



**Winterize your finances: Prepare for the future by taking a biblical approach to financial planning.**

(Part five in a six-article series on the bible and money)

By Matt Schoenfeld

Something obviously went terribly wrong.

Two years after we moved into our first home, some neighbors a couple blocks from us began an aggressive addition to their house. The extensive remodeling project included adding not one, but two new stories to part of the house. Unfortunately, by 2004, *almost 10 years later*, the addition still did not have siding on it, and the project was nowhere near being finished. We frequently drove by this house, and I wondered what could have caused the delay in completing the job. I frequently thought of Jesus' words in the book of Luke, "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 to complete it?" (14:28).

As time went by and the tyvek (the outer shell of insulation that covers new construction) began flapping in the wind, we could literally see the wood rotting from exposure to the elements. The seasons were taking their toll on this addition. I've never seen a more painful reminder of Jesus' teaching to plan ahead for the completion of a project.

When it comes to our financial lives, part of good stewardship is to look ahead so that we take the necessary steps to "winterize" our finances. Part of caring for our loved ones includes organizing our financial affairs in such a way that we are prepared for the days ahead. It is a worthy goal

to be like the Proverbs 31 women, of whom it was said, “When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet (21).” Her finances were winterized; she was ready for the tough times because she had planned wisely for the future.

In fact, the Proverbs 31 woman was not just a decent planner, she was an exceptional planner (not to mention an incredible investor, another key aspect of planning). As a result, she was a blessing to her family, and to the poor (see verse 20). I believe there are two core aspects to viewing financial planning from a biblical perspective, and she exemplifies them both. These qualities form the foundation of biblical financial planning, and they are always lurking around the corner whenever the bible talks about wise planning.

So it’s time to unlock the spiritual secret for this month’s column. In this case, there are two of them.

1. To be a wise planner, you have to be a hard worker.
2. The wise planner has his or her eyes focused on using money as a tool to help the marginalized and bless his or her family.

Diligent labor is always associated with sound planning. Whether it was Nehemiah rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem or the ant in Proverbs 6:6-8, 10-11, hard work paved the way for prudent planning. We must first put our hand to the plow to earn the money that will enable us to give it back to God or save it for future kingdom use. You have to earn it to give it!

Secondly, at the very core of the passage where we learn all the wonderful qualities of the Proverbs 31 woman is her commitment to serving the poor. She understood that the whole point of planning and using the resources God gave to her was to bless and serve the Lord and others.

I want to briefly share some very simple, effective concepts that will help us prepare, as best as we are able, for what is to come.

1. **Commit:** First we have to commit to following the Five Principles we've been reviewing in this series on God and money (Give generously, flee the love of money, live within your means, plan for the future, and use a spending plan). Implementing these ideas in our financial lives will set us on course to manage money God's way.
2. **Commence:** We've all heard this command at the beginning of car races, "Ladies and gentleman, start your engines." The real battle in financial planning is getting motivated to start doing the planning we need to do. Once this hurdle is crossed and the systems are in place, the actual mechanics of monthly and annual planning are quite simple. But like the old spiritual song goes, "You gotta move!" And don't be afraid to seek help from others who are skilled in this area (accountants, financial planners, lawyers). My ministry, HFC, also provides very affordable financial seminar to help you get started building your debt reduction and spending plans (see contact information at the end of this article).
3. **Consistency:** We need to save money little by little. Proverbs 13:11 says, "Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow." Following the Lord's directive to consistently gather funds will enable us, along with other wise planning, to have the resources necessary to meet current and future obligations.
4. **Coverage:** Make sure you have proper insurance. This step is critical. Without proper insurance coverages (health, life, casualty, and disability), you run the risk of leaving you and your family in financial ruin. My best friend from college did not plan to lie in bed for a year. But after breaking his neck when his VW Bug got smashed by a truck his first day on campus, his life changed dramatically. His wise planning to have basic insurance in place

helped him avoid getting wiped out financially by this unfortunate accident (he had a long, but full, recovery thank God!).

- 5. Confidence:** As in, our confidence is in the Lord. Most importantly, we need to place our faith and trust in the Lord, not in our ability to plan or our store of resources we've gathered. Ultimately, it is our Father who promises to care for us and provide for our needs. So balance is needed to do our part to prudently plan while acknowledging that God alone is the source of all provision.

These five concepts form a sound foundation for biblical financial planning. In the final article in this series, I will introduce the secret weapon of financial planning. We will conclude our look at the 5 Biblical Principles for Financial Success by equipping you with a tool so powerful that you will be prepared to manage money God's way for years to come.

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