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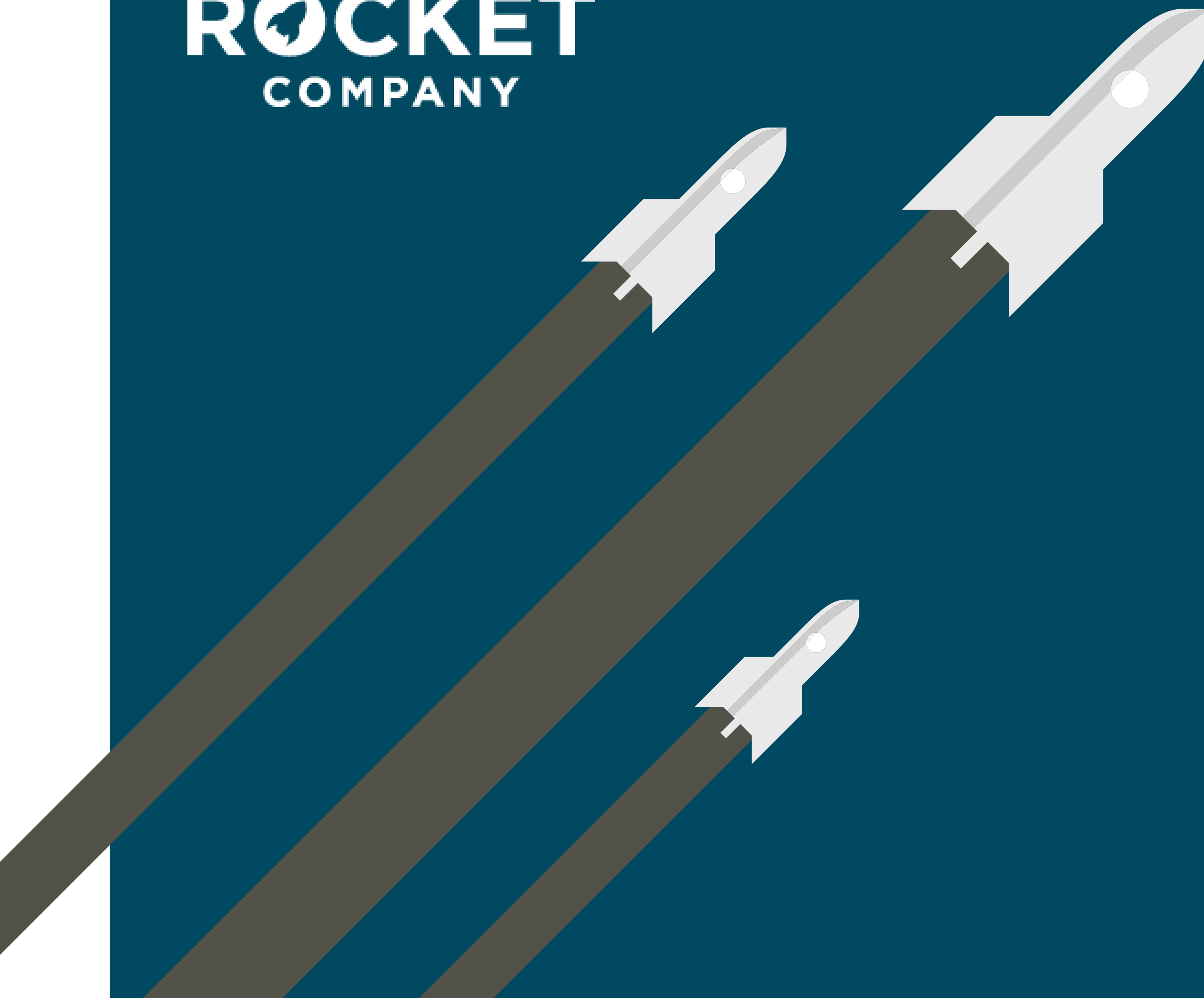

39 THINGS PASTORS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MONEY

THE KEY TO LEADING A FINANCIALLY FREE CHURCH IS LEADING YOURSELF FIRST

ABOUT THIS EBOOK

This eBook is dividided into two sections.

SECTION ONE: THE PASTOR'S PERSONAL FINANCES.

As a pastor, it's important for you to have your own finances in order. You can't lead a financially healthy church if your own personal finances are not solid. We're going to share with you a ton of practical advice that you can implement right away. We will help you save money, build personal margin, and make wise financial decisions that will affect you and your family.

SECTION TWO: CHURCH FINANCES.

As the leader of a local church, you've got to take responsibility for the financial condition of the church. We're going to equip you with tools and ideas to help you lead your church in this important area.

Each chapter is short, and each chapter is practical. Start anywhere, but start somewhere. It's time to get intentional.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Lukaszewski is the CEO of The Rocket Company, an organization devoted to serving and coaching church leaders around the world.

Before joining the team, Michael was a youth pastor and a church planter, having worked in the local church for more than 20 years.

Disclaimer: This book is not legal or tax advice. When it comes to those matters, you should consult a professional. However, this book is good advice, and if you take it, you'll be glad you did.

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CHAPTER ONE
BROKE PASTORS ATTRACT BROKE PEOPLE

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who think NASCAR is a real sport and those who make fun of cars with number stickers driven by people who like making constant left turns.

If you belong to the first group, then you're familiar with the pace car. In car racing, the pace car limits the speed of cars at the beginning of the race or during a caution flag. Jeff Gordon, Dale Earnhardt and Greg Biffle aren't allowed to pass the pace car, which drives at a slower pace. Only when the pace car pulls aside can regular racing resume.

A pastor living in debt is the pace car for the congregation's generosity. Your church can't move on to financial health, because their leader isn't financially healthy. The people in your church are going to follow your lead, and in this case, you are leading them into a 24.99% APR.

You attract who you are. If you care about reaching the down and out, then chances are, the down and out find a place of comfort in your church. If you love verse-by-verse, angry preaching, then your church is probably filled with angry Calvinists. And if Joe's PayDay Pawn Shop has your car title in their safe, your people are struggling to make their car payments.

Broke pastors can't lead broke people to financial freedom, because they haven't experienced it themselves. If you're in debt personally, you're not going to be able to lead your church to financial health.

If you're in debt, then chances are, you're avoiding talking about Biblical financial principles. It's the reason you've never seen a fat preacher preaching about gluttony. You're not going to be honest with your church, because you're not being honest with yourself.

Or if you are preaching the truth to your congregation without living it in your life, you're a hypocrite.

The good news is the flipside of this principle. Paul was able to say, "Follow me, as I follow Christ" because he understood the power of leading by example. If you are financially free and healthy, then you'll be able to lead your church to that same place.

If everyone in your church was in your financial position, would your church be strapped or blessed?

IF YOU ARE IN DEBT, GET OUT OF DEBT.

People can only follow you where you've been. You don't have a spiritual life and a financial life – those two things go together! Jesus said our heart and our finances are connected. If you're in debt, then you are in bondage. You MUST stop excusing your behavior and seek help. Until you do so, you'll never be able to lead your church in the area of money, and you'll pastor a church that struggles with money.

IF YOU ARE NOT IN DEBT, STAY THAT WAY.

Encourage people that they can live financially free. The world is telling them one message, but you are an example to them of how they CAN live. Being wise with money gives you credibility with your congregation. Tell your story and set the standard.

CHAPTER TWO
PAY EXTRA ON YOUR MORTGAGE

How would you like to have $50,000?

I don't want to bore you with statistics, no matter how true they might be. But the bottom line is that you could save a significant amount of money over time by evaluating and adjusting your mortgage.

When you write that check to your mortgage company every month, most of your payment is applied to the interest, not the principle. In other words, you're paying to use their money, not paying what you owe them.

When you make extra payments or pay something extra, that money goes straight to the principal. That means you're paying down the actual debt. In addition to owning more of your house, there's less of a balance generating interest. It's a double-win, which is almost as cool as a double rainbow.

There's several ways you can accomplish this:

First, you can add something to your current mortgage payment. If you're paying $1,000 a month, add $100. That extra payment goes directly to the principal.

Secondly, you can make one extra payment a year. Apply that extra payment directly to the principal and you'll knock years off a typical mortgage.

Third, you can switch to bi-monthly payments instead of monthly payments. The end-result of this decision is 26 payments of half the typical amount instead of 12 payments of the full amount. It's the same as making an extra payment each year, and it will save you money. If you get paid every two weeks, this is a great option for you.

Finally, you can refinance your current mortgage at a lower rate. This will only help if you keep making your same payments and stay in your house for at least five years. Making your same payments but at a lower interest rate effectively paying more towards the principle.

If all of this sounds confusing, take a breath. The bottom line is that you can save thousands and thousands of dollars, and own your home much faster if you make extra payments. Start small and gradually increase what you're doing and you'll see exponential results.

Extra payments that you may not really feel can make a huge difference.

CHAPTER THREE

YOU MUST HAVE A PLAN FOR FINANCIAL FREEDOM.

"Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty."
– Proverbs 21:5

You wouldn't build a house or start a business without a plan. The best way to get healthy is to let a personal trainer create a custom plan for you. And you're not going to get out of debt or save money without a plan either.

In fact, setting out in this direction, without a plan to get there will only lead to frustration. It's counterproductive because you'll spin your wheels, get nowhere, and give up.

You are not going to accidentally get out of debt or spontaneously become financially healthy. Good stewardship takes work and financial health requires intentional planning. You need to be committed, but you need to be committed to a specific plan, not the general idea of saving money or getting out of debt.

