

## **Biblical Money Principles e-book by Helen Johnson**

We are living in a culture that seeks financial success, financial freedom and sadly, with a mindset that only thinks about oneself financial situation, rather than helping others and being generous. In this e-book I will take you through 8 Biblical principles with regards to stewarding money well. We will be covering the following:

- Generosity
- Saving for the future
- Investing your money
- Avoiding debt
- Understanding it is not your money, but God's
- Money doesn't equal happiness
- Hard work pays off
- Budget your money

I work as a Debt Advisor, so I am very much aware of the damage money can do, whether you have a lot or not much at all. My husband Andy and I have always done our best to manage our money well, but we have been challenged recently on what generosity looks like and what it means to be stewarding God's money and not our own money. I believe we are all on a journey together and this e-book is not to make anyone feel judged, in fact it is to help in establishing Biblical principles that will ultimately lead to growth and blessing in your life.

### **Generosity**



In 1 John 3:17 it says 'But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?'. This verse really challenged me, as we are living in a scarcity culture, it is so easy to hold your possessions close to your chest and not seek generosity. In the Bible we see homeless people seeking support, we see widows and orphans without any family to help them, but we also see wealthy people who are greedy and self seeking. Jesus loved and cared for all people, it didn't matter how much or how little they had, he loved them and supported them. We are called to live a life like Jesus, so therefore we should have a heart of generosity. So what does it look like to be generous?

- Tithing - as a debt advisor I can't say everyone should give 10% of their earnings, as I work with clients every day who can barely afford to eat with their earnings, nevermind if they gave 10% away. However I can't deny that tithing is a Biblical principle, so my encouragement is to pray to God and ask Him to guide you in what this looks like for you. Maybe it's 5%, maybe it's not financially giving, but giving your time, there are many ways we can be generous
- Supporting people in need - my sister and her husband in their early years of dating decided to make sandwiches for the homeless, and use this as a way to outreach and share their faith. To me this was a wonderful example of using what you have to help those in need. Some of you may give to charity, or some of you may buy a coffee for a homeless person you pass on your commute to work. What I will say is that it's less about what you do, and rather the heart behind why you're doing it.
- Allocating generosity in your budget - one thing Andy and I want to do is allocate even just £30 per month in our budget for blessing friends with a coffee and cake, or blessing friends with a home cooked meal. Again this isn't about the value of your generosity, but your heart posture and the meaning behind why you're doing what you're doing. I think there is something special about being able to financially help someone out in a time of need, but this money won't be available if you don't budget.

A question I want us all to think about is, 'If Jesus was walking beside us in person every day and witnessed how we spent our money, would we spend it differently to how we do now?'. A couple months ago on my way to work I was in a rush and I saw this homeless man near the train station. I walked past him and immediately felt convicted, yet I continued to walk. There was a coffee stand that I passed, and I could have bought him a coffee and a croissant, but I didn't. My mind was on my own breakfast I hadn't yet had and the fact we

were in the middle of buying a new home that was costing us more money. I was thinking about myself, but I know if Jesus was there with me I would have 100% bought him that coffee and croissant. Let's not let life feel so rushed that we miss these moments to be generous and to serve others, before we serve ourselves.

### **Saving for the future**



In Proverbs 6:6-8 it says 'Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest'. I recently listened to a sermon on Biblical money principles and this verse was mentioned, I had never read this verse before. It says that even an ant who has no leader or authority telling her what to do, makes the decision to harvest food in summer, so that when winter comes, she is prepared. There will be seasons in your life where your income is plentiful and you are living a very comfortable life. But there will also be times when money is limited and you don't have much coming in. We need to prepare for those winter seasons where our income streams are low, so what does this look like?

- Planning ahead if you know you will face winter seasons. For example if you are intending to have children you will know it will be a tight season financially. Another example is retirement, we're all heading there and we will lose a massive source of our income, are we preparing for this? This could be investing your money, for example in a lifetime ISA, or it

could be giving as much as you can into a workplace pension. Or if you know you will be on maternity leave it could be saving £100 every month so you have some extra money to cover your mortgage or your rent during those maternity months.

