

Another cause of financial bondage might be your attitude about the material areas of your life. You find in James 3:16 that, “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” If you have the attitude that says, “I’ve got to have it!” Or, “I truly deserve it!” Watch out! This is not the attitude of a Godly steward.

3) LACK OF DILIGENCE

Poor planning can also help financial bondage along. Remember that Proverbs 16:9 says, “In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.”

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Symptom, Problem, Solution

Just like a good doctor will check the symptoms, diagnose the problem, and provide solution, here are some examples of financial symptoms, related spiritual problems, and suggested courses of action.

1. Symptoms: Past due bills, worry, and excessive credit

Problem: Financial ignorance, self-indulgence

Solution: Discipline, excellence, ask for help

2. Symptoms: Abnormal losses, risks, hasty decisions

Problem: Get-rich-quick attitude

Solution: Patience, prayer, planning, ask for help

3. Symptoms: Sloppy records, deficient accounts, no budget

Problem: Slothfulness, laxness

Solution: Developing plans, ask for help

4. Symptoms: Envy, resentment, bitterness

Problem: Covetousness

Solution: Contentment, acceptance of God's authority, ask for help

5. Symptoms: Self-indulgence, lavishness, waste, ego

Problem: Greed, pride

Solution: Discipline, moderation, ask for help

Why Do You Want Financial Freedom?

What is Financial Freedom?

Financial Freedom is God's plan for your life! It represents the ability go and do all God calls you to do. God calls us to have wealth for two main purposes to bless our families and help others.

Financial freedom literally means the release from financial bondage. Philippians 4:6 tells you, "...not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God..." All freedom in God, including financial freedom, comes from being in God's will, not out of it.

Financial Freedom Means Peace

1 Corinthians 14:33 says, "...for God is not a God of disorder but of peace..."

Have you seen this bumper sticker?:
"Know God Know Peace. No God, No Peace"

It is so true. Financial freedom is God's way! Financial freedom means peace – that peace that surpasses all understanding.

"Financial freedom" doesn't mean you'll have a life free of financial and material difficulties. Jesus Christ tells you in John 16:33, *"In this world you'll have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* God is telling you that you'll have times of trouble. You are going to have tough times. These times should strengthen your faith, not destroy it.

What Financial Freedom Is NOT?

Financial freedom does not include:

- *Fear*
- *Worry*
- *Frustration*
- *Greed*
- *Covetousness*
- *"Get rich quick" attitudes*

Create Your Action Plan

Eight Steps to Freedom

It begins with “financial peace of mind”. That is why we are spending so much time getting your mindset right. If you don’t begin to think differently, you will not change your actions. Change your mind, then let it travel to your heart, then you will change your wallet.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM STEP #1: Accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Only then can the Holy Spirit lead you to understand and apply what God’s Word has to say. *Have you come to the place in your life where you know for sure that if you die today you’ll go to heaven?* If you have any doubts, please talk with your pastor, a Christian friend, or click on “Christ at the Center” on our Internet home page at www.good-steward.org.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM STEP #2: Saturate your mind with God’s way of thinking. Simply put, you need to get into His Word to understand what He has to say and why. Your mind is probably so in a tune to the world’s way of thinking that you first must become orientated or reoriented to God’s way of thinking. God tells you that His Word cleanses you as it washes away the impurities of this world. You need to hear, read, memorize, meditate and study the Word of God. Make no mistake, this step is work, hard work, and it takes time and discipline. But remember, this step isn’t working for your salvation. It is the process Paul calls working out your salvation.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM STEP #3: Transfer ownership of everything you have to God. How? It can be very simple. One way is to write down on a sheet of paper, “Today, God, I deed over to you everything in my possession” (all your stuff, your family, your job, your health, or education, etc.) Better yet, download the DEED OF TRANSFER I’ve provided [here](#). Then sign it, date it, and stick it on the mirror or refrigerator so you can see it.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM STEP #4: Pray. Prayer was important to Jesus and it ought to be important to you. The Bible tells you that Jesus would get up before daylight to pray. Sometimes He would spend the whole night praying. Jesus made spending time with God the number one priority in His life. That is how Jesus knew what God wanted Him to do. His disciples knew by watching Jesus’ lifestyle that His power was connected to the time He spent praying. That’s why they asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray...” (Luke 11:1). You need to bring your concerns to God through prayer, then, give God time to provide. But, your normal attitude may be more like, “I want it and I want it now.”