Maybe once before, you've made a decision to get out of debt or start saving money. Maybe you bought a book or signed up for a seminar. Chances are, you know at least some of what needs to happen. The problem isn't that you don't know that debt is bad, and it's not that you don't have what it takes to get there. It's that you didn't have a good plan.

Your plan needs to fit your personality. If you're not a natural planner, this it shouldn't be a frustrating surprise when this doesn't come natural to you. I'm not a cash envelope guy, but the idea behind cash envelopes (only spend what you have) is a good principle. So the plan for our family wasn't to put cash in an envelope, but to put a designated amount of money into a separate checking account. The plan was based on our personality.

Reyna Gobel and Ross Crooks write: "If you've previously tried (and failed) to follow a budget, the problem may have been that you were using a formula designed for someone else, with different life circumstances."

When it comes to healthy home finances, you need two plans. You need a monthly spending plan or a budget. If that sounds boring, you might just need to get over it. You're not going to an amusement park – you're doing the hard work of staying out of debt and being financially responsible. Everything in life isn't fun; some things are necessary. A spending plan is necessary.

You don't need to start from scratch, and it doesn't need to be overly complicated. But you need a plan each month that will show you where to send your money. Download an Excel spreadsheet and fill in numbers. Know exactly how much you're bringing in and how much is going out, and make sure those numbers cancel each other out.

If you have any kind of debt, you need a second plan – a plan to get out of debt. Your credit card, car or house is not going to be miraculously paid off by the dollar fairy, so create a plan and get to work. My favorite plans were created by Joe Sangl; he's got a simple system called "The Payoff Spectacular." You assign a dollar amount to each square and keep your goal before you. It's a free download from Joe's website, and he's got some other great tools as well.

CHAPTER FOUR
CHECK (AND FIX) YOUR CREDIT REPORT

You've heard a lot about your credit score, but chances are, it's a mystery number that you don't fully understand.

Think about how a teacher calculates grades in school and you'll begin to understand how a credit score is calculated. It's like the grade that banks and businesses give you on your financial report card. You don't really have ONE credit score, since each of the three main agencies keeps their own report on you. Here's how it generally breaks down:

- 35% based on payment history. If you miss a payment, that will hurt you.
- 30% based on outstanding debt. If you're using all of your available credit, that's a bad sign.
- 15% based on the length of time you've had credit. The longer you have accounts in good standing, the better off you are.
- 10% is based on new credit. Too many inquiries can hurt your credit.
- 10% based on the type of credit you have. Unsecured debt is worse than secured debt.

In 2003, the federal government passed the Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act, which entitles you to a free credit report every year from each of the major credit bureaus. There are a lot of websites that charge for this, but you can visit annualcreditreport.com to get your free report.

A credit report and a credit score are not the same thing. You can also obtain free copies of your credit report by calling or writing the credit bureau directly:

- Equifax: 1-800-685-1111 (P.O. Box 740256, Atlanta, GA 30374)
- Experian: 1-888-397-3742 (P.O. Box 2002, Allen, TX 75013)
- TransUnion: 1-800-916-8800 (P.O. Box 2000, Chester, PA 19022)

Be sure to include your name, date of birth, address, social security number, spouses name and phone number. Since you can make this request once a year, make a recurring event on your calendar. Save the letter on your computer and just print a fresh copy each year.

Your credit score can have a big effect on your life. It's the deciding factor in an interest rate that could mean hundreds of dollars every month. Many employers check the credit report of potential employees. You need to pay attention to your credit report even if you pay cash for everything and don't need credit.

HERE ARE SEVEN STEPS TO FIX YOUR CREDIT

1. REVIEW YOUR CREDIT REPORT. If you're going to improve your score, you need to know it. Get it, read it, and know what they are saying about you. Some estimate that up to 50% of all credit reports have errors. A significant error might be harming you by 25-50 points, which makes a huge difference.
2. DON'T CLOSE ALL YOUR ACCOUNTS. This may seem like a good idea, but it signals trouble. Banks count off for this behavior. Don't close those unused accounts – just leave them with a zero balance.
3. USE YOUR CREDIT CARDS A LITTLE BIT. Instead of closing the account, buy a tank of gas every few months and then pay it off. This builds a good history.
4. REDUCE YOUR CREDIT CARD BALANCE. Having cards isn't as bad as having maxed out cards. If the ratio of your debt to available balance is too high, that will hurt your score. Just because you have available credit doesn't mean you need to use it.
5. PAY YOUR BILLS ON TIME. This is the single most important thing you can do. Even if you can't pay the whole thing, don't pay late. Stop hoping American Express is going to forget about you.
6. STOP MAKING INQUIRIES. Every time you open up a new card (or try to do so), an inquiry is made. Too many inquiries and the banks will think you're shopping for a way to get out of the country.

7. STOP OPENING NEW ACCOUNTS. You don't need a Fred's Boiled Peanut 5% Cash Back card. Just stick with the card you have.

CHAPTER FIVE
YOU AND YOUR WIFE MUST WORK TOGETHER.

I hope it's not a wild assumption to conclude that, among other reasons, you and your spouse got married because you wanted to do life together. Amid the romance and passion was a conscious decision to stay together for richer or poorer.

The writer of the wedding vows must have known that money is a source of stress in most marriages. While money may not be the primary cause of divorce, it's a huge contributing factor.

Whether you're creating a spending plan, trying to get out of debt, or just trying to pay the bills, you and your spouse MUST work together. You've got to attack your money problems, from the same position and posture.

In many cases, opposites do attract. This is illustrated by our attitudes toward money. One of you could be a spender, while the other could be a saver. In my house, I'm the spender while my wife is the saver.

One of you might be a natural risk taker, while the other likes to play it safe. These differences are part of what you love and appreciate about the other person, but if you don't talk about them openly and honestly, a lack of understanding will lead to resentment.

Get on the same page and discuss your financial values. In my experience as a pastor, most young couples never discuss their attitudes towards private school, saving for retirement or buying lottery tickets. These are important issues that can quickly cause division. When two become one, financial problems and concerns are joined. Differences don't go away on their own; they become bigger issues over time.

There are many similarities between running the home finances and running the church finances. Many of the same rules apply. As a pastor, you understand how personalities and priorities effect the finances. You and your spouse must establish priorities and work together. Let some of the same wisdom that guides your church factor into your home finances.

If you're single, talk about this while you're dating. You may not want to bring it up on the first date, but before you say "I do," dive into a discussion about financial values and goals.

CHAPTER SIX
PAY OFF THE CREDIT CARDS

Let's say you spend $1,000 on a credit card that has a 24% interest rate. The minimum payment will come in around $50 and it will take you more than 75 payments to pay it off. By the time you're done paying off that new pair of True Religion jeans, you're a completely different size, partly because you charged too many meals at Olive Garden and didn't use the gym membership that's automatically charged to your credit card every month. To top it off, that same $1,000 ended up costing you about $1,600 after making 75 payments.

According to mint.com, the average American carries $8,500 in credit card debt. Don't let these numbers make you numb – we're a nation sinking in debt. Credit card debt will rob you of your future.

Before you invest in stocks or try to pay off your house, you need to pay off your credit cards. In fact, "paying them off" might not be strong enough – you need to attack them.

Start with the card that has the smallest balance, not necessarily the one with the highest interest rate. You might think you should start with the card that has the highest interest rate, and in a few cases, that may be the smart thing to do. But I'm betting that knocking out an entire debt and having a $0 balance will give you a motivating sense of accomplishment.

Furthermore, once you pay off one card completely, you can apply that payment to the debt that's next in line.

Dave Ramsey describes the debt snowball principle:

> *The math seems to lean more toward paying the highest interest debts first, but what I have learned is that personal finance is 20% head knowledge and 80% behavior. You need some quick wins in order to stay pumped enough to get out of debt completely. When you start knocking off the easier debts, you will start to see results and you will start to win in debt reduction.*

The principle is to stop everything except minimum payments and focus on one thing at a time. Otherwise, nothing gets accomplished because all your effort is diluted.

List your debts in order with the smallest payoff or balance first. Do not be concerned with interest rates or terms unless two debts have similar payoffs, then list the higher interest rate debt first. Paying the little debts off first gives you quick feedback, and you are more likely to stay with the plan.

Redo this each time you pay off a debt, so you can see how close you are getting to freedom. Keep the old papers to wallpaper the bathroom in your new debt-free house.

The New Payment is found by adding all the payments on the debts listed above that item to the payment you are working on, so you have compounding payments which will get you out of debt very quickly. Payments Remaining is the number of payments remaining when you get down the snowball to that item. Cumulative Payments is the total payments needed, including the snowball, to pay off that item. In other words, this is your running total for Payments Remaining.

You attack the smallest debt first, still maintaining minimum payments on everything else. Do what is necessary to focus your attention. Keep stepping up to the next larger bill.

The snowball really works, and by sticking with it, you'll see exponential improvement. If you're an iPhone user, there's even a free app that will help you keep track of your debt snowball.

If you've got a lot of credit card debt, consider transferring it to a low-interest rate card and get aggressive with the payments. Remember, it doesn't do ANY good to transfer the balance and forget about it for 12 months - you've got to make payments.

Finally, you can ask for an interest rate deduction on your credit cards. Surveys show that nearly half of all people who request reductions in their rates receive them. If you've got a decent credit score and you've made your payments on time, the credit company will want to keep you as a customer. If that doesn't describe you, then try for a balance transfer. And if that's a no-go, then just start the snowball.

