

How to Have Money to Give Away

This is the first article in a series suggesting how Christians can have the means to be generous givers.

People sometimes come to the church asking for money for gas, food, rent or other emergency needs. While the immediate cause of the need may be uncontrollable events, a contributing factor at times may be that money they had has been spent in unnecessary ways.

Why do people come to churches for money? Because church people are known to be generous, motivated by the love of God who is the giver of all we have. But sometimes church people are not so generous, not necessarily because they lack the motivation, but because they lack the means. They too have already spent the money they had in unnecessary ways.

It is for the benefit of both groups that the following ideas are shared about how to have plenty of money. They mostly come from the experience on two sides of a family with several generations of large families and limited incomes, who still had money to generously give away. With the current sagging economy, it could be helpful for anyone to know some of the secrets of economizing which have been practiced by older generations.

These ideas are counter-cultural. To some they may seem extreme, but real people live this way and live happily. As with dieting to lose weight,

this may involve a total lifestyle change for some, a new understanding of what is “normal”. Only making a temporary change until things improve and then going back to old ways means going back to old problems.

Those who already have plenty of money to give away are welcome to ignore these suggestions. Those who don’t are invited to try them. Those who have even more useful ideas are invited to share them.

To read the full series, go online to goodshepherdmandkato.org

Good Things for Those Who Wait

A most important and most commonly ignored factor in wise use of money is deferred gratification. If you don’t have money for something, do without or wait until you do.

Inability to resist the urge to have it NOW assures that one will always have less later. Buying now and paying later means paying more in the long run. Buying on time, with interest, is the opposite of buying things on sale. Never buy anything on credit except what will save you money (such as a house) or make you money (such as a car to get to work).

Credit cards can be useful for keeping money in an interest bearing account longer if the bill is always immediately paid in full. Never charge something you are not sure you already have money for. If you can’t manage credit cards well, cut them up. They will be like a “virus” in your pocket, corrupting your finances.

What Do You Really Need?

Don’t spend money on entertainment. Don’t waste money to waste time. You need to work, learn, exercise, care for your family, and worship. No one “needs” to be entertained. This means not spending money on Cable TV, comic books, paperbacks, movies, spectator sports, videos, DVDs, CDs, expensive hobbies, etc.

It should go without saying, but never spend money on pornography or illegal drugs.

Instead of paying to watch adults play games, be a fan of kid’s teams. Be active in sports yourself. This will also benefit your health and save even more money in medical costs.

For music, listen to the radio. Don’t pay for periodicals unless you read the whole thing every issue. Use the library, where there are an amazing amount of books, magazines, movies, etc., which are already paid for with your taxes. If you need to rent a movie, get one for \$1 from “Redbox”.

Only have one TV per household. This may help bring the family together more. Never have a TV in a child’s bedroom. Studies show this has a bad effect on grades. You may spend less time watching TV, which gives you more time for other things and means you spend less time watching commercials designed to get you to spend more money on more things you don’t need.

There is no such thing as a free pet. There is value in pets but realize they are expensive. Be careful of investing money in pets that keeps you from being able to invest it in people.

Consider Replacement Cost

When buying something that will be used up, such as food, toiletries, etc., buy as cheaply as possible, but when buying something that should last and be used for many years, such as furniture and major appliances, spend the money to buy quality. Replacing such things is more expensive than buying something that lasts.

Don't replace something that still works. Mechanics agree that the cheapest car you can get is the one you already have (until repairs become more than its value after repair). Don't upgrade a computer, camera, etc., if what you have still works for you.

Don't buy new clothing as long as what you have still fits.

Keep everything you have in good repair. Sew up clothing and have shoes repaired. Learn to do home and car maintenance and minor repairs. Things that are broken or torn are more easily fixed soon before the problem gets worse.

Watch What You Eat

As a rule of thumb, don't pay to consume anything that doesn't at least have vitamins – No tobacco! no alcohol, no coffee, no soft drinks, no bottled water, no chips, no candy. This also is better for your health and will save you even more in the long run.

Eat only a small amount of meat. The average American eats much more than needed for a healthy diet. Reducing the amount of meat consumed has been found to have as much of an effect on the environment as switching to a hybrid car.

Don't buy donuts or snacks, especially from vending machines. Take along something healthy instead.

Don't eat out in restaurants, with rare exceptions. If you need to eat away from home, there are a lot of things in grocery stores that can be eaten right of the shelf (after you pay for it, of course). For hot food, some groceries have a deli – no waiting, no tips.

Don't buy preprocessed, precooked, or highly packaged foods. Home cooked food is often healthier as well.

If you are able, grow your own garden vegetables. They may well taste better too!

Don't throw away leftover food that can be eaten later and taken along for lunch. Don't throw away left over supplies or materials that may be useful later. Small quantities will be expensive to buy.

Get What You Pay For

Don't pay for advertising of brand name products. Many generic products are made by the same manufacturers. If you can't feel, taste or see the difference, don't pay the difference. Don't buy brand name clothes to wear the logos. You are paying the company to do their advertising for them.

Don't buy sugared cereal. Avoid buying any food where one of the main ingredients is a sweetener. Don't buy something to get the "free" prize or toy that comes with it.

Don't burn money

Only have one vehicle per income. If you have another car, you will drive it; if you

don't you will find another way. Even when you have a car, use public transportation or carpool whenever possible.

If you (or your child) are going less than a mile or too, don't drive. Walk or ride a bike. Mow with a push mower instead of a riding mower. It is better for your health and the environment.

