

How can I handle my money problems?

There are several practical things that you can do to stay out of financial trouble or to get out of the trouble you are in.

1. Matt. 6:30-34, **Turn to God for help.** "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." It is the Lord that gives you power to get wealth. Most people in financial trouble lay out of church on Sunday and Wednesday night because they are working, depressed or tired. You court financial disaster when you do that. Get back in your Bible, on your knees and in your pew.
2. Rom. 13:8, "Owe no man any thing." **Stay away from debt.** Debt is a killer, and most people can't handle it responsibly. It's easy to borrow and hard to pay back, particularly credit cards. If you have to borrow to stay afloat, you are in bad trouble already.
3. 1 Tim. 6:6, **Live within your means.** "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." An unbelievable amount of money is thrown away at restaurants and convenience stores. One coke and a bag of chips each day will cost you over \$40.00 in one month. One taco and a cup of coffee on the way to work each day will run you over \$45.00 a month. Two packs of cigarettes a day will run you \$150.00 a month. A trip to McDonald's or Taco Bell with the family once or twice a week will run you between \$60 and \$120.00 a month. We're talking nearly enough money to pay the rent here. Get rid of that junk and stick with the good stuff. It's much cheaper and much better for you, too.
4. Prov. 21:17, **Cut out the fat.** "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man." You only bring in so much money each month and you have to pay all your bills and live off the rest. In addition, you have to have a little set aside for car repairs, unforeseen problems and taxes. If you spend some of that hard earned money that was for bills and food on something that you don't need, you are going to come up short at the end of the month. Just look at all the excess that you spend on pleasure: movies, cable TV, fancy cars, sporting goods, club fees, knick-knacks, you name it. You wouldn't need all of that junk if you weren't so depressed about your finances. That stuff doesn't make you happy, anyway.
 1. Eph. 4:28, **Don't steal from your employer.** "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good." Sometimes you might get the idea that your boss owes you a little more than you're being paid. So, you just help yourself to some of his cash, tools, supplies, or whatever. Cut it out. God won't bless that. You put in an honest day, working all the hours for which you are being paid, and God will bless that.
 1. Prov. 14:23, **Quit talking about it and just fix the problem.** "In all labour there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." There are two systems

that will help you get a handle on the problem and fix it, if you have the character and discipline to do these two things.

- a. **Do a budget.** The best way to do this is to estimate what you think it costs you to pay your bills, groceries, gas, sundries, and so forth. Estimate everything. Then for two months, write down everything you actually spend each day, including a single candy bar or whatever. I mean everything! Then compare the actual expenses with what you estimated and you will be shocked. Your spending habits are "nickel-and-diming" you to death. You probably spend \$200.00 to \$500.00 more each month than you think you do.

Then from the actual expenses, come up with a real budget. Cut out all the fat and discipline yourself not to cheat. Quit buying small, prepackaged food, for instance. Buy in quantity. It takes more work to prepare a meal than go to a restaurant, but you can't afford to eat out all the time. So, change your habits. Check yourself at the end of each month to be sure you are staying within the budget.

- b. **Use the "three envelope" method.** This method keeps you from spending up your paycheck before you receive the next check. Most people have bigger bills to pay out of one check than they do out of the other. So, they usually end up short on the one that has the biggest bills coming out of it. Here's what you do.
 - Mark one envelope **Tithe/Offering**. Take at least 10% of your paycheck and put it in this envelope. Some people hate the word "tithe" for Christians. But whatever your preference, you'll never make it hoarding all of the money for yourself (Prov. 11:24-25, 2 Cor. 9:6-7). I don't care how you skin it; people don't start working out of their financial troubles until they give God his money. 10% is what Abraham gave God before the law (Gen. 14), and you should do at least that much. The first opportunity you have, give to the Lord through your local church.
 - Mark the second envelope **Bills**. Look at your bills and your budget and put everything that you are going to spend on bills and necessities out of each paycheck in this envelope. You should withdraw out of this envelope to pay everything that's coming due before the next paycheck. Don't wait for the "cutoff" notice. That's past due. It would help to make a little ledger that shows when the money is due and how much is due, and mark it paid as you pay it. That way, you won't lose track of your money.

You will undoubtedly need some of the money from the paycheck where the bills are low to help cover your bills from the other

paycheck where the bills are high. So, keep the extra money in here. Don't touch the money in this envelope for anything other than the bills and necessities that are to be paid out of it. If you do, you are going to come up short.

- Mark the last envelope **Mad Money**. Everybody likes a little of this. If you truly have anything left over after your tithe and your necessities, put it in this envelope. You can use this money for whatever. However, a wise man or woman would realize that sometimes mad money has to be used for unexpected repairs. Therefore, he or she won't go through all of this money at once; save a little.

2. Prov. 15:22, **Get some credit counseling.** "Without counsel purposes are disappointed." You might already be in debt over your head. If so, there are a number of consumer credit counselors that can help you consolidate your debt and lower your payments. That could help you immensely.