CHAPTER SEVEN

YOU NEED MEDICAL INSURANCE

Insurance is costly, but not having medical insurance can be even more expensive. In fact, crippling medical bills is the number one reason for bankruptcy in America.

A simple accident could cost you thousands of dollars. A typical emergency room visit costs $2,500. A heart transplant can cost $250,000.

There are some medical procedures that are simply unaffordable without insurance. Should you somehow absorb the cost, it would severely change your life or drive you into bankruptcy.

If you don't have insurance, shop around. Don't let the fear of high costs keep you away from investigating. If there's a finance team or group of leaders at your church who are responsible for this, talk to them.

Churches need to provide access to quality healthcare to their employees. If this benefit is not completely covered, then it should be heavily subsidized. Pastors and staff members should not have to put their health or their families' health at risk unnecessarily. Cutting a few dollars from the budget is irresponsible compared to the personal health of the staff.

Let's say that your church will not cover this benefit and you cannot afford traditional insurance. At minimum, get a high-deductible, catastrophic insurance policy.

This high-deductible policy costs a fraction of a typical medical insurance and would cover the costs of a super-expensive procedure. It won't cover routine doctors visits and you'll have out-of-pocket expenses, but it would cover organ transplants, surgeries and other expensive procedures. The annual deductible might be $10,000, meaning that you'll pay for 100% of your family's medical care up to that point. But in the event of something catastrophic, insurance kicks in. A $10,000 bill might be a significant setback to your bank account, but it's probably not something that will permanently alter your life.

You should also open a Healthcare Savings Account (HSA). You are not taxed on contributions made to this account, and you can use it to pay for prescription drugs and medical care. The account comes with a debit card that you can use at the drugstore or doctor's office. If you don't use the money in this account, it's yours when you retire. Even if you have traditional insurance, you can pay for healthcare expenses from a HSA.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GET A NEW QUOTE ON YOUR CAR AND HOME INSURANCE

Sometimes, commercials are true. 15 minutes really can save you 15% or more on car insurance.

In fact, studies have shown that the average person who shops for car insurance saves about $300 a year. If you own your own home, you can also save money by getting an updated quote on your home owner's insurance.

Isn't a few minutes on the phone worth $500? Wouldn't you rather have $500 in cash than needlessly pay extra on a couple of bills?

Too many pastors pay more for auto insurance because they are doing business with a church member, or keep their old policies in effect even though rates have changed. If you've gotten older or your driving record has improved, you may be missing out on discounts.

There are many companies competing for your business. Let that fact work for you, and let people compete for your business. You can get quotes from multiple companies from NetQuote.

Find out what kind of coverage you have now, and get a new quote. Be sure that you're comparing apples to apples, and that you're not set-

tling for less coverage for less money.
It's okay to adjust your policy based on your needs, but don't get talked into to something that doesn't meet your needs.

Get a new quote on your homeowner's policy as well. In many cases, the cost of insurance is added to your mortgage payment and handled through an escrow account, so you might not even see how much you're paying. Call your mortgage company and ask for an escrow statement and shop around for insurance. Just like auto insurance, be sure to compare quotes for similar coverage.

If you don't own your home, get a renter's policy to cover your furniture and electronics. These policies cost as little as $15 a month and would cover you in the event of fire or theft.

You might think tasks like this aren't worth your time. But if you spend two hours and save $500 over the course of the year, that's like getting a $500 check in the mail. Plus, you're saving money EVERY year, not just one time. This is money that you could be saving or spending on something more fun.

CHAPTER NINE

INTEREST RATES MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE

Let's say you charge $1,000 on a typical credit card with a 23.99% interest rate. Making the minimum payment, it will take you more than 75 months to pay down the debt and you would have spent nearly $600 in interest.

If you spend that same $1,000 on a card with a 9.9% rate, you'll make about 60 minimum payments and pay $176 in interest.

That's a $400 difference.

Of course, if you pay cash (or use a credit card and pay it off each month), you'll pay $0 in interest which is a $600 savings! But you get the idea…a better interest rate can save you a lot of money.

The same thing is true for auto loans. A 1% difference in the interest rate makes about a $400 difference over 48 months. You may spend a lot of time haggling over the price of the car, but if you don't factor in the interest rate, you're kidding yourself.

It's an even bigger difference when it comes to a mortgage, where one percentage point can result in thousands of dollars over the life of a loan. Play around with an online mortgage rate calculator and see just how much difference the interest rate can make. Don't just look at the monthly payment either – take a look at the total amount paid over the life of the loan.

This is why it's important to monitor your credit report and take intentional steps to improve your score. If you want to get the best rates on a 30-year fixed-rate loan, you're going to need a FICO score of 760 or higher. According to Kiplinger's, 35% of consumers have a score less than 650.

A difference of 20 points could bump you into the next category, giving you a much more favorable rate.

Negotiating the price of a car or home is great, but you've got to consider the bigger picture. When you're shopping for a big-ticket item, think about the interest rate. It may be worth it to wait a while and work on improving your credit score.

You can take action and save money by transferring your credit card balance to a low or zero interest rate card. You might pay 3-5% in the form of a transfer fee, but over the course of a year, that's much better than a 24% interest rate.

You could also call your credit card company and simply ask for a rate reduction. Let them know you're looking to transfer to a lower rate card. This is likely to work, especially if you've paid your bill for several months in a row.

CHAPTER TEN
OPEN AN ONLINE SAVINGS ACCOUNT.

If you have a savings account at a traditional bank, there's a good chance you're earning about .05% interest.

Not 5%. Not .5% I said .05%. That's less than the inflation rate, meaning that your money is actually DECREASING in value in your savings account. You're letting a bank borrow your money for next to nothing, and they are lending it to people with credit cards at 18.99% interest. That's how banks make their money – on the difference between the rate they pay you for your money and the amount they charge others to use it.

You shouldn't keep a lot of money in the savings account at your bank, and you should open an online, high-yield savings account. The interest rate is probably 10 times what your bank offers. You'll get a much better rate of return. In other words, you'll make more money!

Online banks are usually FDIC insured, and accessing your money via the Internet is easy. You can get checks and an ATM card just like you would with a traditional bank. Some banks even allow you to make check deposits simply by snapping a picture from your smartphone.

An online savings account is the perfect place for your emergency fund. If you don't have an emergency fund, open up an account and start making contributions. Small deposits add up over time. Since you shouldn't use this money on a regular basis, it will earn interest over time.

ING Direct is one of the best online savings accounts. There isn't a minimum deposit amount and there are no monthly fees.

Maximize your online savings account by setting up automatic, monthly deposits or transfers. Just like the interest rates on your credit cards make it hard for you to get ahead, the interest you earn in these accounts builds over time. It's debt in reverse!

An online savings account is something you can do right now.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CLAIM A HOUSING ALLOWANCE

This is a big time difference-maker so pay attention.

A housing allowance is the most important tax benefit available to pastors. The IRS allows pastors to exclude some of their income for tax purposes. There are a lot of rules and regulations, and you're probably going to need some help, but here's how it works:

Pastor John makes a total of $50,000 a year. He designates $12,000 as a housing allowance, so that amount isn't reported to the federal government as taxable income. John will still pay SECA taxes on the housing allowance, but he won't pay federal income tax on that amount.

If you're licensed and ordained to the gospel ministry, then you're probably eligible for this tax benefit. The IRS has quite a few eligibility rules so it's smart to check with a qualified tax specialist who understands the unique needs of pastors.

The bottom line is that if you're considered a pastor by the federal government, you need to claim a housing allowance. It could save you thousands of dollars in taxes.

How do you figure out the number? You can claim the lowest of these three amounts:

1. The housing allowance designated by their church; or

2. Actual housing expenses (including mortgage payments, utilities, property taxes, insurance, furnishings, repairs and improvements); or

3. The fair rental value of the home (furnished, including utilities).
Let's say John's church designates $14,000 a year for his housing allowance, and fair rental value (including furnishings and utilities) would bring $16,000 a year. However, his actual costs are $13,00 a year. According to the IRS, he must go with the lowest number, meaning he can claim a housing allowance of $13,000.

Consider mortgage payments (principal and interest); rent payments; real estate taxes; property insurance; utilities, appliances and furniture, remodeling expenses; homeowners' dues; and pest control when computing your housing allowance.

You can claim a housing allowance even if you rent your home, and you can claim some expenses even if a home or parsonage is provided for you.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SAVE FOR UNUSUAL ANNUAL EXPENSES

When I say "unusual expense," I'm not talking about budgeting for a Katy Perry wig for a Halloween party on the moon.

A lot of pastors are blindsided by expenses that just "snuck up on them." The statement might sound good, but it's not honest. Many expenses that people claim to be surprising really aren't out of the ordinary at all. They aren't surprises and they didn't sneak up on you…you just didn't plan for them! They happen on a regular basis, but they always seem to set you back.

It doesn't have to be that way.

You can plan and save for annual expenses that happen on an irregular or infrequent basis. Here's a few examples:

- Taxes – this is the most common unusual, annual expense. You pay taxes every year, so there's no reason it should surprise you.
- Associational Dues – don't let this annual expense set you back a month because you know it's coming.
- Car repairs – the specific repair might come as a surprise, but if you own a car, you should count on repair costs. It's not a matter of "if," it's a matter of "when."

These things are not surprises. There's no excuse for "letting them sneak up on you." They are regular, recurring, unusual expenses.

Here's how to plan for this stuff: Figure out how much you spend on these things each year and then divide that number by 12. Set aside that much money in an online savings account, so when the expenses occur, you're ready.

