

Father God, the words to that song are so true, our lives were tossed like leaves blowing in the wind, our hurts, and our difficulties have blown all around us. But when we come to you and look to you and trust you, oh God, no matter the wounds, you can be the healer of our broken heart. In a crowd like this, there are many wounded and broken hearts. There are people here that love you and still have hurts. May your word be an encouragement to us. As we look at Operation Freedom that you can free us. Whether a wounded heart, financial, the hurt of loss or loneliness set us free.

Thank you in that song, In Christ alone, our hope is found, whether he calls me or comes in the cloud of glory, we as believers can hold on to that. He is our hope, trust and we look forward to seeing him that mighty day.

We are known to be a church of the book. God's infallible precious word, do you believe in what it says? I got one amen. I do from the beginning to the end, I believe it. I don't just go through and rip out pages; his word is eternal and will last to the end of time. We need to lean on it. It would be wrong for me to not talk about everything that is in it. You will hear some things in the next few weeks that you may not have heard before. Operation Freedom is a multi level program. The Sunday School and everything will be tied together.

Wednesday we had 70 reservations for dinner, and if you are a Baptist you cannot refuse this week's dinner; mashed potatoes, gravy, etc. The point is what? Fellowship, we get together and celebrate what God is doing. Pack your own lunch, we just want you here.

That started off great. Our men's Ministry started last week, I want to encourage our men to come to that.

Our ladies have a new TeaTime that is getting ready to kick off and have gone from 6 to 10 groups. That is not where they sit around and gossip, it is a great time of bible study and sharing.

Celebrate Recovery is very exciting and the attendance has increased by about 1/3. That is huge.

Youth is under the Ministry of Seth and Shelly and going very well.

We have prayed about these things and must not stop. We must continue to love and making the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives, with that he will be the Lord of our church and we will see things that we can't even imagine.

You will hear some of the difficult things. They say you shouldn't talk about money too much. We had 3 big things in June, kids' camp, youth camp and VBS which left us in the red of about \$15,000 and then the month of July was the biggest month of giving and we have made up about \$10,000 from the deficit from June. Is that not worthy of praise to the Lord? It is about what God has done. When he sets us free, we are free

indeed.

What a great word as we look at Operation Freedom. You will hear a lot about being free in many areas of our lives. Next Sunday I will do a sermon called “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps”. Many of you that are older know that term.

FPU has been a huge success in our church. We have had about 200 people that have gone through that; Lynn and I have done it and will start to tag team a class on Wednesday night. Financial Peace University is not about a person, it was at ARBC long before Dave Ramsay. The neat thing is that ARBC was doing it way before this. The principles and foundation of this great church have been in place a long time. But we get these thoughts that we don't want to be talked down to, but you will find that it is inspiring and has some funny moments and will realize it just makes sense.

Larry Burkett was a program that we went through before. I am really warm today and I don't have a tie on but I need to take off my coat. It is really warm. We need an air conditioner.

The Bible addresses the issue of money over 800 times. Genesis to Revelation... 800 times... That isn't a lot. But Jesus talked about finances and money more than salvation. More than heaven, more than hell. For me, in my mind, I think.... Really? Could that be possible? With all the goals for living godly lives and to be with him in glory forever the importance of spreading to word, it talks about finances and our responsibilities more?

We will look at 3 Biblical things on finance. You will see a piece of paper in your bulletin to help you jot some notes down. FPU started today and yesterday. But the insert will help you will the points and scripture references.

Money management is a spiritual issue. There are church members that believe that money should never be mentioned from the pulpit. Some of you men have a grip of your billfold, and some of you ladies have a grasp on your purses. You can all relax. It's not about church finances, it's about you and I and we want to help you.

How you manage your money is an intense spiritual issue. It's slavery verses freedom. If we will live by this book that we believe in, this means that we need to open up our checkbooks and set it side by side to God's word and see what it says.

Larry Burkett says you can tell a person's heart by looking through their check register. What is important to you?

Principle #1: Money is a Powerful Force

There are 2 major distortions of the biblical teachings about money. You will hear them everywhere.

Distortion #1: “Money is a sign of God's blessing, and poverty is a sign of His

displeasure.”

Have you heard that before? I did; that is so wrong and opposite of what the Bible says. If it were true, why would Jesus say ... It is more difficult for a rich person to enter heaven.

Jesus stepped out of heaven, born of a lowly carpenter and born in a stable with animals. That doesn't sound like great prosperity.

Jesus' disciples we're fishermen; not a glamorous job. How untrue that statement is.

Matthew 19:23-24 (NIV)

Jesus is talking and says

23: Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

24: Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Proverbs 28:6 (NIV) says this.

6: Better the poor whose walk is blameless than the rich whose ways are perverse.

The issue is not about the money it's about our heart. Don't we act different around rich people? You all may know a man named Dave Thomas, the founder of Wendy's. He was there and doing the commercials, but if ever there was a rich man it would be him, but if ever there was a humble man; he was the kind of guy that offered his private jet for Lynn and I to go see my father when he was sick.

