

**Series: “How to be rich ... Take 2”**  
**Sermon 2: Our money and our past**  
**August 18, 2019**

**Key Texts:** Proverbs 22.7; Proverbs 25.28; Proverbs 21.5

**Key Words:** Debt, Desire, Entitlement, Bigger, Better, Taught, Slave, Self-control, Sacrifice, Planning, Dave Ramsey

**Summary:** Decisions we made in the past limit our options in the present - with respect to our money, too. Too often, our choices led to the prison of debt. What can we do to start digging our way out?

Okay, let's have a show of hands. How many of you guys have ever - ever - done stupid stuff with your money? Come on! Keep them up. Now look around you. If you see someone near you without their hand up, remind them that we did a sermon on lying a couple months ago.

Because it's kind of who we are and what we do, isn't it?

- How about your daily Salted Caramel Mocha Frappuccino, Venti of course?
- Or, ever buy a bunch of extra lives in Angry Birds, Candy Crush, or whatever?
- Or, how many of you guys are still paying for a gym membership that you haven't used since January?
- Or, maybe you are into lottery tickets, or maybe even an occasional excursion to Belterra?
- Or, how about timeshares, or extended warranties.
- Or maybe it's not just Netflix, but also Amazon Prime Video, plus Hulu, plus HBO Now, plus cable.
- Or maybe you already have 40 or 50 pairs of shoes ... and you are still on the hunt for more.
- Or, maybe there are clothes in your closet with the tags still on them.

Ever done stupid stuff with your money?

- Have you ever wondered how comfortable you'd be if you had cut your spending on golf, or fishing, or video games, or clothes, or booze, or eating out ... by maybe half?
- Or, have you ever had so much credit card debt that you could barely keep up with just the interest?
- Or, maybe you were suckered into an investment that just “couldn't miss”?

My preaching partner, Randy, kicked off a short little series on “How to be rich ... God’s way” last week - how to handle our money in a way that honors our God.

- Last week Randy kicked it off by identifying the single most important principle for a Jesus follower: Learn how to be content. It’s basic, it has to be learned, and it is learnable. It’s about loving what we have instead of loving what we don’t have. And if we work on that piece, it will make life a whole lot easier and more peaceful.
- Next week is about your money and your future, how to prepare for the future in a God-honoring way.
- In two weeks: generosity. That is huge, for us Jesus followers. God has blessed us. And when you are blessed by God, he expects you to be generous. ... And it makes life a whole lot richer.
- But today is about your money and your past. Because here’s the deal: Decisions you made in your past shape the choices you can make today. It’s that way in all of life. And it’s huge when it comes to our money. So, if we’ve made poor decisions in the past - with respect to our money - what can we do about it today?

Now, I suspect some of you are going to feel like I’m picking on you this morning. I’m really not. I’ve told you before, I kind of preach to myself and let you listen in. This stuff just kind of hits most all of us. Now, I know some of you guys aren’t Jesus followers yet. And if you’re not, some of this will probably sound kind of weird. You don’t have to try to honor God with your money, although I suspect these ideas will work for you too. But if you are a Jesus follower, you need to lean in. The Bible talks a whole lot about our money. Because how we manage our money is one of the most visible ways we either honor or dishonor our God every day. ... So here goes. Our money and our past. Let’s start by identifying some of the factors that have driven our decisions about how to manage our money. Four big ones.

#1: Desire. We just ... want stuff. We crave stuff. We love stuff. 1989, before some of you were born, there was British rock band named “Queen.” Some of their music is still around: “Bohemian Rhapsody,” “We Are the Champions,” “We Will Rock You,” “Another One Bites the Dust.” How about this one: “I want it all, I want it all, I want it all, and I want it now.” That’s us, isn’t it? And the marketing gurus take it from there and convince us that it’s possible: we can have it all, and we can have it now ... with no money down and no interest for 6 months! How cool is that?! You see, their goal is to keep us from asking, “How much?” They want us to focus on how little money it will cost

you now and how little the payments can be. Because we have this intense desire ... for stuff. And their job is to help us sate that desire ... now.

#2: Entitlement. It's amazing how much our sense of "entitlement" drives how we manage our money. We convince ourselves that we deserve what everybody else has. He's not better than me! I've worked harder than him! If he has one, I deserve one too! This is a big one for our kids. Too often our kids don't want to start at the bottom. They want to start where they left off when they left home. They deserve a house like mom and dad's, right? A car like theirs, vacations like theirs. It probably took mom and dad a lifetime to get to where they are now, but junior believes that is the entry point to adulthood. And culture says, "You're right. You deserve it. And you can have it...now!" ... at a price.

