

## Transformations Newsletter – 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr. 2006 Edition

### *T*ransformations Takes Flight

Welcome to the first edition of the Abundant Living newsletter *Transformations!*

Over the course of the last year, the Abundant Living personal finance training ministry has hosted seminars from coast to coast, and it's been our privileged to work with you, pray for you, and encourage you to grow in financial discipleship with Jesus Christ.

When we visited your home town, you asked us to begin sending you this newsletter and as the National Director for the Abundant Living ministry, I am thrilled to place this first offering of *Transformations* in your e-mail box.

Our goal with *Transformations* is to continue to encourage you to follow the biblical principles you learned when you attending the Abundant Living workshops. Along the way we will hopefully inspire you with our articles, make you laugh through our "Funny Money" cartoons, keep you up-to-date on the Abundant Living ministry, and keep you informed about resources and information that can help you manage money God's way.

We are calling this newsletter *Transformations* because our goal is to help you be transformed to the image of Christ. A lot goes into that process, of course, and our hope is that the Abundant Living ministry can help you become more like Jesus when it comes to managing financial resources—a key component of the Christian life.

It took us a little longer to get you this first issue, but I'm excited with how it turned out. We plan to bring the newsletter to you on a quarterly basis, and on behalf of the entire Abundant Living leadership team, I hope it will be a blessing to you.

Please let me know what you think of *Transformations*. Feel free to [contact me](#) any time. And by all means, forward this to a friend! God Bless!

By grace,  
Matt Schoenfeld  
National Director of Abundant Living

### **F** aith in Action: Abundant Living Testimonies

*How God is using Abundant Living around the globe to help His people.*

We are pleased to offer Abundant Living as the primary tool to teach personal financial stewardship in local Nazarene churches. Abundant living is a wonderful ministry which provides quality education and training on whole-life stewardship.

As the resource management skills of people become stronger, so will their stewardship, which is critical to accomplishing the Great Commission. As we've offered Abundant Living at our denominational headquarters in Kansas City, I've experience first hand how this ministry can have a powerful impact on one's spiritual growth.

Dr. Marilyn McCool, General Treasurer  
Church of the Nazarene Financial Office

# Debt and Ministry – Why debt is the enemy to God's kingdom

(part one is a six-article series on the bible and money)

By Matt Schoenfeld

Debt is the enemy. OK, we all know that Satan is the real enemy, but he is sure using consumer debt to cripple the church.

Here's what I'm finding. Over the past year and a half, I have counseled many families on personal finances through my stewardship training ministry, Heartland Financial Concepts. As I've reflected on each of these counseling sessions with these wonderful families who desperately want to follow the Lord, a formula has emerged that consistently rings true – Non-Mortgage Debt = No Ministry.

Virtually every family has commented that they feel called to youth ministry, missions, or pastoring. However, they cannot answer the call because they are so deep in debt. How deep? Frighteningly deep.

The average non-mortgage debt of all the families who have come to Heartland Financial Concepts for assistance is just over \$40,000. Non-Mortgage Debt = No Ministry. And it is causing God's people a lot of misery.

Non-mortgage debt includes all types of debt other than your home loan such as credit cards, school loans, and car loans. It also includes what I'm calling hidden credit card debt, and this seems to be the main culprit to blocking ministry effectiveness. Hidden credit card debt is created when people consolidate their credit card debts into a second mortgage on their home. While this tactic for dealing with debt is widely touted as a good way to lower your payments, it also has a scary downside the advertisers of such plans fail to mention.

You can lose your house.

Because your debt load is now backed by the tangible asset of your home, if you can't make your payments because of too much debt, you stand at risk of losing your home. I've seen it happen in several real-life situations. It is brutally painful.

The average hidden credit card debt of families coming to HFC for help is about \$17,000. What tends to happen all-too-often is people consolidate their credit card debts to a second mortgage, but they do not change their spending habits. As the balances on their credit cards begin to grow again, the pressure to make all the payments mounts and people are caught in a financial vice that squeezes the life, spiritual vitality, and ministry potential right out of the saints.

The ability and capacity to serve Christ evaporates in a cloud of stress, tension, added work hours to try to catch up, and anxiety as families attempt to juggle their financial plates to keep the world spinning. The end result is that overspending and lack of planning leave people in bondage to the credit card companies. Further, the cry of their hearts to serve Jesus with passion and answer His call is snuffed out by financial burdens. Non-Mortgage Debt = No ministry. How did it come to this?

Debt is the enemy of ministry. But it doesn't have to be. There is a way out of the financial fog and negative money messages our culture sends us.

More than 15% of all of Jesus' teachings dealt with money, possessions, and things. Throughout scripture, God continually warns that money is one of the main idols which can cause us to stray from following the Lord (see Duet. 8 for one example). Both the old and new testaments are brimming with sound instruction on how to handle finances effectively. But it's not just principles to follow – it's the power of the Living Word!

