

FAMILY FINANCES AND STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

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Stewardship requires that we place our personal spiritual and financial management in order. An orderly spiritual life and spiritual management of our God-given assets assure that we will have the confidence and experience to manage God's programs in the manner prescribed by Jesus, the Son of God.

Cheryl Broussard, who presented a workshop at Downs, is CEO of Cheryl Broussard and Co., Inc., an Oakland-based financial and small business consulting firm with extensive experiences with investment houses. In the workshop, Ms. Broussard gave us a plan for financial security. Financial security, in turn, provides a basis for spiritual security.

An initial financial program requires goal setting. Some suggested goals are as follows: Get out of debt goals; educational goals; lifestyle goals; saving and investment goals; and starting business goals. She recommends that, as our first step, we should calculate our net worth as follows:

- Take a sheet of paper and place a line down the middle of the paper.
- On one side of the divided paper, write down all of your debts and calculate the total.
- On the opposite side of the paper, write down all your assets and calculate the total.
- A positive net worth is the goal.

If your debts are greater than your assets, you have a negative net worth. To correct a negative net worth, you should develop a plan to pay off your debts over a designated period of time (for example, one year). It also requires that you refrain from creating any additional debt during this period of time. Credit cards should be locked up or cut up.

Develop a saving and investments plan to increase your positive net worth. Many advisors recommend that you save ten percent of your earnings each month. Place enough funds in a liquid account (saving account earning interest or certificate of deposit). You should have enough liquid assets to sustain you for six months to a year to cover such emergencies as illness or loss of job. This amount should include all monthly payments, recreation, food, clothes, housing, education, etc. for this period of time.

After saving an emergency fund, you should make investments in a home, mutual funds, stocks and bonds, or other real estate investment, or start a business. There are many tax benefits in owning your own business.

One should develop short, intermediate, and long-term goals. Examples of each are:

- Short term – Education
- Intermediate term – Purchase a home, education for children
- Long term – Retirement income

Develop a spending plan showing monthly expenditures that can help with changing one's spending habits and produce a positive net worth. Proper management of family finances leads to freedom from money and credit captivity and moves us toward a simple spiritual life.

The wise steward is a spiritual steward. The wise steward plans for the care of his/her family following the teaching of Jesus Christ. The wise steward develops a spiritual lifestyle that leads to a positive net worth and develops the skills that are necessary to lead God's ministries in a spiritual manner.

Once your personal financial house is in order, then you are able to perform for Christ, efficiently and spiritually.

If you wish to make a donation to a particular ministry of the church over a period of time (for example, scholarship ministry), contact the California-Nevada United Methodist Foundation, 1276 Halyard Drive, West Sacramento, CA 95691 and state, "I wish to donate a sum (\$1000.00) to the scholarship ministry of Downs United Methodist Church; to be distributed yearly in the amount of or percentage of (\$100.00 or ten percent of interest and/or principal) with the Foundation investing and managing the funds. Downs United Methodist Church is located in Oakland, CA."