Desires, Entitlement ... #3: Bigger, better, newer. ... Bigger, better, newer.

- How many of you traded in your iPhone 8 for an iPhone 6? No, we want the 10! Bigger, better, newer.
- How many of you have calculated just how much you can afford, and then you go car shopping? And you discover for just a few dollars more, you can have bigger, better, newer, faster, techier.
- I read a review on what some call the best TV on the market today—an LG C8—OLED. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of the review it reads, "Sure, the less expensive LG B8 series is a highly compelling choice as well—who doesn't like to save money? But for a small premium, the C8 offers an irresistible blend of the best picture quality we've tested to date, sleek design, superior processing, choice in screen size and availability." It goes on to say, "If you find yourself the soon-to-be-proud owner of a brand-new LG C8 OLED TV, call a friend or 5 over before unboxing the TV..." Show it off, right?! It's all about bigger, better, newer, right?! In fact, if you check Amazon right now, you can get the LG OLED C9, 77 inch screen, with Alexa built in, for only \$6 grand! Just \$6 grand! And free delivery!

Desires, Entitlement, Bigger - better - newer ... Here's the last one: Taught. What we've been taught ... usually by our parents, sometimes by others we listen to. Randy has a son-in-law who told his daughter before they got married: "Debt is just the way life is." That's what he believed, because that's all he knew. That's how he was raised. I'm afraid that's one of my gifts to my children, I'm sorry to say. We pass our sins on to our kids way too often, don't we? Craig Groeschel identifies 3 kinds of people: The haves, the have nots, and the "I-haven't-paid-for-what-I've-gots ... yet." These are the pretenders who suffer from "Duck Syndrome." It appears that we are just gliding along,

but beneath the surface we are frantically kicking like mad! Too often that's what we teach our kids. They watch us and think that's the way it is supposed to be.

Desires—what we want; Entitlement—what we think we deserve; Bigger, Better, newer - don't fall behind!; How we're Taught - what we learn from those we watch. Pretty tricky, huh? Did you catch it? That all adds up to "debt." The factors that drive our money management lead us into debt - sometimes boatloads of it. Been there? Done that? I have. And for a whole lot of us, the choices we made in the past seriously limit our options in the present.

Well, let me tell you something you already know. But you might not know that it probably originated with a guy named Solomon, who was once called the wisest man in the world. Solomon said, "The borrower is the servant (or the slave) of the lender." (Proverbs 22.7) The one in debt, the one doing the owing is a slave to the one he owes. And we really are! One guy in our history said, "Give me liberty, or give me death." Another guy brought it up to date. He said, "Forget liberty, give me debt." Now, do you think that is a mite exaggerated? It's not!

- "We'd love to start a family. But we just bought a new car, and we can't afford a kid right now." The bank owns my decisions, right?
- "We'd love to give more, we'd love to be generous. But we can barely pay the interest on our credit cards." Because I am a slave, to someone else, right?
- "I hate my job, I hate going to work every day. But I've got bills to pay and I can't afford to pass up on overtime." I'm stuck.
- "We know our kids just got smacked down with a medical bill, and we'd love to help them out. But between the house payment and the 2<sup>nd</sup> mortgage , we don't have any margin."

Because that's what we do, right? We live right to the edge of our margin ... and sometimes a little beyond. As much house, as much car, as many toys as we can afford, and when we want just a little more, we charge it. And there's no margin for an emergency, for generosity, or for God ... Let me share with you 4 stats. It's hard to nail down these numbers, but these seem to be close.

- According to the Federal Reserve, the average American household has \$137,063 debt, while the median household income is \$59,039. So, the average American household owes almost 2 ½ times their annual income! And some of you guys only wish you had so little debt.
- For those who carry credit card balances—you know, the kind of guys who don't pay it off every month—the average credit card debt is \$14,517.

Other studies place the number higher still. Do you realize that if you make just the minimum payments, at about 18% interest - pretty normal for credit cards - it would take you 40 years to pay it off that 14 grand, and it would cost you over \$104,000 dollars?

- Here's another stat. The average 21-year-old has \$12,000 of debt! By the time they are 28 their average debt is \$78,000! Most marry during that time, doubling the debt on that family. No wonder so many marriages struggle getting started.
- One more: The Wall Street Journal reports 70% of American households live paycheck to paycheck—they are just one missed paycheck from disaster. That's probably where most of us are. If you lose your job, or get laid off, or get fired, or if you are on commission and have a bad month, you can't make the next house payment.