To counterattack the negative money messages culture sends us, I teach The 5 Biblical Principles for Financial Success in my seminars and counseling sessions. These five simple guiding values can help us excel at managing God's money and give us the ability to serve Him with all our resources, our time, talent, and treasure. The 5 Principles are: Give Generously, Flee the Love of Money, Live Within Your Means, Plan for your future, and Use a Spending Plan.

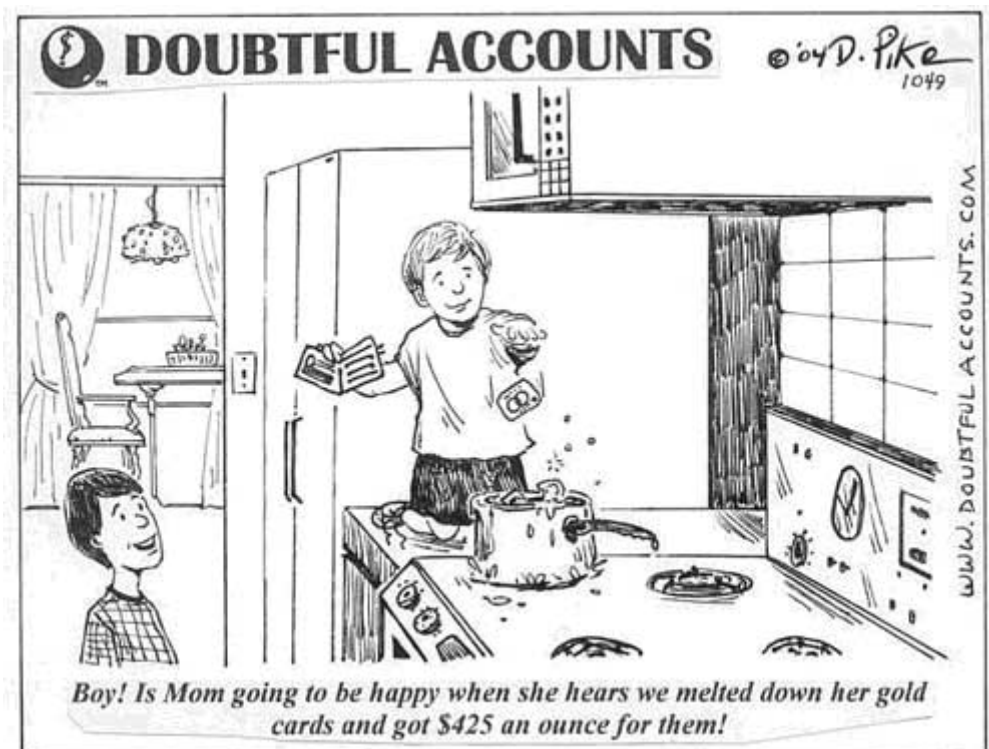
In the next newsletter, I will explore the 5 Principles in more detail. Through submitting our finances to Christ's Lordship and learning a simple, effective way to manage the resources God provides for us, we can find financial freedom so we can answer the call to serve Jesus. That way we can live out a different formula for our personal financial discipleship, No Debt = Powerful Ministry (in Christ's name).

Matt Schoenfeld is the National Director of Abundant Living, a stewardship training ministry offered by Stewardship Ministries. Matt is the author of *Abundant Living: The five biblical principles for Financial Success* and *Hidden Treasures: the secrets to abundant living*. The Abundant Living ministry teaches biblical principles for money management to people across the nation through their personal finance seminars and small group bible studies. [Email Matt](mailto:Matt@StewardshipMinistries.com) or toll free 1-877-434-9878.

## Notes and Quotes

- "You haven't begun to give until you feel glad over it."
- "Love of the right use of money is the root of much good."
- "The discipline of tithing is a blessed gift to help individual Christians order their entire economic life" — Mather and Christopher

## Funny Money



Thanks to Doug Pike for giving us permission to use his cartoons in Transformations. Check out his [website](#).

## **A**bundant Living Tool Box: Resources to Help you Grow in Financial Discipleship

Abundant Living Offers Small Group Bible Study: *Hidden Treasures: the secrets to abundant living*

What do you do once you've found the map that leads you to the site of deep riches...you start digging for hidden treasures!

With *Hidden Treasures: the secrets to abundant living*, you can now dig deeper into the powerful biblical truths you learned at the Abundant Living workshops.

- *Hidden Treasures* is a simple to use, six-week small group bible study that will help you go deeper into your study of what the bible teaches about money.
- This is a perfect follow-up to the Abundant Living workshops (but workshop attendance is not required).
- In this study, you will explore the central theme of the bible—love. As you work through the discussion topics and practical exercises with your group, you will be called and challenges to do the loving thing with the resources God has granted to you. You'll learn how to "Do it for Love!"
- For more information on the Hidden Treasures small group bible study, contact Abundant Living at 1-877-434-9878.