10 Prophetic Suggestions to Save Thousands of Dollars in 2020

The late Ern Baxter was considered by many the finest Christian orator of the 20th century. He used to tease audiences that if a speaker was advertised as coming from a mile away it wouldn't draw as many people as the guy coming from another continent. "People seem to think the further away, the greater the anointing!"

The same thing can happen when a church advertises a practical message on its marquee contrasted with one that puts "prophetic" in the title. There's just something about that term that seems to captivate people. "It must be something mysterious and deep so we don't want to miss it!"

Sometimes we're "so spiritually minded that we're no earthly good." And when it comes to the area of finances many avoid some nitty gritty advice because it's too "basic," and just not very "spiritual." That's why I placed the term "prophetic" in the title so multitudes don't miss this advice launching into the new year.

The statistics are staggering on how many Americans, including Christians, are up to their eyeballs in debt. Sixty-six million Americans have zero savings for any emergency! If inserting the word "prophetic" in the title of this commentary gets people's attention to take seriously saving and retiring debt, it's worth it! It's God's directive, not Dave Ramsey's, to "Owe no one anything" (Rom. 13:8). The Greek meaning: "Don't keep on owing any man anything." In other words, if you're in debt, do whatever you must to get out!

My intention is not to be a financial adviser establishing a plan to remove outstanding debts or engage in retirement planning; rather, it's to offer you practical insights on how to save money in 2020. This can definitely help you get on solid economic footing in the new year. It's prophetic in the sense that it's forth telling what is currently on the heart of God for His people to be faithful and financially free!

"If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will commit to your trust true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

No more debt!

10 Tips to Spend Less and Save

1. First, be faithful with your "first fruits" finances to God. "Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. … He who earn wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes" (Hag. 1:5-6).

Claim by faith God's promises from Malachi 3:8-12, choosing never to "rob God." As John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress,* stated, "I shovel it out, God shovels it back, but God has the bigger shovel!" Being faithful with your tithes and offerings "opens the windows of heaven" for God to bless you!

2. Learn to live by two principles for financial freedom:

First, if I can't afford it, I don't need it. Secondly, if I need it, I'll save for it! Remember: "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Prov. 22:7) and disciplining our spending habits honors God and pays off in the long term.

3. Since housing expenses approximate 50% of monthly income, be responsibly frugal.

Time to downsize? Reduce utilities by adjusting the thermostat seasonally 2 to 3 degrees. Install an attic fan to extract hot air and cool the home. Close blinds/drapes to maintain temperature. Reduce water usage with shorter showers and turn water off when brushing teeth. Run full loads in the washer and dishwasher, and wash clothes in cold water. Cut the lawn and do landscaping yourself! Cut the internet package. Raise your insurance deductible. Appeal for rent reduction. Wear sweatshirts and sweaters in the winter to cut costs on running the heat. It's amazing how all these changes add up to big bucks!

4. Exercise self-control and eliminate the unnecessary.

Use money-saving coupons. Get gas at Costco and save 30% a gallon. Stop going to Starbucks (strong supporter of LGBTQ agenda and abortion), which saves $100-$2,000 yearly. See movies at early discount times ($5 vs. $12). Use free DVDs from the library vs. costly cable. Eat before attending sporting events. Host kids' parties at home vs. getting a rented room and pricey, unhealthy food.

5. Use wisdom with cars.

Purchase reliable, pre-owned vehicles vs. new ones. The moment you drive a new car off the lot it instantly depreciates 10% or $3,500 on a $35,000 car! Keep up car maintenance and keep it as long as possible. Billionaire Warren Buffett drives an older Honda plus lives in the same house he bought in 1957! Walmart heir Jim Walton drives a 15-year-old pick-up truck.

6. Shop smart with a prepared list—plan ahead.

Buy bulk quantities of often-used items at discount stores. Avoid last-minute and impulse buying (marketing experts design stores to ensnare you here). Prepare for birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas gifts in the off-season during clearance sales (shopping the day after Christmas gets you 50% to 75% off items). Store gifts in a "gift closet," which we've done for decades.

7. Avoid "get rich quick" schemes, gambling and lotteries.

Your odds of winning the Powerball are 1 in 190 million! Don't be seduced. Be responsible and a good steward of God's money.

8. Be discerning and disciplined regarding burdensome college debt.

With some exceptions, it's not essential to go to a prestigious, exorbitantly priced, out-of-state institution unless God clearly directs. "U.S. companies largely favor graduates of big state universities over Ivy League and other elite liberal arts schools when hiring…" (*Wall Street Journal* 9/13/10). They surveyed almost 500 companies, public and private, for this study.

I recently asked a high school grad about his college plans. He said San Diego University versus inexpensive local colleges. When I told him his full expenses would be about one-third of a million for four years he was jolted back to reality.

I graduated cum laude from Cleveland State University with 13,000 students. Applying for financial assistance, going to a commuter school, working jobs throughout and gaining free tuition my senior year as student government president enabled me to graduate debt-free and God blessed me with a job across from the White House in Washington, D.C.

9. Be self-controlled and selective in dining out.

You can save thousands of dollars by simply changing some habits you may have unwittingly developed. Consider the frequency with which you indulge. Is it essential? Is it merely convenience? Are there creative alternatives? Could I lose some weight and actually be healthier if I bought a nutritious "smoothie," grabbed a $7 burrito bowl at Chipotle or a $6 sandwich at Subway?

For birthdays and anniversaries do we take advantage of available specials and complimentary appetizers? If I'm a senior, am I availing myself of free coffee and discounts at restaurants in my area?

When going out with my spouse, could we avoid appetizers? Dessert? Adult beverages? Get water with lemon rather than sodas? It all adds up plus lowers the tip. For years our family enjoyed free “aqua-colas” with lemons instead of paying close to $20 extra for drinks.

It can be revealing to check out how much you’ve been spending going out for lunches, dinners and those more convenient “carry outs” in the past year. It may shock you how much money has been going here.

10. Get serious this year regarding money-saving stewardship.

I minored in marketing and a marketer’s goal is to influence people to want things they don’t need and buy things they can’t afford! It’s important to be intentional in resisting seduction here.

Here’s the deal: It’s God’s will for us to be basically debt-free and on the pathway to this liberating way of life. Starting a new year is a great time to make quality decisions and important adjustments for a lifestyle of greater simplicity, frugality, generosity and “prophetic” sensitivity. {eoa}