How to Save $10K in Today's Turbulent Times

Astronomical federal deficit. Skyrocketing national debt. Obamacare and what lies (no pun intended) ahead. Escalating health care costs. Mushrooming taxes and hidden fees. Downsizing and pension cutbacks. Food and education increases. "Spread the wealth" socialistic policies.

Surviving and even thriving in the midst of today's economic upheaval is the challenging task we all face. Many churches, in addressing financial matters, will focus on the area of giving the tithe, which is paramount, yet oftentimes overlook what God says about handling the other 90 percent. As a result, millions of people look to financial counselors like Dave Ramsey and Suze Orman or secular forecasters for guidance and help.

Here's the deal as we close out this year: God wants to both encourage and instruct all of us (myself included) to be ever looking to Him as our ultimate provider, in addition to being better financial stewards so we can glorify Him and be channels of blessing to others in need.

This is personal for my wife and me as we find ourselves closing the year without any more partial salary from a local church, health insurance, cell phone coverage or any perks that have been part of my ministry for more than 41 years. This is by divine design, as God recently transitioned me from a local church involvement "because of the present distress" (1 Cor. 7:26, NKJV) upon America, in order to serve the wider body of Christ in our desperate need for spiritual awakening and assurance as children of God.

Therefore, I'd like to offer some specific suggestions to assist all of us in becoming more like the "wise ant" of

Proverbs 6:6-8 in preparing ourselves and saving money for whatever lies ahead. With a little self-discipline, discernment and prudent decision-making, we really can save “big bucks.” It comes the same way God instructed His people to take the Promised Land: “little by little” (Deut.7:22).

Our motivation in saving this money should not be to spend it frivolously on unnecessary items but rather to be faithful stewards by diminishing any debt we may have, keeping Joseph-like supplies in readiness and investing in God-honoring ministries, ministers and missionaries.

In Luke 16:10-11, Jesus says, “If you are not faithful in money matters, who will entrust the true riches to you?”

Aubrey Andelin, an author on marriage and family says, “Few families are free of anxieties and contentions in the matter of family finances. To some it is a matter of such major importance as to be an ever-festering sore, never healing and continually thwarting the happiness of the home. As a factor in marital breakup, it is one of the primary causes.”

Are you ready to enter into a new dimension of financial rest through the “exchange zone”? To save money and have more to give, will you make choices substituting one thing for another to discover big dividends in the end? Let me illustrate by citing “exchanges” made in the realm of eating habits that bring the benefits of weight loss and longevity of life.

The best-selling paperback series entitled *Eat This, Not That!* presents the reader with thousands of simple food swaps that can save individuals 10, 20 or 30 pounds—or more! Once people are informed of the hefty caloric content in foods they routinely consume and change over to healthier items, they discover weight loss as well as increased energy. Examples of items the author exhorts us to replace include (calories follow the listings):

$1· Cinnabon, classic cinnamon roll (813)

$1· Outback, cheese fries with ranch (2900)

$1· Uno, classic deep-dish personal pizza (2300)

$1· Panera, Sierra turkey sandwich (840)

$1· Pizza Hut, 4 slices supreme pan pizza with pepperoni (1672)

$1· Starbucks, bran nut muffin with Venti white hot chocolate (1530)

$1· Ruby Tuesday, Bella turkey burger (1145)

$1· McDonald's, hotcakes with biscuit without syrup and margarine (1090)

Scary, huh? Yet as Scripture tells us to add to our "knowledge, self-control" (2 Pet. 1:6), once we're informed, we can exercise self-control in making better choices.

So here goes. These are not presented in some rigid, legalistic way but rather as practical suggestions, enabling you to save money God's "little by little" way and have more to give.

10 Ways to Save $10,000

1. Renounce all impulse buying. Commit to live by this pledge: *If I can't afford it, I don't need it. If I need it, I'll save for it.*Remember the biblical admonition: "Owe no one anything" (Rom. 13:8, NKJV).