In your monthly spending plan, include a category for "annual expenses." If you figure that you spend $2,400 a year on taxes, homeowner's dues and car repairs, then set aside $200 every month. You're paying these things anyway – you might as well prepare for them.

CHAPTER THRITEEN

DATE NIGHTS AND VACATIONS ARE NECESSARY

A healthy marriage can lead to a healthy ministry, but a growing ministry doesn't automatically lead to a healthy marriage. In fact, the opposite may be true. The demands of a thriving church put abnormal stress on the marriage and family.

As a pastor, you're responsible for the condition of your church. But too many families struggle because the pastor takes care of everyone else while forgetting his own family. Paul writes, "An elder must be a man whose life cannot be spoken against. He must be faithful to his wife … He must manage his own family well … For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's Church?" Kevin Springer says, "The integrity of your marriage will determine the length and strength of your ministry."

Perry Noble says it like this: "If you are putting your church before your marriage then one of two things are taking place. #1 – You are on a tremendous ego trip and need to feel needed, and so you make yourself available to the flock for the purposes of feeling better about yourself and NOT for the purpose of ministry. Or, #2 – Your marriage is in bad shape and you are choosing to ignore the problem because you fear what people might say about you "not being available" to your church."

That's why date nights with your spouse are not frivolous expenses. Building this into the budget or finding a way to make it happen is crucial. Do NOT believe the lie that you'll work on your relationship when things settle down at church. You must be intentional about spending time with your spouse.

Here are some date night tips for you husbands:

1. Parents, if you can't afford a sitter, is there a way to set up a rotation with three other families to take turns each week watching kids for date night?
2. Husbands, when is your date night? Your wife needs it. You do, too.
3. Husbands, plan out your date nights. Ask your wife in advance what sounds good, see what your options are, and make a plan. She'll be thankful.
4. Time with other couples now and then is OK, but if most date nights involve other people, there is likely an intimacy disconnect in the marriage.
5. Husbands, what can you start doing days or hours before date night to build the expectation of connection with your wife? Flowers, cards, calls, texts?
6. Sometimes sending the kids out to someone's house and having a date night at home can be cheap and fun if planned right.
7. Men, you don't pursue a woman to marry her and stop pursuing her. You pursue a woman to marry her and pursue her with more passion and creativity than ever.
8. Men, you don't need to understand women. You will be doing better than most men to understand just one woman. Date nights are to ask inviting questions, listen, and learn about her. It's also a night to open up and let her do the same.
9. Men, if you don't date your wife, someone else may eventually volunteer for the job.
10. Ladies, sometimes it's a great gift to go into your husband's world for a date night by doing something like putting on a jersey, going to a game and eating a hot dog.
11. Sometimes the best date night is date breakfast, date lunch, or surprise pick up your spouse from work for an hour at a hotel.
12. If your spouse likes board games, date night could be a nice spot, a beverage of choice and time to play and chat.
13. Plan in advance for some big events like concerts, comedians, Cirque show, etc. Who is coming to town? What would be fun?
14. Men, take your wife shopping. Yes, shopping at a place that does not also sell carburetors or fishing supplies. Patiently help her pick things out, watch her try them on, flatter her with comments, and spend some money.
15. Sometimes it's fun to go on an old memorable date again, or retrace a first date, relive the memory, and recollect what God has done since then.
16. Just like date nights are essential to the health of your marriage, family vacations are important. If you're working at a church that

can't survive without the pastor for a week or two, then you're working at the wrong church. If you've led your staff or congregation to constantly need you, then you haven't done a good job of leading your church.

It's absolutely necessary that you spend time with your family. This means that you need to plan and save for this expense, and not feel guilty when the time comes. You may be committed to paying every free cent to your mortgage, but this doesn't excuse a Scrooge-mentality when it comes to your family.

Pastor, don't sacrifice your family for the sake of the ministry. If you have a growing church but your kids don't know you (or Jesus), you won't feel like a success in the end. Plan and budget for date nights with your spouse and vacations with your family. Don't let a finance committee, church member, or the calendar keep you from spending time and money on what really matters.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SAVINGS WORKS LIKE DEBT IN REVERSE

There's a popular myth about rich people that causes people to think they are born with a silver spoon in their mouth. The reality is that 80% of millionaires are first-generation affluent, invest 15%-20% of household income, buy used cars, and rarely buy expensive watches or suits.

They aren't handed large amounts of cash – they work hard and save money. Millionaires aren't necessarily rich because they earned a lot of money – they have money because they saved a lot of money.

The way to save money is by working hard over a long period of time. When you do that, compound interest works for you. Check this out:

- You save $5,000 a year for 45 years.
- You invest that money in an IRA that earns an 8% return on average.
- You've got $1.9 million when you retire.

Compounding interest is the opposite of credit card interest. It's a snowball effect, just one that works in your favor. Here's an example of how the cost of an iPhone and monthly service could become more than $1 million. I'm not suggesting that you get rid of your phone, but I do want you to understand the power of compound interest.

Let's say you start with $1,000 and invest it at 5% interest. At the end of a year, you'll have $1,050. If you continue to invest $1,000 every year for 15 years, you'll have nearly $25,000. Let it go for 30 years, and it's nearly $75,000. I don't want to bore you with numbers, but the idea is that saving money starts to work FOR you over time. Debt works against you, but savings work for you.

It starts small, but over time, it can really grow into something sizable.

Since the power of compound interest takes time to work, start as early as you can. If you have to start small, that's okay – the key is getting started and to stick with it every month. Make contributions to your retirement account automatic. Set them up and then forget about them. After all – you should automate the important!

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

YOU NEED LIFE INSURANCE

There are more than 60 million Americans that don't have any life insurance at all. You might be one of them. After all, it's not like it's fun to shop for life insurance. But you need life insurance to protect your family (and anyone else) who depends on you for income.

There are two kinds of life insurance:

- Term Life Insurance pays your beneficiaries if you die. It's good for however long the term lasts and then it expires.
- Whole Life or Universal Life insurance includes investment components and lasts your entire life. If you talk face-to-face to an insurance agent, they will probably try to sell you this type of policy.

For most people, term life insurance is the way to go. The good news is that this is cheaper than you think. You need it, but you can also afford it. You can shop for this on the Internet, and receive quick quotes from multiple providers. If a health screening is required, they will send someone to your home or office. You can get multiple quotes from different companies at Accuquote.

Your life insurance policy should be about ten times your annual salary which means if you make $50,000, you need a $500,000 life insurance policy. That may cost as little as $25 a month depending on your age and health.

If your spouse works outside of the home, or is the main childcare provider, they need a policy also. It's not fun to think about what would happen if your spouse dies, but chances are, there would be a lot of additional expenses.

You should also consider obtaining a term life insurance policy and naming your church as the beneficiary. What an incredible gift and legacy to leave your church!

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SAME AS CASH ISN'T THE SAME AS CASH

According to the Federal Reserve, total consumer credit outstanding as of November 2010 is $2.4 trillion.

Think about how long it would take you to get to $1 million. And then get there 1,000 times and you're at 1 billion. Then do that 1,000 times and you're at 1 trillion. Then multiply that one and a half times and you're at 2.4 trillion. That's a lot of debt, and it's probably a number so high that we can't really comprehend it.

One reason that we're in so much debt is that we've bought into the "same as cash" lie. The auto-repair place or the department store tell us that we can buy things and pay for them in 90 days.

But most people rarely pay the bill off completely in 90 days, and then they charge you interest, all the way back to the original date of purchase. If you pay most of it off, but still have a small balance at the end of the grace period, you're charged interest on the entire amount. The new transmission in your car or the new sofa from the furniture store retroactively becomes a bad deal the moment the due date hits.

You haven't saved any money by going the "same as cash" route. In fact, it's cost you even more!

I know you think you're the exception and you really will pay the bill during the grace period. Everyone thinks they are the exception to the rule, but the credit companies know otherwise. They know that something else will come up and capture your attention. And they will get rich off charging you interest for something you bought a long time ago.

This is just another reason to save for the furniture that you want and have an emergency fund to cover the cost of the new transmission. Paying cash for these things keeps you from the same-as-cash trap.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

UNSECURED DEBT IS WORSE THAN SECURED DEBT

If you're in debt, one of the smartest decisions you can make is to become financially free. This will take planning and hard work, but the outcome is worth it.

The Bible says that debt is a form of bondage. You know this, because you feel it.

Secured debt is tied to an asset like a car or a house. It's a lower risk to the lender because there's something they can take if you don't pay the loan. If you miss too many mortgage payments, then the bank can foreclose on your home...that's because until you pay off the mortgage, your home really belongs to them!

Unsecured debt isn't tied to anything specific or concrete. Credit card debt is a common form of unsecured debt. Even though you sign your name and you're obligated to pay, it's not secured. American Express isn't going to come to your house and take back the microwave that you purchased from the warehouse club if you fail to pay the bill.

Debt can easily get you in trouble, but unsecured debt is worse. Once you've made the decision to live financially free, start with your credit cards, which are unsecured. Let the snowball work for you.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
YOU NEED A WILL

CNN estimates that 50-75% of American's don't have a will, including 30% of people who have more than $500,000 in assets. This means that in the event of their death, the state decides who gets what, regardless of their intentions. Without a will, the court divides your assets according to the laws of the state where you live. If you have children, your will determines who receives custody.

You may not think about your death all that often, but writing a will is important. And it's not really that hard.

LegalZoom is a great website that will guide you through the process of creating a will. The three-step process will cost you about $75.

You know you need to do this, and you've known it for some time. Stop putting it off.