That's normal. Normal is debt. Normal is as much car payment as you can afford, as much house payment as you can afford, credit card payments, student loan payments. Normal is fighting over finances, laying awake worrying, acid reflux and headaches all driven by our debt.

So ... that's a little bleak! What's next? You see, a diagnosis without an action plan just increases the stress, right? "Yep, it's cancer." "So, what do I do?!" "That's not my job. I just diagnose the problem, I don't help you fix it." The problem is, choices we made in the past have severely impacted our choices in the present. So, what do we do now? Can it be fixed? ... Probably. Will the fix hurt? ... Undoubtedly. Will it be worth it? ... Absolutely.

I mentioned Craig Groeschel earlier. He is a great pastor and teacher out in Oklahoma. He identifies 3 values that are necessary to dig out of the mess we've made. #1: Self-control. That's hard for us, brutally hard! Here's Solomon again: "Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control." (Proverbs 25.28) You see, our problem is not that we have too little money. With very few exceptions, and you probably aren't one of them, our problem is not having too little money; our problem is really with too little contentment, and too little self-control. Money is ... neutral, You are the one who convinces yourself that it's not enough, that you need more stuff. That's why we hammered on our need to learn to be content, last week.

- We think, "If I had more money, I wouldn't have to work so hard!" No, that's not it. The truth is, people who make more work more.
- We think, "If I had more money, I would be more generous!" No. The truth is, people who have more give less ... percentage-wise.

- We think, “If I had more money, I wouldn’t be in debt.” No. The truth is, those who make more borrow more.

Because ... because ... money is a magnifier. Money makes you more of what you already are. It just reveals ... our workaholism, our stinginess, our lack of self-control. The problem isn't money; the problem is our lack of contentment, and our lack of self-control. By the way, did you know that “self-control” is one of the gifts of God’s Holy Spirit. It's hard, without his help. With his help, it is doable.

Value #2: Sacrifice. This one is even harder for us! Here's what it means: Learn to give up what you love, for something you love more. Let me say that again: Learn to give up what you love, for something you love more. Boy, living that out would transform lives!

- That may mean driving your car a little longer, so you can pay more cash on your next car.
- That may mean eating out a little less, or buying fewer shoes, or playing a little less golf, so you can be a little more God-honoring generous.
- That may mean spending a little less on me time, so you can spend a little more on family time, or God time.

Self control, sacrifice ... Value #3: Planning. Planning. You won't manage God's money well by accident. Here's Solomon again. Solomon says, “The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.” (Proverbs 21.5) You see, you can get into debt with no planning at all; in fact it's really easy. But you won't get out of debt without some serious planning. It's a whole lot easier to get in debt, than to get out. And it will take some planning.

Guys, I wish I had more time this morning. This stuff is so important. I'd love to be able to lay out some practical “to dos” for you, but I don't have the time. What I can do is point you to some powerfully good helps.

- Our Wednesday Growth classes start this Wednesday, 6:30. One of those classes will be Financial Peace, led by Ricky Spaulding. Ricky is a serious Jesus follower, an accountant, and a really sharp guy. He'll take you through some of the best stuff there is on getting out of debt, in detail. You'll get right into the weeds. You'll take a brutally honest look at where you are financially. You'll start identifying and fixing some of your bad habits. You may have to cut up some credit cards. You'll learn about the “Debt Snowball” ... it works. If you are getting crushed, financially, this class will help you.

- And if you can't take the class, go get this book and read it: Dave Ramsey, The Total Money Makeover. If you read it, and try to live out some of the big ideas in it, you'll start finding some financial peace.
- And if you can't do either of those, and you need some help, come and talk to one of our staff, or one of our elders, and we'll try to point you to someone who can help you. Don't just think about what you could do, or should do, let's get something done. ... ...

Now, one more thing: Most of the debt that “enslaves” us is because choices we made in the past. But sometimes, debt really isn’t our choice. Sometimes life kicks us in the teeth. Medical debt can be like that.

We’re going to have an opportunity to do something both God-honoring and flat out incredible. We talked about it last week. By partnering with RIP Medical Debt we’re going to have the opportunity to eliminate the medical debt of hundreds of people in Franklin County, Shelby County, Henry County, Woodford County, Scott County, Owen County, Anderson County, Bourbon County, Harrison County, and parts of Fayette County. In fact, every dollar we give will pay off \$100 in qualified medical debt. It is unbelievable! I’ve asked Jon, our Executive Pastor, to come up here and kind of explain how it works. ... ...