Don't Throw Money Away

Never, ever, gamble in any way. Don't support an industry that feeds this destructive addiction. Sweepstakes also are a way to totally waste money. If you want to support a good cause, just give the money.

Don't buy anything just so you can throw it away (except toilet paper). Use cloth napkins and wash them instead of using paper. Use cloth diapers. This has the added benefit of keeping landfills from filling so fast.

Use resealable containers for food instead of disposable baggies. The bags inside cereal boxes also make good sandwich bags. Use rechargeable batteries and avoid battery operated devices in the first place by using hand operated or plug-in equipment instead.

Don't buy things that will keep costing you even more, such as clothes that need to be dry cleaned. Don't fertilize and water the yard so that it needs to be mowed more often. Both of these are also better for the environment.

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

Spend as little as possible on anything you won't still have next week, (such as restaurant food, mentioned before).

Instead of staying in a motel when traveling, camp out at a park (or stay with relatives). Enjoy what your tax dollars have already paid for. Basic camping gear can be bought for the price of a night or two in a motel and be used for years. Camping also allows you to save more by cooking your own meals.

Don't vacation at theme parks or "tourist traps". Enjoy nature at public parks. Get out of your car and take a hike. Some of the most wonderful sights are a short walk from roadside picture points and so are seldom seen. Expand your mind at historic sites and museums. Except for a nominal fee, these too are already paid for by your taxes.

Don't throw away anything you can reuse. Use old clothes for rags instead of buying paper towels. Use the Sunday funnies as gift wrapping paper.

Shop Around

Buy bread from bakery outlet stores. Check the dollar stores for non-perishable foods, toiletries, cleaning supplies, etc.

Plan ahead. Most things cost more at the last minute. Pay attention and buy when things are on sale. Buy Christmas items in January when they are on clearance.

Buy consumables, such as toilet paper, in bulk.

Don't buy food or drinks at sporting events or movies. That is where they make most of

their money. Eat ahead of time and don't show up hungry.

Avoid impulse buying. Make a list and stick with it. Never go shopping when you are hungry. If you must go shopping with children, learn to say "no" and practice it often. Don't buy fresh fruit and vegetables out of season.

Never buy something for more than one day's wages without comparison shopping and talking to your spouse first.

Waste Not, Want Not

Know what is in your cupboard. If you already have something, use it before you buy more. Yes, this includes cosmetics.

After using a towel, hang it up to dry and use it again. Don't wash clothes that are not actually dirty. This just wears them out faster.

Reuse shopping bags for trash, etc. Be creative in using what you have for what you need. This is better for the environment.

Turn down the heat when you are gone and at night. When it is nice outside, turn off the AC and open a window. Thoughtful use of windows and shades in a well insulated house can eliminate the need for air conditioning most of the year in Minnesota. During the day, think about whether it is light enough for what you are doing before turning on the light.

Turn off the water when brushing teeth, scrubbing in the shower, washing dishes, etc.

Turn off lights, fans, TV, computer, etc. when they are not needed, especially in the

summer, when they are producing more heat.

When the weather allows, hang clothes to dry rather than using a drier. They will smell fresher too.

Time is Money

The time you save in watching less TV, etc. can be used to save more money. Don't pay someone else to do something you can do yourself.

Change your own oil in the car and wash it with a hose at home. Shop where you bag your own groceries. If possible, cut your own family's hair. Don't pay for lawn services.

If you must have coffee, make it at home and take it with you. Make a lunch to take along instead of eating out at work or on trips. On longer trips or vacation, take a cooler of food. This can also save the time of finding a place to eat.

Clip and use coupons. Watch for sales. Be sure to return rebates. (Most are never returned.)

With today's gas prices, don't drive too far to save a few pennies but plan ahead to save trips to the store.

Why Buy New When Slightly Used Will Do?

Shop in second hand stores. You can find clothing and other items that are good as new. You are often also helping to support a good cause. Shop garage sales, especially for children's clothing and toys that are quickly outgrown.

Never buy a new car. A huge amount of value is gone as soon as you drive it off the lot.

Don't rent to buy, which is always more expensive than waiting until you have the money, but don't buy what you can rent if you don't need to keep using it.

Better yet, borrow. Use the public library. Share books, periodicals or magazines with friends or ask for theirs when they are done. Share tools with relatives or neighbors.

Enough is Enough

Millionaire Sam Walton still drives his old pickup truck. Another of the world's richest men still lives in his first home. Their lifestyles hold part of the secret to riches. Don't buy the biggest house you can afford. It will cost more for utilities and maintenance as well. Life can be lived well without a bedroom and bathroom for every person, a table for every meal, and multiple rooms for sitting in.

Larger houses are needed partly to hold more stuff. Avoid continually adding more things. Deescalate the amount of toys and gifts given for birthdays and Christmas. Agree to eliminate token gifts to those who don't really need anything. Remember that the real

meaning of Christmas is not about getting presents.

Don't be swept away by excessive expectations about parties, prom, weddings, etc.. Look for enjoyment that comes from being with people rather from spending money on impressive displays. There are ways to do the same things without clothes and decorations that are used only once, professional entertainers, rented vehicles, etc. Don't spend a lot of money on professional pictures that will be put away for the next 25 years, when snapshots can show the same things.

Don't try to "keep up with the Joneses". It is foolish to spend money you don't have to buy things you don't need to impress people who don't care.