CHAPTER NINETEEN
START AN EMERGENCY FUND

We know we're supposed to "expect the unexpected," but we don't really do it. If you have an accident or lose your job or a tree crashes through your roof, then you're going to need some money. Most people turn to credit cards in these situations, which drives them further into debt. In those circumstances, fixing the problem leads to worsening the problem. You may not think you need money in the bank right now, but there will come a time when you will.

Pick up just about any personal finance book, and the author will advocate starting an emergency fund. In The Total Money Makeover, Dave Ramsey recommends saving $1000 in an emergency fund before attempting to pay off any debt. In The Automatic Millionaire, David Bach recommends the following three steps:

1. DECIDE HOW BIG A CUSHION YOU NEED. Experts suggest anything from $1,000 to six months worth of living expenses. You (and your spouse, if you're married) should decide on the number that makes sense for you. Remember, if you lose your job, it may take three to six months to find a new one.

2. DON'T TOUCH IT. "The reason most people don't have any emergency money in the bank is that they have what they think is an emergency every month…A real emergency is something that threatens your survival, not just your desire to be comfortable," Bach says. You're not going to use this to fund your trip to the mall or to buy a new sofa. You're not going to access it to buy your kid a birthday present. It's for emergencies – things that threaten your survival.
3. PUT IT IN THE RIGHT PLACE. "Not earning interest on your emergency money is almost as bad as burying it in your backyard," he writes. Put your money into a high-yield online savings account. You'll be able to access it quickly, and it will earn interest while it's sitting there.

Not only will an emergency fund provide you much-needed financial help in a time of critical need, it will give you peace of mind throughout the year. It's a feeling of freedom, knowing that there's a cushion there in case you need it.

CHAPTER TWENTY

SET UP AN IRA

Before you pay your mortgage or buy groceries, you should pay yourself. I know it's hard, because there are so many other places your money is needed. Saving for later seems impossible when there are so many things pulling on you now.

That's why waiting until the end of the month to save what's left rarely works. If you want to save money, you've got to do first things first. Proverbs 3:9 talks about the principle of first fruits, a passage most pastors use to discuss the principle of tithing. But the idea of first fruits can also apply to your choices, schedule and personal finances.

J.D. Roth gives three reasons to pay yourself first:

- When you pay yourself first, you're mentally establishing saving as a priority. You're telling yourself that you are more important than the electric company or the landlord. Building savings is a powerful motivator — it's empowering.
- Paying yourself first encourages sound financial habits. Most people spend their money in the following order: bills, fun, saving. Unsurprisingly, there's usually little left over to put in the bank. But if you bump saving to the front — saving, bills, fun — you're able

to set the money aside before you rationalize reasons to spend it.

- By paying yourself first, you're building a cash buffer with real-world applications. Regular steady contributions are an excellent way to build a nest egg. You can use the money to deal with emergencies. You can use it to purchase a house. You can use it to save for retirement. Paying yourself first gives you freedom — it opens a world of opportunity.

An IRA (Individual Retirement Account) is a great way to save for retirement. In most cases, your money will grow quicker in an IRA than other forms of investing. If you've got an old 401(k) from an old job, you can roll this into a new or existing IRA.

There are two kinds of IRAs. Contributions to a traditional IRA are tax deductible, while contributions to a Roth IRA are not deductible. However, you'll pay taxes when you withdraw your money from a traditional IRA while you won't in a Roth. It's basically a question of paying taxes now or paying taxes later. You may have to get some advice on this based on your financial situation.

Once you put money into your IRA, you can buy stocks, CDs, or mutual funds. You choose your level of risk. Scottrade is an online broker, with trades costing $7 each. There's no minimum deposit requirement to open an IRA.

Sharebuilder is another great service, and you can make automatic investments that are as small as $1. I'd shoot a little higher than that, but it's a great way to get started.

You can also get a full-service broker or investment banker to set things up and manage them for you, though with a little homework, a discount broker like Scottrade or E-Trade will save you money.

If your association, denomination or church matches personal contributions made to an IRA (or some other form of retirement account), then be sure to take advantage of that offer. If you don't, you're turning down free money!

Remember, with retirement accounts, the earlier you start saving, the more money you will have when you retire.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

SET UP A 529 PLAN FOR YOUR KIDS

According to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, a 529 plan is "a tax-advantaged savings plan designed to encourage saving for future college costs." Legally known as "qualified tuition plans," they are sponsored by states, state agencies, or educational institutions. Earnings in 529 plans are not subject to federal income tax.

In other words, a 529 plan is a way to save for college. In fact, it's the best way to save for college.

It works much like an IRA, meaning the money can be invested and will grow over time. Money invested in a college savings plan can be used for all "qualified higher education expenses," including tuition, room and board, fees, and books. You control the deposits and withdrawals, not your child – so you know the money will be spent appropriately. If your child gets a scholarship or doesn't go to college, you can withdraw the money without a penalty (you will still pay taxes, though).

Another version of this plan is a pre-paid tuition program, which locks in current tuition rates and are often backed by a particular state.

Set up a free account at upromise.com and a percentage of your purchases can be automatically deposited in a qualifying 529 account. You simply register your credit cards on the site, and when you use them to make a purchase, you get "cash back" in your account.

There are different plans for each state, but you can join a plan from any state. Experts say Utah is a good bet because the expenses are low.

Here's a primer on 529 plans with great links from Clark Howard, a radio show host.

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO
HAVE A FUN FUND

Most people aren't fired up about saving money.

You know getting out of debt is important, and you're all for saving for retirement, but let's face it – it's hard to get motivated sometimes. That's why a healthy financial portfolio includes something fun.

You need a fun fund – a place you can save for something you really want.

Yes, you need to pay off those credit cards. Yes, it's smart to pay a little extra on the mortgage. Yes, that car loan is probably a drain. But if you're only pinching pennies to pay off debt, you're probably going to give up. A handful of people are highly-motivated to take every resource and pay off their house, but most people need some fun along the way. Even if it takes a while, open an online savings account or get a money jar and save for something fun.

It might be a pair of jeans or a nice dinner or a weekend away, but you need a fun goal. It doesn't cost you anything to open an online savings account (even if you've got one for your emergency fund) and automatically contribute a little bit of money each month.

You'd even be amazed at how much you can save in a change jar in your kitchen. One couple empties their change jar every December and uses the money to buy Christmas presents for each other. One family saved enough change to take a family vacation. One guy covered his poker night expenses (no word on if he went home empty handed or doubled his quarters).

The idea behind a fun fund is to keep money from becoming totally boring and all work. Reward yourself for making wise decisions. Do something fun from time to time – just don't do it with your credit card.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

GET A REALISTIC PICTURE OF WHERE YOU ARE

Years ago, I used to use paper, fold-up maps. If you're over the age of 15, you know what I'm talking about. You'd spend about ten minutes finding your location, and draw an imaginary line with your finger to your destination. Then you try to fold it back up, eventually cramming it into the glove compartment

If texting and driving is dangerous, trying to navigate with the assistance of a map the size of a billboard can't be better.

Now, I simply use my iPhone. I can type in a destination, and the built-in GPS finds my current location. I get a highlighted map or turn-by-turn directions.

But whether you're using an old-school map or your smart phone, it's hard to get to where you're going without first realizing where you are. You can't set effective goals, implement a practical plan, or accomplish much of anything without an honest assessment of your current situation.

In Good to Great, Jim Collins says that great companies are willing to confront the brutal facts. Leaders of these companies are willing to look at the truth, no matter how grim, because they know that an honest evaluation is necessary for effective planning.

The same thing is true in your personal finances.

You need to know exactly how much you have and how much you owe. You need to know interest rates and payoff dates. And you need to be honest with yourself about just how bad things really are.

Sugar coating things or pretending like debts are invisible isn't going to help. You've got to confront the brutal facts in your personal finances. You must see things as they are, not as you wish.

Start by making a list of all your assets, which is something of value that you own. Write down every bank account and list every balance. Write down the amount of money in retirement accounts and the current value of your paid-for vehicle.

Next, list all of your liabilities. An asset is something that you own, while a liability is something that you owe. If you owe $150,000 on your house, that's a liability.

Finally, write down the terms and condition of all your debts. You need to know how much you're going to pay for your house and when you'll make your final payment. You need to know the interest rate on your credit cards, and how long it will take to pay them off.

Making these three lists will help you assess your current situation. When you understand where you are, you can make a plan for going somewhere else.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR
INVEST IN STOCKS AND MUTUAL FUNDS

Did you know that the stock market has averaged a 10% annual return over the last 30 years? That's about 100 times what a traditional savings account might pay in interest. Yet many pastors and leaders are scared of the stock market or similar investment opportunities.

But once you learn a few basics and take steps in the right direction, investing in stocks and mutual funds are the best way to build wealth. It's easier to get started than you think, and you can automate your investments. You don't have to buy and sell every day – in fact, that's probably not a good idea. But it doesn't have to be over your head.

Here's a great tutorial from thestreet.com on the basics of stock investing. And a quick Google search will lead you to a wealth of information.

If you're new to stock investing, check out what's known as an index fund. These funds are designed to track the general market or a segment of the market and the holdings are diversified. For example, a technology index fund might consist of 25 leading technology companies. There are index funds that mirror the DOW or the NASDAQ.

Another way to invest is through mutual funds. These are managed funds, so you don't have to spend your time researching and purchasing individual companies. You can buy and sell mutual funds just like you do individual stocks, but a professional fund manager is handling the investments.