- Having an emergency fund - as much as you plan, some things happen that you don't expect and it can leave you in a place of financial strain. Having an emergency fund is crucial, especially if you own an asset such as a house and have monthly payments you have to make. From my research a good place to aim for is to have 3 months of earnings saved up as an emergency fund. For example if you earn £2000 per month it would be good to have £6000 in a savings pot that you don't touch, but is there if you urgently need it. This would be essential if you are in a situation where you lose your job, or if a family member is sick and needs financial support.
- Building a foundation for the next generation - Andy and I have talked about this in great detail. We don't know if our children will have a state pension, they could be living in a society that is even more financially broken than our society is today. Andy and I want to do our best to set some money aside every month for our children's future (once we have children). It's important to have a mindset of the future when it comes to managing money.

One important thing to say is that I understand not everyone can afford to be thinking about the future, as your current situation might be financially tight. and so there is no way you can be saving and planning ahead. However I'd encourage you to think about ways you could start thinking about planning ahead, and that may require making hard decisions now that will ultimately help you in the future.

### **Investing your money**



In Proverbs 31:16 it says 'She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.' I love this scripture as it makes it very clear that to invest, you need to firstly consider and think through your decisions, secondly you need to make the decision to use your money to invest, and thirdly you then need to work hard to make sure that the investment bears fruit and finally reaps the reward. You can see this woman used the money she had to make more money, at first it seemed like she had lost money, but in the long term that money turned into a vineyard which would have produced great wealth. I'll share a personal example. Last year Andy and I used some of our savings to invest in a walking business. Our savings initially reduced, but our plan is to one day have a fruitful business which will bring in more money than the initial investment we made. We need to be smart about how we manage our money and seek investment opportunities where appropriate. There are so many ways you can invest your money, some are smart and some are dumb, so my advice would be to seek support from a professional before using your money to invest, especially if you don't have available funds to invest. Another Biblical example is in Luke 19, where Jesus shares a parable of a King who asks 10 servants to look after some of his wealth. It then says that one servant invested the money and got 10x the original sum of money, another servant got 5x more. The third servant was afraid and buried the original sum of money, the King was very annoyed and said 'why didn't you put my money on deposit, so I could have collected it with interest?'. The servants who provided interest were then blessed in return. We need to steward our money wisely, through prayer, Biblical teaching and financial guidance from experts.

### **Avoiding Debt**



In Proverbs 22:7 it says 'The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.' You will never achieve financial freedom if you owe people money. My job means I see debt all the time and I have seen the prison it can trap people in, and it is so crucial to break free. Firstly, if you are in debt I will link some debt help charities at the bottom of this e-book which I hope will help you break free from your debt. Secondly I want to share some tips on how to stay out of debt for those who are not currently in debt.

- Have an emergency fund and plan ahead - we have already gone through the importance of these financial approaches, but it is especially important when it comes to avoiding debt. If you have an emergency fund it could prevent you needing to borrow money if you lose your job, or if you need to buy a new car or if you have a bereavement in your family etc. So many people get into debt from situations beyond their control and having emergency savings for those moments can be crucial in avoiding debt.
- Spend less than you earn - we need to get out of this mindset that life is better when you spend more money. If you are not able to save money then you need to ask yourself, are you living a lifestyle you can't afford? We are living in a cost of living crisis, so it's no surprise people are struggling to save, however I know many people who are living a lifestyle of someone on £50k, when they earn £30k. We need to understand our financial situation and work around what money we have, and find ways to increase our income if required.
- Save for purchases, don't use buy now pay later - we live in a culture that wants everything right now and sadly this is leading to debt. If you want that sofa, save for it, if you want that new car, save for it. I remember speaking with a friend who was purchasing an item that only cost around £100, and they used buy now pay later and by the end of their payments they had paid almost 3x the cost of the item. We see people driving around with fancy cars on Hire Purchase, we see people purchasing items they financially can't afford in the moment, and these are not habits that will bring you financial freedom and growth.
- Avoid credit cards - if you are sensible with your money then credit cards aren't all bad, there are some benefits. However the majority of us probably aren't the best at managing our money very well, and so using credit cards can actually be quite confusing and lead you to spend more than you think. I'm speaking from experience here, my husband and I used a credit card for 6 months and when we sat down and reviewed our spending we were shocked at how much we were spending without even realising. Since stopping using our credit card we have managed