When we are so slaved by the burden of debt, when God calls us to do something, we have to stop and go.... Can I afford to do that?

James writes, because they had a problem in their day.

James 2:1-4 (NIV)

1: My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.

2: Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in.

3: If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

4: have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

You see back then, rich people were shown special attention while the poor we're ignored.

James 2:8-9

8: If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

Love your neighbor.

9: But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

We must love and show respect for all. My word to teenagers....Learn quickly now, not to make the same mistakes that we make. Whether a TeaTime group or men's fellowship; it's okay to have friends. We have a natural to gravitate to people we are close to. But in a large group, we are all on level ground; we need to be united and together. There is nothing wrong with having friends, but when we are together we need to be one.

We must love everyone and have respect for all.

Distortion #2: "Money is Evil."

#1 was a biggie but # 2 is;

Distortion #2: "Money is Evil."

That is wrong too. Money is not good or bad it is amoral. That means without morals. You are not evil if you have money and you are not good if you don't. Think of money as a pile of bricks. You pick up a brick and I can toss it at Dave Fitts and hit him and the head. I can do something bad or I can take it and build a hospital, a church. A brick is neither good or bad just like money is not good or bad, it is what the person does with it. We must have the heart to do what is right.

The Bible says the love of money is the root of all evil.

1 Timothy 6:10

10: For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

You can be a jerk if you have no money but you can be a jerk if you have a pile of

money.

People need help and for you to have the freedom to do it...

Money takes on the characteristic of that person whether a jerk or a godly person.

Principle #2: Money Expands - and Limits - Our Options

Proverbs 22:7

“The rich rules over the poor and the borrower is slave to the lender.”

A slave doesn't have any choices in the matter, he can't come and go because he has no freedom. It is all limited. I am afraid the master in our lives is the MasterCard, the visa card or Sallie Mae.

This issue is talking about our freedom to go and do as God directs.

Have you ever borrowed or loaned money from family? What did that do to your relationships? There was a pole that says that 57% of people polled have seen their relationships end because of that.

When our money has someone else's name on it, it means that we are a slave to that person. I hear this a lot, if a mission trip comes up to go somewhere, what keeps us from doing it? I can't afford to go. If we are free, we are opened up to be able to go and do the other ministries.

Principle #3: Money Must Be Managed

Pastors and church members don't know how to manage their money. When you hear stewardship; people think of giving. The word stewardship doesn't mean to give, tithe or offering. It isn't a code that we want your money. We are talking about managing the money that God gives us.

Proverbs 27:23 (NIV)

23: Be sure you know the condition of your flocks; give careful attention to your herds;

Luke 14:28-30 (NIV)

28: “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?

29: For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you,

30: saying, 'this person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

Success doesn't happen by accident, you have to prepare.

20: A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

If I am truthful with you and you are truthful with yourself; you may have seen an infomercial along the way. You may have a knot in your stomach because if you sent \$19.95 within 3 minutes we will set you up and you will be set for life.

That passage was so appropriate. There is no fast way to do it, you must plan, prepare and let God bless it. The schemes come and go; maybe you have been brought into one. I have.

We have a men's class on Wednesday night which talks about strong difficult subjects. I went in there and told them that just because they are there, doesn't mean you have a problem, more importantly you are here because you can be a helper or a mentor. Men come to me and may go to you and you won't know what to say. It will help you be an effective leader.

My analogy to Financial Peace University is this....

I am retired or middle aged or whatever... I am successful and am set. Praise God because you did exactly what God wanted you to do, but the point is that my challenge to you is that you be that mentor, that encourager, that shot in the arm to say it can get better if you are faithful. If you practice these principles you will be blessed.

When I came here one of my concerns was our youth. I am thankful for Seth and Shelly. We have lost young married folks, single adults. We need to embrace that area and help it to grow.

You all know if someone wants to leave they will give you an excuse and leave. Here is one that I get.

Here we are a young married couple and no one wants to embrace us, help teach us and bring us along. There may be some truth to that, but even if just a few of them really felt that way, our challenge is for us to reach out to the singles, the young married people to help bring them along.

Donnie is starting a class for parents, then they can go out and move into other areas. All of this is important stuff as we look at the Bible, FPU, etc.

For us to start talking about freedom from pain, loneliness, etc, if we didn't go to the source first. We talk about political freedom, financial freedom; the most important is spiritual freedom. Jesus came to live, die and raise again for you and me to live again

so he can set us free.

That is where it starts; with a relationship. We can talk about mentoring, FPU, children's, men's, ladies Ministry. If we don't have the ultimate freedom we have failed.

My challenge is wherever your walk is; you may not understand what it is to be free in Jesus. Maybe today is the day for you to come and plant your roots, be a member here, accept Jesus, be baptized, be released of freedoms. If you want to pray and be left alone go to that side, if you want someone to pray with you go to that side.

Where ever you are, come.