FINANCIAL FREEDOM STEP #5: You must learn to set the right balance in your life. Here is a scriptural sequence of priorities to consider.

1st PRIORITY = God

2nd PRIORITY = Your Spouse (If you're Married)

3rd PRIORITY = Your Children (If You Have Them)

4th PRIORITY = Your Work

5th PRIORITY = Your Ministry

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Oswald Chambers once said, “The central thing about the kingdom of Jesus Christ is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not public usefulness to men. It is much more important to get close and stay close to God than to prepare for works of public ministry.” Financial Freedom Step #5 along your path is to set the right priorities and balance in your life.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM STEP #6: Have a clear conscience.

Conflicts (including financial disagreements) between fellow Christians are a reality of life this side of Heaven. Jesus shows you in Matthew 18:15, 5:24 (and many other places in the Bible as well) how to handle these conflicts and disagreements in ways pleasing to God, without hurting the Body of Christ.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM STEP #7: Avoid Indulgences. In Luke 9:23, Jesus says.... “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Jesus instructs you in John 6:27 not to work “for food that spoils, but for food that endures.” An indulgence is something that has little or no utility or practical value.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM STEP #8: Accept God's Provision. The last step along God's path to financial freedom is for you to learn to accept God's provision. God's Word tells you to learn to be content in your circumstances (Philippians 4:11), content with your wages (Luke 3:14), content in good times or bad (Philippians 4:12), even to be content without a home (Matthew 8:20).

One way to be content is to adjust your lifestyle to fit your income so that you spend less than you make. If you find you spend more than you make you can choose to cut costs, increase income, or use credit. The first two can lead to contentment; credit most often does not. Many times you end up spending more than you make and ask God to make up the difference.

YOUR HOMEWORK: EVALUATE YOUR FINANCIAL LIFE IN THESE 5 AREAS

ACTION STEP #1: Learn to write down your budget plans.

Put pen to paper and write down whatever you, your family, and the Lord decide is appropriate in every budget category (housing, transportation, food, entertainment, medical, clothing, etc.)

Why? Because, having no written plan is the same as having no plan.

According to God's Word, not to plan is slothful. God wants you to be disciplined, organized, and yet not legalistic. One way to become disciplined and organized in your planning, especially in budget planning, is to write down your plans.

Well thought out, prayed over and written down plans help strike a balance between slothfulness and legalism.

ACTION STEP #2: Identify your needs, wants and desires.

Let's add some definitions to start:

“Needs” are the basic material necessities of life. Needs are the minimum amounts it takes to provide housing, food, clothing, medical care, etc.

“Wants” cover the same budget categories but at a higher quality or quantity level.

“Desires” cover the same budgeting areas but at a level where price is no object.

Perhaps God is providing the resources to live at the wants level. If so, and the resources are available to stay at this level, great. Sometimes, after all your obligations have been met, you can use some of your surplus funds to reach for some of your desires. Many times God will give you the desires of your heart. Once you identify your needs, wants, and desires it will be much easier to change your lifestyle if you have a hard time paying your bills.

It is hard to cut much from the needs level. It can be easier to move from wants to needs or from desires to wants or needs.

ACTION STEP #3: Think before You Buy

Here are some suggestions to consider BEFORE you buy.

A) Pay only with cash or check. Stop using your credit cards. Try this for one month. You will find you think and plan more--much more. Plus, at the end of the month you will find you will have spent far less than normal for the “normal” things of life. (Credit card companies have statistics to show that you will “normally” spend 34% more if you use credit as compared to cash.)

If you really want some excitement in your life, go on a cash only basis AND carry a small note pad to write down everything you spend down to one penny. This simple exercise will help you identify and correct some of your poor spending habits.

B) Is the “thing” you want to buy a necessity or an indulgence. Can you meet the “need” for this “thing” in any other way?

C) Does it reflect your Christian ethics? For example, what magazines, TV, radio, INTERNET, etc., do you allow into your home? Do you even know what is in your home?

D) Is this the very best possible price you can get? Are you buying on impulse? You are if you don't take the time to check around for better prices--check Consumers' Reports, etc.

E) Is it a highly depreciative item? If it is, look for a better alternative. For example, you can choose to buy used cars and appliances. You can also choose to buy basic cars and appliances and forgo some or all the “bells and whistles.”