to stick to our budget and save a lot more money. My advice for using credit cards, is to only use them if you are seeking rewards, and if you are paying off your credit card every month. If you are purchasing a holiday, then there are benefits of purchasing it on credit card, but just make sure you have the money saved up to pay that credit card at the end of the month. If you know you struggle to manage your money, I would encourage you to avoid credit cards.

Those are just a few examples of how to avoid debt. I want to make it clear that doing everything humanly possible sadly doesn't always avoid debt. However I believe you can stand a better chance of avoiding debt if you follow these principles.

### Understanding it is not your money, but God's



It doesn't matter how many jobs you have or how much you earn, at the end of the day every penny you earn belongs to God. He's given us life and enables us to do the jobs we do, so if our lives are for him, then so is our money. This can be very hard to get your head around, especially in today's

culture. I can't say I personally have 100% succeeded in understanding this myself, as I often hold onto my money too tightly, however it is something we need to understand, even if it takes us some time to get there. Here are some tips on how you can change your mindset from being you focused, to God focused.

- Tithe or give a percentage that is affordable (that won't lead to financial hardship or debt). One massive way we can stop being 'us' focused is by trusting God and deciding to give some of your money away. As I mentioned previously, you need to be wise in how you approach tithing or giving to charity. As Christians we are called to use our lives to serve others, and that includes how we manage our money.
- Be generous in your friendship groups, for example pay for a friend's meal or drink. As discussed previously, if you budget for this it won't lead to financial struggle. This doesn't need to be an excessive gesture if you can't financially afford it. Even buying a friend a £3 coffee every couple weeks shows you have a heart of generosity.
- Pray before making any significant financial decision. Before Andy and I decided to move house, we prayed about it. We knew it would impact our finances, especially as we hope to start a family soon. However through prayer and careful consideration we decided it was a wise decision to make.
- Learn to be a good steward of your money. What does this look like? I would say it's following the Biblical principles in this e-book. These are not my own opinions on how to manage your money, these are 8 Biblical principles that we all should be adopting.
- Don't spend your money on things that aren't pleasing to God, for example spending your money on excessive drinking, gambling websites, illicit sites etc as it is not honouring God. What we consume has a massive impact on every aspect of our lives. If you are using the money God has blessed you with to do things against his word, then this is not blessing God, as it's his money, we should spend it his way, according to his word.
- Make financial decisions that will bless future generations. We shouldn't be living in a bubble, whether we have children or not. Every decision we make today will impact the next generation, and so we need to be smart in the lifestyle we chose to live.

If you start applying some of these tips to your everyday life I'm sure you will start to see your mindset shift to God, and valuing the money he has blessed you with.

## **Money doesn't equal happiness**



Ecclesiastes 5:10 says 'Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless'. I love this verse as it makes it very clear that if you love money, you will always be seeking for the next thing, as the money you have will never satisfy. Nor will your belongings that you purchased with that money satisfy, now don't get me wrong, a lovely holiday abroad in the sun is pretty enjoyable, but only for the time you are there. Money like many things can bring gratification in the moment, but when it's past suddenly sadness or emptiness becomes your experience. Instead we should be seeking things that bring long term joy, such as a relationship with Jesus, a romantic relationship with our spouse, good friendships, a church community etc. Those things will bring real joy, not that momentary joy that disappears as quickly as it arrived.