A discount broker like Scottrade is a great way to get started. And a service like Sharebuilder allows you to invest small amounts each month.

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE
TEACH YOUR CHILDREN TO BE GENEROUS

What good is it if a man impresses his entire church, but fails to pastor his own children? Just like a pastor must lead his family spiritually, he must teach his children about Biblical stewardship. If you want your children to make wise financial decisions when they are older, you must start when they are young.

Give your children an allowance and teach them to give. Give your elementary child ten dollars and show them how to save at least one dollar and give at least one dollar. Give your preschoolers ten coins and teach them the same principles.

Not only can an allowance teach them about generosity, you can teach them responsibility. Give them responsibilities around the house, and let them keep track of them using chorechart.com. I love this website – it's a simple tool that allows parents to set up jobs and points. Kids log on to the website and check off the completed tasks.

Make sure they have an opportunity to give at church, and teach them how to do it. If your children's environments don't receive an offering, consider adding that element. Student ministry services should also contain an offering element, and the youth pastor should intentionally teach on giving and explain the offering time. Giving shouldn't be reserved for the adult services; it's something that needs to happen in kids and student services.

When you teach your children to give, you'll lay a foundation for their adult life. The lessons they learn as a child will carry over to their own families. As coins become dollars and dollars become paychecks, generosity will remain important. You'll combat the sin of selfishness and the idol of money.

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

GET INTENTIONAL ABOUT THE OFFERING TIME

Skilled preachers who are passionate about teaching God's Word spend time praying, reading and studying their sermon.

Musicians listen to songs, practice and rehearse on a weekly basis so they can lead the congregation in a way that honors God.

Neither of these things should happen by accident. Since they are important parts of your church service every weekend, someone (or a group of people) spend a great deal of time in preparation.

A good church service requires planning. Since the sermon and the singing happen every week, you want them to be good.

But there's another element that happens in most church services – an element that's very important but often doesn't receive any advance thought.

I'm talking about the offering.

52 times a year, you have the opportunity to connect your people to God's heart for generosity and your church's mission in the community. But effectively connecting the dots requires planning. You MUST think about this in advance.

Too many churches tack this on. The worship leader mumbles some words after a song is complete and before you know it, ushers are sending buckets down the aisles. Or maybe the pastor moves into a brief explanation after the sermon, and all of a sudden, deacons are passing the plate.

Both of those scenarios are typical.

And both of those scenarios are bad.

Just like the preacher should pray, read and study – just like the musicians should be scheduled and rehearsed in advance – someone needs to plan what is going to be said and who is going to say it. You need to think about what's being said in your church service to set up the offering. You need to think about how you're going to prepare people's hearts for generosity. You need to think through what you are asking them to do.

A giving talk is a short explanation of how the offering works plus a call to action.
It's a 60-second or two-minute talk from a pastor, staff member or volunteer, that sets up the offering, connects the dots for participants, and gets everyone ready for what's coming next.

It's an intentional, planned moment of explanation in your church service. You need a PERSON to emphasize the offering this week, and they need to PLAN what they are going to say. We have an entire resource that will give you a step by step guide for executing a giving talk.

One of the greatest benefits of being a Giving Rocket member is receiving a written, done-for-you Giving Talk every week. Simply give it to a staff member or volunteer, and start being intentional with one of the most important aspects in your service.

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

HELP PEOPLE WITH SPENDING AND SAVING

I've heard a lot of sermons on money - good and bad, helpful and not helpful, accurate and completely wrong. In my opinion, here's what makes a sermon on money a good one.

1. BIBLICAL ACCURACY. This is true of all sermons, not just money ones. A sermon on money needs to be true to God's Word. The good news is that the Bible has a TON to say about money. Make sure you're teaching the whole counsel of God's Word, not cherry picking a verse to back up what you want to say.
2. HOPE. This is a big one, because God is a god of hope, and people don't feel that. They are bombarded with fearful messages from the world, and they need to know that God offers them hope. A lot of people know that they need to get out of debt and start living generously, but they don't feel like it's possible. A good sermon on money will teach people the truth, but offer them hope and help in the process.
3. HELP. We've got to stop beating people up about giving, and offer them practical help in other financial areas. People need to understand debt, savings, and spending, in addition to generosity. A lot of churches choose to spend 3-4 weeks on the subject of money, so they can unpack several different areas.
4. A NEXT STEP. The best money sermons have a practical next step that people can take. Maybe this is a small group or a one-time seminar; maybe it's one-on-one financial coaching with a trained leader. Maybe it's a weekend retreat for married couples to help them get their financial house in order.

Offering help and providing next steps are critical components to a sermon or a series on money. You're not using guilt as motivator or beating people up, you're speaking into their daily lives in a way that offers hope. When you help people, you earn trust.

Offer a two-hour financial seminar and teach people about compound interest, insurance, and savings accounts. People in your church and community are struggling with money, and they have questions. Let them know that this isn't a "give money to the church" seminar. Provide food and childcare – it's worth the investment! Joe Sangl's Financial Learning Experience is a great event that will yield lasting benefits to your church.

You can also provide one-on-one financial counseling to people on Sunday morning. Connecting people who have questions to those in your church who are making wise financial decisions can go a long way.

Find two or three people in your church who are willing to meet with people to help them develop a spending plan. This should be a regular, standing announcement in all of your communication pieces. Even people who don't utilize this service will be reassured that your church is offering help to those in need.

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT
HELP YOUR STAFF

As the senior pastor, you're the lead shepherd. You MUST love your team, care for their souls, and be present in their lives. Leadership is much more than writing job descriptions or emailing directions – you've got to get involved.

What's happening in the family? What's causing personal stress? How is the family doing spiritually? Are the kids struggling in school? Are there healthy relationships outside of church? Do you know what's really going on?

These are the kind of issues that good pastors and good leaders ask. And these are areas where your staff needs your help.

Good leadership involves helping your staff in the area of money. Pastors who do not lead their staff are like fathers who do not lead their own family. Too many times, we lead everyone else, but forget about those closest to us.

If your staff is struggling with money, they will struggle to do their job well. It's impossible to lead others from a place of emptiness. If a staff member (or their spouse) is overly-worried about paying the bills, avoiding collectors, paying taxes, paying for college, it WILL affect their ministry.
Helping people financially begins with fair compensation. In too many churches, staff members are underpaid. It's not your finance team's job to keep pastors humble by keeping them in debt or failing to provide competitive pay. While there are some profit-seeking ministers who use the church for financial gain, most leaders are in the ministry to serve people and spread the gospel. Here's two ways you can practically help your staff:

Provide health insurance benefits. As we learned in chapter nine, medical bills can be financially destructive to a family. As an employer, you can help shoulder the load and provide peace of mind. Build this into an employee compensation plan, and help your staff be financially responsible.

You can set up an IRA or a 401(k) and encourage your employees to make pre-tax contributions. If your church is part of a denomination, check with your area office and see what opportunities are available to you. You could also investigate SEP-IRA, which is designed for small businesses. The Department of Labor has a step-by-step guide for setting up a SEP IRA. Encourage employee participation by matching their contributions up to a certain amount.

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE
PREACH ON MONEY MORE THAN ONCE A YEAR

Many preachers fall to one extreme or the other when it comes to preaching on money. Either they avoid the subject out of fear of people leaving or offending the unchurched, or they harp on the subject with baseball bat words or prosperity theology.

But the wise pastor handles the Word of God with skill, and presents a balanced message on all sorts of Biblical subjects, including money.

You need to talk about money, because Jesus talks about money. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that our heart would follow our treasure. In fact, if you read the Gospels, you'll discover that Jesus had a great deal to say about money. This isn't an issue we should shy away from in church, because Jesus didn't shy away from it.

You need to talk about money, because people struggle with money. Married couples argue about money. Single mothers worry about money. There's a good chance that 90% of the people in your church have financial pressures. This isn't a theoretical issue for them…it's real life. When you talk about money in a helpful and Biblical way, you're meeting a practical need. It's better to talk about it on the front end than on the back end. Let's face it…you are going to talk to your church about financial issues. You can teach them about Biblical finances, or you can counsel them through bankruptcy. You can teach your church to generously fund the vision, or you can beg because you're behind budget again. Just like it's better for a church to teach what the Bible says about marriage and a pastor to model a Godly marriage than it is to counsel couples on the brink of divorce, it's better for a church to intentionally teach what God's word says about money and model good stewardship for the people in your church.

People are bombarded with worldly financial messages. You may think you're talking about it a lot, but if you do a four-week series on personal finances, most people will hear three of those messages. That's about 90 minutes of Biblical teaching on money. Stack that up against the thousands of commercial messages that a person hears every year.
Not only should you do at least one financial series each year, you should sprinkle messages on generosity throughout your teaching calendar. Don't think that preaching on something one time a year is enough.

In a series on marriage, devote at least one week to finances. After all, money is one of the biggest causes of marital conflict. If you're talking about faith, then talk about giving by faith. If you're teaching through a book of the Bible, you'll probably encounter a passage on giving or stewardship. Don't shy away from these topics…lean into them in a healthy way. Remember, giving isn't just a financial issue – it's a measure of where our heart is.

Preach a few focused messages on money, but you've got to talk about money throughout the year. The Complete Money Message System will show you how to preach, teach and grow giving throughout the year. It provides simple, plug and play solutions and includes several messages.

CHAPTER THIRTY

PEOPLE WILL GET MAD AND LEAVE THE CHURCH WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT MONEY.

