



The Financial Secret Weapon
Discovering the tool that will lead you to financial peace
(Part six in a six-article series on the bible and money)

By Matt Schoenfeld

He was surrounded, and there was no way out. The enemies had closed in from every possible angle, and there was to be no escape. It looked as bleak as it could get. Imminent death was a heartbeat away.

Then, right as he was on the brink of disaster, he remembered his salvation. The Secret Weapon. He had a secret weapon!

Remember the old video game “Defender?” I know, I’m dating myself here! The best part of this game where you navigate your spaceship through hyperspace and try to blast the enemies out of the sky was the secret weapon. Just when all was lost and you were surrounded by the bad guys, you could hit the red button and implement your clandestine weapon...the Smart Bomb. The Smart Bomb allowed you to blow up all the bad guys on the screen who had you surrounded. Just when all was lost, miraculously there was a way to safety. You could live for another day, or at least the chance to get to the next level! You had an air of confidence about you, even when you knew things looked bad, because you knew you had the secret weapon!

Wouldn’t it be great if there was a financial secret weapon? Just when you think there’s no way out—no way to pay all those bills, no way to plan for the future, and no way to afford all the things you need—you could hit the button and all the bills, all the creditors, all the enemies

pressing in on you—would simply disappear and you could rest easy and get a fresh start.

Guess what? I'm here today to tell you that there *really is* a secret financial weapon for you to use to fight back against the relentless and deceiving financial messages the world lobs at us—that consumer debt is ok, the get rich quick mentality, that you can give your time instead of money. And the remarkable thing about this secret weapon is that it is based on scripture and grounded in God's truth.

The final secret to finding financial peace in our series on God and money is, in fact, a secret weapon in and of itself. If you want to find financial peace in your life, use the secret weapon known as a spending plan.

Using a spending plan is the financial equivalent to having the secret weapon in a war. Not many people have one, but when you use it, it turns the tide of the battle. According to expert researcher George Barna, 25% of people say they follow a spending plan, but in reality, only 10% of people actually use the financial secret weapon. So what in the world is a spending plan?

A spending plan is a flexible money management tool that helps you allocate resources, live within your means, plan for the future, and meet your obligations. Now realize, I'm really not just trying to trick you into "following a budget." I promise. Something about the word budget just seems to carry a negative connotation with most people, doesn't it? If you follow a budget what that means to most is that you are not allowed to spend any money, and you certainly don't get to have any fun!

Let's be honest, we are going to spend our money aren't we? And you know what, there is nothing wrong with that. We all need money to live and to care for our families. Let's just have a plan for how and where we're going to spend it so that we do so wisely. Because what we are really dealing with when it comes to managing our personal finances is

this question, “How am I going to spend the money God has entrusted to me?”

I do think it’s highly significant to note that the concept of using a spending plan is a biblical concept. When approached from that angle, my guess is that a lot of people who wrote off the idea of “budgeting” a long time ago may need to take a second look at this spending plan idea. Here’s why.

In Proverbs 27: 23-24 the wisdom-literature writer instructs us, “Be sure to know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations.” When those words were penned thousands of years ago, livestock was the currency of the day, the common means of exchange, just like cash is for us today. If the shepherd did a poor job of keeping track of his sheep or camels, he was in for significant financial hardship. It is no different for us. Using a spending plan is really just modern-day sheep herding. If we do not follow a spending plan to help us keep track of where our money goes, it is highly likely that we will lack key financial information, end up wasting money, frequently get caught by surprise, and struggle to find financial freedom.

To contemporize the verse a bit, read it this way, “Be sure to know the condition of your money, pay careful attention to your cash...”, because the implication in Proverbs 27 is quite powerful. If you don’t have some system that helps you pay careful attention to what’s going on with your money, there is a high probability that it will disappear ...for riches do not endure forever.... Not only that, but if we don’t pay careful attention, it will also cause us to hurt our loved ones both now and in the future...a crown is not secure for all generations. So if you want to do the loving thing with your money and bless your kids, your kids’ kids, or even your kids’ kids’ kids, follow a spending plan so that you will be able to wisely manage the money God entrusts to you and enable you to bless your family and others.

2005 has been an incredibly difficult year for our family. Eight days into the New Year, my wife's mom suddenly passed away. Two daughters lost their best friend and confidant, and four grandkids lost their Nana. The grief came in waves like the turbulent ocean in the movie "The Perfect Storm." At times the sorrow was debilitating.

However, through the grief and pain, we quickly learned one thing about Carol Morrison. During her lifetime, she had taken to heart Proverbs 27:23 and 24. You see, Carol had been very good at paying careful attention to her flocks and herds. She did not have a lot of money. She had raised two girls on her own as a nurse, and then a small business owner. But because she managed wisely what she did have, she departed this world by leaving behind tremendous blessing in the wake of her passing. The blessings were things like her funeral and grave plot had already been pre-paid and pre-arranged. She had no debts that had to be paid off. All of her financial records were up-to-date and well organized. These may seem like little things, but when dealing with this kind of loss, you can only imagine how much easier it made it for her daughters.

I had heard horror stories from friends about the utter chaos and disarray of their parent's financial affairs and records. Not so here. All the records were stored neatly and were well marked in her file cabinet. Her will was in good order. There were no surprises. What a blessing. At this difficult time, my mother-in-law's wise planning created a wonderful testimony to how she had loved her family during her life. She left a legacy that will live on in her grandkids—part of their college education will be funded by their Nana's bequest. She did the loving thing with her money, she paid careful attention to her financial affairs, and as a result, she passed on blessing and a secure crown for the next generations.

No doubt, you have to learn how to handle a secret weapon properly. To learn the "nuts and bolts" of how to set up and follow spending, debt reduction, and investing plans, I encourage you to schedule an Abundant Living workshop in your church, business, or school. A certified

facilitator from our nationwide network can help you learn these key aspects of Christian discipleship through our powerful seminars so that like my mother-in-law, you too can be a blessing to your family and others. Give us a call toll free at 1-877-434-9878. We would welcome the opportunity to help you and your organization's people.

You can also contact Christian leadership expert, Dr. Jeff Myers, at the Myers Institute (www.myersinstitute.com/store.html) to obtain a copy of my book, *Abundant Living: the five biblical principles for financial success*, and other simple financial planning tools. This book will take you step by step through the process of creating and implementing your spending plan.

The financial secret weapon, the spending plan, is available to you. It will enable you to unlock all the keys to financial peace and lead you to a life of abundance and increased intimacy with the Lord. Follow the 5 Biblical Principles for Financial Success and you will walk in the joy of a life that blesses others as you handle money God's way.

Matt Schoenfeld is the Executive Director of Heartland Financial Concepts, a stewardship training ministry based in Mission, Kansas. In his first book, *Abundant Living: The five biblical principles for Financial Success*, Matt reveals five key biblical truths that will help us manage our money wisely. HFC teaches biblical principles for money management to people across the country through their Abundant Living stewardship seminars (www.hfcinc.org). Matt can be reached at: matt@hfcinc.org or 877-434-8978.

© 2005 Matt Schoenfeld