

THE STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS TO HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER STEWARD

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Ten Financial Tips that Saved Me from Bankruptcy

By Sarah Kelly

A few months after we said “I do,” my husband and I found ourselves staring at the possibility of financial collapse. We had a mortgage on our new home and an investment home in another state rented through a realtor. Within months, the tenants had caused severe structural damage and stolen most of the appliances. We were devastated by this loss on top of our other debts.

Nearly fifteen years later, we had paid off thousands of dollars in debt—including our 30-year mortgage. We avoided bankruptcy. We rebuilt. How did we do it? Here are ten stewardship principles that helped save us from financial ruin and led us to lasting freedom.



PRAYER

Desperate for relief, I considered a debt-reduction company but realized it could damage our credit even further. In our lowest moment, I prayed, “Lord, help us.” Instead of instant provision, God gave direction—leading me to stewardship mentors who taught me biblical and practical financial principles that I began applying in our home.

CREATE A BUDGET

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28, NIV).

The Bible emphasizes planning before building, and that principle applies

**STEWARDSHIP IS REVOLUTIONARY GENEROSITY. IT INVOLVES THE 7 T’S:
TIME, TEMPLE, TALENT, TREASURE, TRUST IN GOD, THEOLOGY, AND TESTIMONY.**

directly to finances. A budget is simply a written plan that ensures your spending aligns with your income, values, and responsibilities. Without a plan, money tends to disappear unnoticed.

Start by reviewing your spending for at least one month. Examine receipts and bank or credit card statements. Identify fixed expenses such as housing, utilities, insurance, and loan payments. Then list variable expenses like groceries, dining out, clothing, and entertainment. Group categories so you can clearly see patterns.



Next, list all sources of income and compare the totals. If expenses exceed income, adjustments must be made. Include debt payments in your plan and intentionally work toward eliminating them. If you are married, build the budget together. Open communication about money reduces tension and strengthens unity.

CONTROL EXPENSES

When expenses are higher than income, you either increase income or reduce expenses. While increasing income may take time, reducing expenses often brings immediate relief.

Rethink your spending habits. Many purchases are emotional or impulsive rather than necessary. Making a shopping list and sticking to it can significantly reduce grocery costs. The same discipline applies to clothing and online purchases. What begins as a simple errand can quickly become unnecessary spending.

Consider practical adjustments: eat out less frequently, choose modest vacations, adjust the thermostat slightly to reduce utility costs, and review subscriptions or service plans for savings. Even small reductions add up over time.

Wise expense control is not about deprivation; it is about intentional stewardship—aligning your spending with your priorities and freeing resources for what truly matters.

SAVE

One of the most transformative habits we developed was treating savings as a required expense. Instead of

Check out
this video
about
treasure:



saving what was left over, we saved first. Begin with a starter emergency fund to cover minor unexpected expenses. Then gradually build toward a larger reserve that can cover several months of living expenses. This cushion prevents emergencies from turning into financial crises. Savings provide peace of mind and flexibility. They protect you from relying on credit when the unexpected occurs.

CONTROL CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are convenient but can quietly become destructive. Interest charges compound quickly and prolong debt for years. If you use credit cards, commit to paying the balance in full each month. If that is not possible, consider limiting or pausing their use until you regain control. Discipline in this area prevents financial bondage and protects long-term stability.



CREATE A STRATEGY TO STICK WITH YOUR BUDGET

A budget works only if it is followed. Develop habits that reinforce your plan. Before making a purchase, ask yourself, "Is this a want or a need?" That simple pause often prevents unnecessary spending.

Some individuals create accountability systems—such as reviewing purchases weekly, setting spending limits, or using cash envelopes for certain categories. Others use creative strategies like freezing credit cards in water to create a delay before impulse purchases. Find methods that match your personality and circumstances. Consistency—not perfection—is the goal. Small, disciplined decisions made daily produce lasting changes.

WATCH YOUR DEBT-TO-INCOME RATIO

Just because you qualify for a loan does not mean you should accept it. Lenders may approve amounts that strain your finances. A helpful guideline is to keep total debt payments—including mortgage, vehicle loans, and credit cards—below 30% of your gross monthly income. Staying within this range preserves flexibility for savings, giving, and future opportunities. Before committing to new debt, calculate how it will affect your budget. Financial freedom often comes not from earning more but from owing less.

SET GOALS

Clear financial goals give direction to your budget and motivation to stay disciplined. Prayerfully plan for intentional



giving, vacations, and becoming debt-free. Build emergency savings, invest in education, maintain appropriate insurance coverage, prepare essential estate documents, and contribute consistently toward retirement. Thoughtful, written goals transform financial management from survival into purposeful stewardship and long-term stability.

NEVER STOP SHARING

During our financial rebuilding, we learned that generosity does not begin after debt is gone—it is part of the journey. Giving shifts our perspective from scarcity to trust.

Paradoxically, giving during challenging seasons strengthened our faith and discipline. Financial freedom is not solely about accumulating wealth; it is about using resources to bless others.



DON'T FORGET GOD

Above all, remain faithful to God in every financial decision. Scripture reminds us:

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it” (Malachi 3:10, NIV).

God did not miraculously erase our debt overnight. Instead, He guided us step by step, teaching discipline, patience, and trust. The journey reshaped our habits and deepened our faith.

Financial freedom is not merely about numbers—it is about stewardship, obedience, and confidence in God’s provision. When we align our finances with biblical principles, we position ourselves not only for stability but for lasting peace.

The same principles that transformed our situation can transform yours. Start where you are. Build slowly. Stay disciplined. Trust God. Over time, what once seemed impossible can become a testimony of His faithfulness.



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