Some people leave a church because you're not deep enough. Some think the music is too traditional, or too contemporary. People won't like the children's ministry, student ministry or groups ministry and decide that the church down the street is more suited for them. You might be too Calvinistic, simplistic, serious, funny, young, old, rich or poor. It's always been this way, and it's always going to be this way.

There are legitimate reasons people choose another church; but a lot of times, it's about personal preference.

This will happen when you talk about money, and you might as well get used to it.

For what it's worth, liars also get mad when you talk about lying. People having affairs are uncomfortable when you talk about infidelity. And stingy, cheap people don't like it when you preach on generosity.

That's not your primary concern. Whether you're talking about faith, sin, Jesus or money, you're responsible to preach the truth of God's Word. You are called to "rightly handle the Word of Truth," not picking and choosing from what people want to hear or what will get them in the door.

People are going to be offended when you call out their particular sin, but that's part of being a preacher. People might get mad and leave your church when you don't lead the way they want you to, but God's called you and gifted you. If you're honoring Him and walking in His steps, then you're being faithful to your calling and your character.

Sometimes, people are not offended by what you say but by how it's said. It's possible to talk about money in a Biblical, helpful, and challenging way. You just have to work on it. Don't be a jerk, and then blame it on your God-given personality. Don't offend people on purpose and then call them out for being consumer Christians.

Preach on money, and preach on it regularly. Be faithful to God's calling on your life.

CHAPTER THIRTY ONE

INSPIRE PEOPLE TO GIVE WITH STATS, SCRIPTURE & STORIES.

Every weekend, you have the opportunity to motivate your people to give. But it's time to abandon the tired, canned speech that you use every week. You can spice up this important moment in your service. You can motivate and inspire people to give, not just give them an opportunity.

Here are three tools you can use:

STATS: Where does a dollar go? How many guests have attended church so far this year? How many children are in a particular environment? How much help have you given your community? How many volunteer hours does it take to execute a weekend service? Stats are a great way to highlight ministry and connect the ministry of the church to the time of giving in the service.

STORIES: How has Jesus changed your life? How has your church helped a family? What marriage has been restored? What child has placed their faith in Christ? Who is going public with their faith in baptism? What lives are being changed? People who do not care about statistics often connect with a story.

SCRIPTURE: What does the Bible say about giving? What does God say about generosity? What's the difference between a tithe and an offering? What principles are mis-taught? Many people simply don't know what the Bible says about generosity and giving.

Every giving talk from Giving Rocket is based on this principle. We take a stat, story or Scripture reference and write a giving talk that you can use in your church. It's a done-for-you service for every Giving Rocket subscriber. Simply print it off, give it to a staff member or volunteer and intentionally motivate your people to participate in the offering.

CHAPTER THIRTY TWO

AUTOMATE THE IMPORTANT

A few years ago, my wife and I decided that we needed to do a better job of saving money for retirement. So we committed to save a little bit more each and every month. We were excited, passionate and even determined to do better. But you know what? We got to the end of the month, and somehow, we were out of money. Crazy how that works. Even though we wanted to save – even though we were determined to save – it just didn't happen.

So we decided to make it automatic. At the first of the month, right after we get paid, we set up an automatic payment from our checking account to our savings account. The deposit went in regardless of whatever else was happening. Saving was important to us so we decided to make it automatic. Along the way, another funny thing happened. We managed to still break even at the end of the month.

Simply stated, if something is important, we should do it first. For us, savings needed to be important, so we needed to do it first and we needed to make it automatic, removing feelings from the process.

Ramit Sethi writes:

> *Why do so many people believe that personal finance is only about willpower? The idea goes like this: "If I just try harder, I'll start saving more, pay off my debt, stop spending all that money, keep a budget, learn about investing, start investing, rebalance every year…" Unlikely. In fact, go ask your friends if they're taking full advantage of their employer's 401(k) match. The vast majority of people are not — even though it's literally free money. Their answer? "Yeah…I really should do that…"*

It's not about willpower. More than anything else, the psychology of automation is critical to successfully getting control of your finances.

When it comes to saving money, you need to make it automatic. Set up an automatic contribution to your online savings account, IRA or 529-plan. Obviously, the more you contribute, the better off you'll be, but if you have to start small, that's okay. The key is making it automatic.

Open an online savings account or a Sharebuilder account and begin making automatic contributions right away. If you've never saved anything before, start with as little as $10 a month. Make investing automatic so you don't have to remember or worry about it.

This applies to giving as well. Generosity is important to my family and me, so we don't want to forget the checkbook when we go to church or forget to visit the website to make a donation. Our monthly contributions to our church are automatic. Before we pay the government or the mortgage company, we want to worship God through giving.

Once you make the important automatic, it's time to teach your people to do the same, especially in the area of giving. You need to educate them how to put their contributions on autopilot. An intentional emphasis like this can have huge results in your church. And this isn't about getting more money – it's about doing more ministry and reaching more people with the Gospel.

Offering online giving, and emphasizing online giving are two different things. If your church can receive contributions online, you still need a strategic plan for moving your people toward this option. That's why we created the Automate the Important campaign – an intentional communication strategy and timeline for increasing automatic giving in your church. It includes graphics, slides and a step-by-step process you can run right now.

CHAPTER THIRTY THREE
GET A COACH

Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed. - Proverbs 15:22

Professional athletes are at the top of their respective games, yet they still rely on coaches to make them better. Tom Brady has a quarterback coach. LeBron James has a head coach. Olympic athletes have coaches.

What's true in sports is also true in the church world. If you want your church to be at the top of it's game, then you need a coach.

Mentors and coaching networks are helpful, especially in the area of church finances. When you rely on a mentor, you're admitting that you don't have all the answers.

Not long ago, we received this email from Will, one of our Giving Rocket clients.

> *I am benefiting greatly from all the info from Giving Rocket. A few years ago, I had been doing some research for some of my teaching series and began noticing how all successful golfers, tennis players, etc. had their own personal coaches. I thought, if Tiger Woods understands the importance of personal coaching then maybe it's something I should entertain.*

Though I had graduated from Bible college and even went on to get my Masters degree I had never received any coaching or training in the area ministry funding. It feels great to be able to log onto the Giving Rocket site and receive some instant coaching that I know will increase me and better equip me to positively impact the people I lead and the community I serve. Thank you Casey, Renee and the entire Giving Rocket Team for helping me to help others! You are making a difference.

Will understands something all great leaders understand…coaches make things better. You can become a Giving Rocket member and start increasing operational revenue in your church. Stop trying to figure it out on your own and get some coaching.

CHAPTER THIRTY FOUR
DEVELOP DONORS

Discipleship involves helping people take steps to follow Jesus. This includes helping them take steps financially. If you want to lead a financially healthy church, then you need an intentional strategy for turning tippers into givers and turning givers into tithers.

If you're like most pastors and church leaders, there's a part of this that sounds uncomfortable. Perhaps you've got questions about this whole thing because you don't want to treat people differently based on what they have or what they can do for your church.

That tension is a good thing!

It means that your motives are in the right place. It means that you do not want to take advantage of people and use them to fund your dreams. It means that you care about pastoring people, not just taking their money. Keeping your motives in check is important, and it's something you've got to continually address. Proverbs 4:23 says that we must guard our hearts. That's definitely true when it comes to developing people in your church that have the gift of giving.

You have three options when it comes to big givers.

1. IGNORE THEM. A lot of people in church leadership choose this position because they are afraid to treat people differently based on their financial position. After all, James 2 says don't show favoritism and describes a church setting where people with wealth are given better seats and more opportunities. When it comes to high capacity givers, this is an option, and it's one based on the right motivation.

Some pastors choose to not know what people give so that they don't treat people differently. While this is admirable, and certainly allowable, it may not be wise. We'll talk more about this in a minute.

2. USE PEOPLE. The flipside of ignoring people is to use them. People who choose to use high capacity givers only develop relationships with these people because of money. They are seen as a means to an end.

We don't think the Bible requires that you ignore high capacity givers, but it's better to ignore them than to use them. High capacity donors are people, not paper.

Using people to accomplish your own purpose is not a good thing. It's not honorable, no matter how much you justify it. Remember, your motives matter. Leverage without love is just abuse.

3. DEVELOP THEM. The third option you've got when it comes to high capacity givers is to develop them. This is where we land. Just like you'd develop someone with the gift of leadership, or help someone use their people skills, or create an opportunity for a volunteer that is good with children, you've got the pastoral opportunity to develop someone who has the capacity to give generously.

Developing people is about relationships. Your mission is to add value to their lives. It's an issue of discipleship – helping someone follow Jesus with their heart, soul, mind and strength.

Developing high capacity leaders is also a stewardship issue. As a leader, you've been entrusted with a group of people to pastor. You've been called to lead and shepherd a congregation, and developing people is certainly a big part of that. Developing people's spiritual gifts (including the gift of giving) is a part of the discipleship process. Engaging someone's talent, gifts or passions is part of spiritual leadership.

If you create a specific plan for people who need help with their marriage or follow up with new Christians, implementing an intentional strategy to develop high capacity givers is similar. Just like you'd create a specific path for someone who wanted to follow Jesus, get baptized, join a Bible study, or become a member, you should have a specific plan for developing high capacity donors.

Let's take a deeper look at high capacity givers in your church. Remember, these are people who need shepherding. When you understand a little more about what makes them tick, you'll be in a better position to pastor them.