2. Enjoy the free cup of coffee offered by most local grocery chains, and forego the daily Starbucks specialty routine. Incredible as it may seem, this will save you more than $1,200 annually. If you skip that breakfast bagel, roll or sandwich, you'll save an additional $1,500 to $1,800. That total comes to $3,000!

3. In the winter, save on electricity. Lower your thermostat to 62°, wear sweaters, use inexpensive oil heaters, and close off rooms and vents not being used. This actually is not only cheaper, it's also healthier!

4. Buy gas at Costco or similar discount stores to save 10 cents a gallon. This adds up to thousands of dollars yearly.

5. Pray about and then purchase pre-owned cars instead of the latest luxury model, which depreciates markedly when driven off the lot. I love my red and reliable 2000 Honda coupe that I got for $4,400 a decade ago. Billionaire Warren Buffett drives a similarly humble car and lives in the same house he bought in 1957. The IKEA founder has been known to drive a 15-year-old Volvo, while Wal-Mart heir Jim Walton drives a 15-year-old pickup truck. Regarding selection of an automobile, to each his own, but don't get snared with payments, pricey repairs or status symbols.

6. Unless there's some scholarship or major financial aid included, don't be fooled into thinking your child must go to some prestigious out-of-state school to succeed. Read the *Wall Street Journal* on "Employers Favor State Schools for Hires" or the book*Debt-Free: How I Paid for an Outstanding College Education Without Loans, Scholarships or Mooching Off My Parents* for eye-opening information. Payment plans for local colleges can average $250 a week. Count the cost here to avoid tens of thousands of debt requiring payback for sometimes even decades.

7. Look for bargains. My Messianic Jewish friend of 35 years, Bob Weiner, always chides me, "Larry, you know why God created Gentiles? He knew somebody would have to pay retail!"

Consider the following alternatives:

$1· Go to the movies between 4 and 6 p.m., when it's 1/2 price.

$1· Buy Christmas, birthday and anniversary gifts for the future after the holidays, when stores like Barnes & Noble and Target offer items up to 80 percent off.

$1· Get generic prescription drugs, which can be 75-85 percent less than advertised brands.

$1· Purchase in bulk at discount superstores.

$1· Don't rent DVDs but go to your library, where you can find hundreds of great, free DVDs.

$1· Bring home all the toiletries from the motels when you travel.

$1· Re-use grocery store plastic bags as wastebasket liners.

$1· If you have a cable system, regularly call and cash in on discounts and specials, and make appeals to lower your rates as a loyal customer.

$1· Instead of rushing off to the cleaners, get a wrinkle-free spray to restore items of clothing.

There are so many more creative ways you can be a good steward and save money, but these are just a few that come to mind.

8. Save on the water bill. Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth. Wait until you have a full load for the washer. Shorten your shower times or take the "wet, off, soap, rinse, done!" approach. Finally, have a chuckle at the wisdom my daughter brought home from Youth With a Mission concerning saving water and money in the bathroom: "If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down!"

9. If you are pregnant and not a high-risk pregnancy, prayerfully consider the option of a skilled and caring midwife. Outside the United States, 80 percent of babies are born under the care of midwives. Two of our three children were born this way. Hospital costs can run into the tens of thousands. Epidurals can cost $5,000 and a C-section $12,000.

While this option isn't for everyone, an average $600 bill for a midwife can be an attractive draw in these economically challenged times.

10. Worship God with your tithes, offerings and charitable gifts. This is the most important item of all! The Malachi 3:8-12 "covenant of blessing" is a sure way to experience godly abundance and prosperity. As someone once said, "Everyone tithes—either to the Lord or to the doctor, the dentist or the car mechanic."

Difficult days are before us as we close out a year and look to a new one. Re-read in the Gospels what Jesus foretells concerning the days prior to His return. In these days, Proverbs exhorts us, "The prudent see danger and take refuge" (NIV), but "the fool goes on and suffers for it" (NLV). Let's be prudent in preparing spiritually and economically for whatever lies ahead.

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