One thing I do want to mention though, is that money doesn't equal happiness, but lack of money can lead to depression and great unhappiness. I work as a debt advisor and I see every day what lack of money can do to a person, it goes from not having fancy holidays, to not having food to eat. I don't want to ignore how debilitating it can be to not have money, but I also want to make it clear that money isn't the answer to a life full of joy either. Money will only ever get you so far in life. I watch many podcasts on business owners and CEOs of big companies. Yes they admit they have money which enables them to invest, however one big thing they all talk about is having

good connections and they often say 'it's who you know, not what you know'. Even these big CEO's with millions know that money will only get you so far, and that meaningful connections in life will take you far further.

### **Hard work pays off**



Proverbs 12:11 says "Those who work their land will have plenty to eat, but those who engage in empty pursuits have no sense." I love this verse, as it clearly shows that hard work does pay off, whereas pursuing adventures that aren't prosperous will lead to emptiness. I hope this brings you encouragement if you are someone who works hard every day and it feels like you never have enough, this verse says you will have plenty to eat. This verse is describing two people, one person is hard working and another person is lazy, the first person works hard daily to look after the land they've been given, and the second person engages in empty pursuits that don't bear any fruit. I want to use my husband as an example, as he is one of the most hard working people I've ever met. You could say I'm biased, but I don't think my opinion has been swayed because he's my husband, instead it's just highlighted to me what a hard worker he actually is. My husband has been in some work environments that have been toxic, he's been in jobs where he's

felt belittled, he's been in jobs he's overqualified for, but yet every day he woke up and went to work. No sick days, nothing, just hard work as he knew we had a mortgage and bills to pay. Sometimes we will be in situations we can't control, in Proverbs this person had land that needed looking after, we don't know if this was their dream job, but they did it anyway and they didn't go hungry. We seem to be in a culture full of lazy people who want to find the "perfect" job that makes them so happy, and if they're not in that type of job they don't work hard, but that is not a Biblical approach. God worked for 6 days and took 1 day to rest, we are created to work. Work may look different, to some it is a 9-5 job, to others it could be developing a business and for others it could be raising a family. I often ask myself this question, 'is what I'm doing bearing fruit? Is it reaping some benefit?'. I'd encourage you to ask yourself those questions before taking on new opportunities, as you want your life to be for God and to bear fruit.

### **Budget your money**



In Proverbs 27:23 it says 'Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds'. In Biblical times people's wealth often came from their livestock rather than physical money or money in a bank account. In Proverbs it is telling us to know the condition of our finances, and to give careful attention to our money, so we know what is going where. For example a shepherd would know where every sheep was, he would pay careful attention to look after his sheep, because if anything happened to them he would be ruined. We need to know where our money is going so we don't end up in a situation that could financially ruin us and our family. Here are some tips on budgeting:

- Use a budgeting app or a spreadsheet and keep track of what you spend your money on. For example Andy and I budget for food, for holidays, for utility bills, for unexpected costs and much more.
- If you're unsure how much you spend, log onto your banking app and make a list, or if you don't like using apps, use receipts. Once you have this list you can then create a budget, and if you find you are overspending then you might be required to cut back in certain areas.
- If you do use online banking try using separate pots online, one could be labelled 'holiday' and every month money goes into that pot, one could be labelled 'health care costs' etc. I personally find this very helpful as it tracks how much we have saved

There are so many resources out there to help with budgeting, so please google budgeting tools to see what you can find and what works for you and your personal financial situation. I would say budgeting is the backbone of managing your money well. It allows you to allocate generosity, it helps you discern if you're earning enough for the lifestyle you're living, it enables you to make sensible decisions with regards to investing, as you know what money is available. If you don't budget, then every purchase you make is done without intention or knowledge of whether you should be spending that money. Everyone budgets differently, but the key here is to have a budget that works for you.

## **Conclusion**

I hope you have found this e-book on Biblical Money Principles helpful and I hope it has also challenged you. There are many sermons out there on how to handle your money, but there is also a lot of a talk out there that isn't healthy, so I'd always encourage you to seek the word of God for wisdom, and always pray for God to guide you in your decisions.

Debt Help Charities:

- [Christians Against Poverty](#)
- [StepChange](#)
- [National Debtline](#)