1. HIGH CAPACITY GIVERS ARE OFTEN LONELY. Having money isn't the same as having friends, and some of the loneliest people in the world have a lot of money. Remember when you heard that "money can't buy love" or "money won't make you happy?" Well, that's true. Just because someone has a lot of responsibility doesn't mean they have a lot of relationships. As a pastor, you have the opportunity to be a friend, which is something that people desperately need.
2. HIGH CAPACITY GIVERS OFTEN FEEL USED FOR THEIR MONEY. Remember the story of the prodigal son? When he

received his inheritance and ran away, he was suddenly surrounded by a new group of "friends." But when the money ran out, his friends did too. People with money often feel used and appreciated solely because of the things they can do or buy. They probably feel used because they usually ARE used.

As a pastor, you have the opportunity to love someone for who they are - not what they have. You have the opportunity to communicate that they are worth something because of who they are in Christ, not because of what they have in the bank.

3. HIGH CAPACITY GIVERS DON'T TRUST PEOPLE EASILY. Because people with money often feel like people want to get to know them in order to get something, they are naturally suspicious. When they meet people, they wonder what they really want. They often put up walls and keep their heart guarded. This same lack of trust is extended to the church, which is why so many wealthy people are skeptical of organized religion. They have observed friends and family members after their money, and they have seen the church act the same way. Worse still, not trusting people easily leads to not trusting God.

Developing donors isn't a sin; in fact, it's a form of discipleship. It's often THE thing that helps churches go to the next level. That's why we created an entire resource – a complete step-by-step system for developing high capacity givers. The ENTIRE system along with all the customizable documents and forms is available right here.

CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE

UNCHURCHED PEOPLE UNDERSTAND IT TAKES MONEY TO RUN A CHURCH

We want to reach the unchurched, not steal sheep from other local churches, and unchurched people are tired of the church talking about money. Studies show that people think the church harps on money all the time, so we don't want to scare them.

That's a common excuse given by pastors for low giving in young churches. The problem is the same with most excuses…they just aren't true.

Unchurched people may not know Jesus, but they are not stupid. They understand that it takes money to run an organization. They know you can't write "Pay to the Order of Faith" on a check. Unchurched people appreciate honesty, whether you are talking about faith, prayer or money.

It's time to stop using evangelism as an excuse not to teach people what the Bible says…about any subject. You don't have to dance around the issue out of fear of alienating people who are new to your church.

You can talk about money in a way that's sensitive to guests and new people. It may take skill, counsel and wisdom on your part, but it can be done.

Some churches encourage first time guests that not to participate in the offering, telling everyone that the offering time is for members and regular attenders. This is a big mistake. For one thing, it's not really honest...you do want new people to give. If you put some thought into it, you can come up with a way to talk about the offering that challenges all people to participate and doesn't alienate the unchurched.

CHAPTER THIRTY SIX

UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE GIVE

Maybe you've heard someone say, "People don't give to need; they give to vision." Well, that's not entirely true. The fact of the matter is that people give for a variety of reasons. Just like people have different personality types, they have different motivating factors for jumping in with generosity. Everybody in your church won't be motivated by the same thing.

Let's talk about the five reasons that people make a donation to your church.

REASON #1 THEY SEE A NEED

The bottom line is that most people will not give without being asked. You need to present the need, offer the opportunity, and encourage people to step up. Some people do give to need – to the needs of the student ministry, or facility repair, or a much-needed staff position. You can over-communicate needs to your congregation, but it's also a mistake to keep all needs out of the public eye. Often, when you present a need, people in the church will step up to meet it.

You also need to connect the dots for them and let them know where the money goes. Tell the story of what happens to a dollar once they give it.

REASON #2 THEY BELIEVE IN THE VISION

People do want to give to be a part of something that's bigger than themselves. Let's face it – keeping the staff employed, the mortgage current and the light bill paid in full isn't that inspiring. But being a part of a church that's making an eternal difference is a mission that will inspire people.

Stories and stats do an incredible job of keeping the vision before your people. Tell stories of life change and share numbers with your congregation. Remind them that their financial contributions make real ministry happen.

REASON #3 THEY HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE

People give because they have a relationship with someone. This may be the pastor, another staff member, or a volunteer, but relationships in the church are VERY powerful. We've seen it over and over again – people come to church and get connected to a small group or a volunteer team. Once they have relationships, they "buy into the church" on a much deeper level.

One of the most helpful things you and your staff team can do to increase the generosity levels of people in the church is just get to know them. Don't manipulate them or invite them to small groups where you will ask them for money – truly get to know them and pastor them. Connect new people to groups and teams in your church and let relationships develop.

REASON #4 THEY ARE TAUGHT HOW TO DO IT

Many people don't give because they don't know how. This doesn't sound true to you, but you're familiar with how the church works. Many people, especially those new to the church in general or your church in particular, may not fully understand how giving works. You've got to educate them! You need to teach them why you pass buckets and why you provide envelopes (if you do those things…which you should!). You need to educate them that they can give online and set up recurring contributions. They need to understand that they will get a giving statement for tax purposes.

REASON #5
THEY WANT TO OBEY GOD'S WORD

In addition to stats and stories, you must teach people what the Scripture says about giving. Jesus had a LOT to say on this subject. You must to commit to teach your people about Biblical stewardship and generosity.

Teach people that the Apostle Paul taught that people should give intentionally, generously and in response to God's goodness. Teach people how the Old Testament command to tithe fits within the New Testament framework of stewardship. Help people understand what Proverbs says about money. Weave this teaching into your sermons and preach entire sermons on the subject.

Once you identify these reasons, then you can create intentional offering talks built around them. An offering talk is a short talk that happens right before the offering is received in your church service. It's a "connect-the-dots" moment, and it's one of the most important elements in your service. Too many churches tack on the offering or rush through the setup.

CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN
GIVING IS A SPIRITUAL DECISION

It's probably a big deal in your church when someone makes a decision to follow Christ at your church. The Bible says that the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner repents and turns to Jesus. You may also celebrate when someone is baptized. That's a meaningful symbolic act that's a huge cause for celebration.

But it's time to start celebrating another decision - the decision that someone makes to trust God and make a financial contribution to your church. With so much skepticism about the church these days, here's someone who overcame those concerns to trust your church with their money. Here's a person who, on their own, decided to part ways with their hard-earned money and just give it away. That's a big decision.

And it was a spiritual decision. Jesus said that a person's money was connected to their heart, so when this individual or family made that donation to your church, that was a sign of their heart beating more in step with Jesus.

Generosity is a spiritual decision, not just a financial. And in the church, we need to celebrate those spiritual decisions.

That's why you should send hand-written, personalized thank you notes when someone makes a contribution to your church. That's why you should appreciate (and update) those who support the ministry on a regular basis. It's not showing favoritism – it's making disciples. It's not manipulating people – it's helping them follow Jesus with their whole heart. It's not about funding your operation – it's about leading and helping people.

CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT

DO NOT DELEGATE ULTIMATE FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

It happens in the first few chapters of the Bible.

Adam made a decision and tried to blame Eve. "This woman you gave me," he said. Then it was Eve's turn, who promptly blamed the serpent. And the blame game began.

It's time to stop blaming the staff, deacons, finance team or previous leadership for the financial condition of your church. Whether it happened because of your choice or on your watch, you're the God-ordained leader of your church, and the financial condition of the flock is your responsibility.

Pastor…you need to know the numbers. You need to know how much money is in the bank. You need to know how much you owe on your building. You need to know how a first-week-of-the-month offering differs from a last-week-of-the month offering. You need to know what percentage of your budget is spent on staff expenses or facility costs.

Proverbs 27:33 says, "Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds." A good pastor is a shepherd-leader who knows what's happening in the church.

You also need to understand how things work. Ask someone to teach you the basics of organizational cash flow. Familiarize yourself with how bills are paid. Seek knowledge and understanding, because that's what good leaders do.

Yes, you can rely on other people and let others use their gifts. Your church might be blessed to have an Executive Pastor, finance secretary or finance team who takes care of the finances of your church. Your main responsibilities might be teaching and leading, but that doesn't mean you should check out of this important area. Delegating is a good thing, but dumping the responsibility and accountability on other people because you're not willing to lead is a bad thing.

As the lead pastor, not only do you need to know the numbers, you need to recognize your position of leadership and take responsibility for the financial condition of the church that God has called you to lead. It's time to put an end to the blame game.

If you blame someone else (or the people in your church) for the current financial situation, you'll become bitter. Blame leads to bitterness, and you don't want to become bitter towards your staff, volunteers or church. You want to lead with integrity and act with responsibility.

CHAPTER THIRTY NINE
BE INTENTIONAL

The underlying message of this book is that as a pastor, you must be intentional. If you want to accomplish something, you've got to make a conscious decision followed by implementing a specific plan.

Having a healthy marriage, raising kids that love Jesus, leading a church, saving for retirement and getting out of debt will NOT happen on their own. You're not going to get to where you are going by accident. You must be purposeful and intentional.

You've got to do more than make a decision or try harder. Hope and prayer are great, but combine those with hard work and you'll see better results. God has given you a brain as well as the Holy Spirit to guide you. You must execute a specific system that will get you where you want to go. Let me ask you some questions:

- Do you have a plan for getting out of debt?
- Are you being intentional with the one to two minutes that set up the offering in your church service?
- Are you saving for a family vacation?
- Are you making automatic contributions to an online savings account or IRA?
- Have you created a monthly spending plan?
- Do you have regular conversations with your spouse about the family finances?
- Are you seeking out wise financial counselors?

Do you see the kind of questions we're asking? Do you see the level of intentionality that's required in order to be financially free and healthy? Hope and hard work are not enough – you've got to think, plan and execute a real strategy.

It's true for your church and it's true for your family – you've got to lead on purpose.