F) Does it require costly upkeep? There is nothing wrong with Christians owning boats, motor homes, lake lots, swimming pools, etc. But, before you buy, consider the cost of upkeep. Many folks get into trouble because they can afford to buy, but cannot afford to maintain.

G) Can you rent or borrow rather than buy? You don't have to own all that you use or enjoy.

H) And finally, does it bring you closer to God?

ACTION STEP #4: Avoid Leverage

Leverage is when you buy something (house, car, etc) with little if any down payment. Let me be clear—the use of leverage in itself does not violate any spiritual principles unless leverage is leading you toward surety. The problem is that leverage almost always leads to surety.

What is surety?

Surety is taking on a debt without a clear way to repay. You buy a house using surety if you assume that if you can't make the payments you will always be able to sell it or give it back to the bank and walk away and owe nothing.

It is surety if you believe the house will always be worth more than what you owe because houses “always go up” in value. Houses do not always go up in value—just ask those who had to sell in real estate “down markets” (California, Florida, Alaska, etc.).

It's the same with a car. No new car is worth what you paid for it as soon as your drive it off the lot. Many cars are only worth one-half what you paid in less than two years after you buy.

You should try to buy major purchases such as houses and cars with enough down payments so that if you are forced to sell you will not owe the lender after the sale.

KEY CONCEPT: Owing the lender after the sale is an example of leverage that leads to surety. If you avoid leverage you will avoid surety.

So, how do you “avoid leverage” and still buy a home or car. The world teaches you to borrow what the “bank” says you can afford.

The truth is that most home lenders will approve a home loan for approximately 35% more than a balanced budget can afford.

So what do you do? Here is one suggestion. Live on a budget long enough to know how much you can afford to spend on a monthly basis to finance a home (principle and interest, etc.).

For example, if you find that after six months of budgeting, you can afford \$750 each month in rent and still have a balanced budget, you could choose to spend that same \$750 (more or less) for a mortgage payment.

Next begin saving for a down payment. When you are ready to buy, ask the bank how much you can borrow based on your cash down payment AND the amount you can afford to repay (\$750 per month, etc.).

The amount the bank will lend for the \$750 monthly repayment plus your down payment savings equals the home price you can afford.

ACTION STEP #5: Practice Saving

You need to develop the habit of saving even if you only save a small amount each paycheck.

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One reason to save is so that when something breaks or wears out, you can fix or replace it without borrowing.

However, some may have “good reasons” not to save.

a) Some may say, “I cannot save a lot—therefore, it is meaningless to save anything.” But, according to God’s Word, it is not meaningless to save small amounts.

Why? Your attitude leads to new habits which are far more important than the amount. Plus, saving a little for a long time is a great way to accumulate wealth.

b) Some might think God frowns on a Christian who saves anything. If this is what you believe, please reconsider Proverbs 21:20, “...there are stores of choice food and oil in the house of the wise, but the foolish man devours all that he has.”

God’s Word teaches you, even encourages you, to save. Therefore, it is something you need to do as part of Your Plan of Action.

You Have To Believe God Enough To Act on His Word and Open the Door

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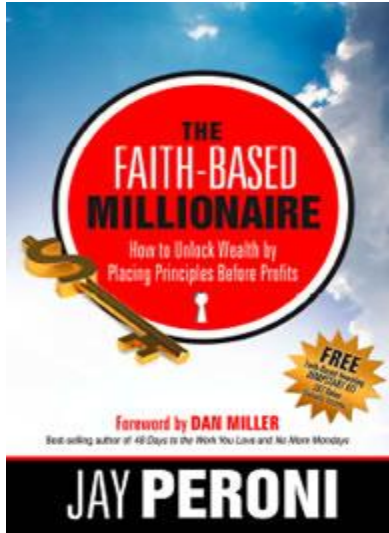
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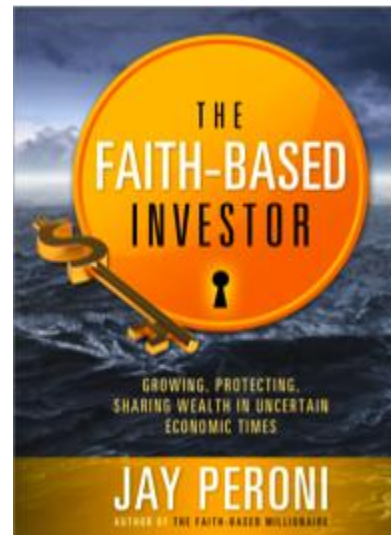
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