stewardship well done

Journey

Personal / Group Study Guides

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Dear Friend:

Welcome to the *Stewardship Well Done Journey!*

As we have engaged with clients for over 30 years, we have had one overall goal – to help each person live a life of *Stewardship Well Done*. We believe this is accomplished as each person faithfully manages the resources God has entrusted to his/her care.

Unfortunately, in our flawed and complex world, there is a consistent downward drift away from the elements in our lives that matter most. Our best intentions often become distorted by a wide range of influences that include the urgent, our culture, and our own predispositions. Most of us yearn for excellence and fulfillment, but instead we often find ourselves being complacent, confused, and frustrated because we fall short of all we can be.

The *Stewardship Well Done Journey* was developed to help all travelers take the time to focus on what matters. The nine waypoints of the journey are designed to position finances around biblical stewardship principles. At a glance, the waypoints may seem quite basic; however, when travelers take the time to view each one through the lens of biblical stewardship, they come alive to bring hope and peace.

There are many financial resources available today. Some provide a broad overview while others focus on a single aspect of financial life, such as debt reduction. We don't claim to be the "next best thing" in the financial world, or offer you a financial formula for success. We simply want to create a space where travelers, regardless of their level of financial knowledge and sophistication, can take the time to give intentional thought and action to stewardship matters.

A couple important notes for you:

- All videos can be accessed using the QR code or link on the first page of each waypoint. You can also find a link in the video section of the resources page on our website (**www.fmfinancial.org/resources**). Look for the "Stewardship Well Done Journey Library of Videos." The password for all videos is: **S1eward3h1p**!
- The questions with an asterisk (*) in each waypoint are suggested for group discussion.

We pray God will use the *Stewardship Well Done Journey* to strengthen your daily walk and relationship with Him. We pray that as you examine and live out each of the waypoints, you will discover that wise stewardship results in freedom and joy in Christ. Ultimately, we hope the journey helps each traveler build a meaningful legacy and hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

With all glory to God,
Your friends at FM Financial

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Introduction

Personal / Group Study Guide Introducing you to the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

There's always room for more travelers on the Stewardship Well Done Journey.

We're so glad you've joined us.

His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

(Matthew 25:21)

Introducing the Stewardship Well Done Journey

FM Financial believes that all we are, all we possess, and all we can do, are gifts from God given to accomplish His purposes in the world through us. This means that while other financial service providers talk about wealth accumulation, we talk about living a life of "Stewardship Well Done". To help explain what we mean, we have developed a tool called the "Stewardship Well Done Journey". It consists of nine waypoints designed to position your finances around biblical stewardship principles.

Priorities

Determine what life priorities matter most.

Budget

Prepare and follow a budget that includes tithing and giving all along the way.

Emergencies

Assess insurance needs and build / maintain 3-6 months of living expenses.

Essential Documents

Draft a basic estate plan including a will or trust and powers of attorney.

Retirement

Make monthly contributions to capture all 401(k) and 403(b) matching funds.

Debt

Pay off all credit card and consumer debt.

Plan

Engage a professional for comprehensive financial planning and investment management.

Save

Set aside more for education, retirement, future purchases, and charitable opportunities.

Legacy

Use proven gifting strategies to maximize your impact on the people and ministries you love.

Looking at these nine waypoints, which one(s) do you already put into practice? Which one(s) seem to require the most attention for you personally?

***All we are, all we possess, and all we can do are gifts from God.* Do you believe this is true? How might this approach change the way you use your time, talents, and treasure?**

Why did FM Financial develop the Stewardship Well Done Journey?

The mission of FM Financial is to provide professional planning, investing, and giving services from a biblical perspective. While we realize not everyone is in a place with significant financial assets to invest, we recognize *we are all on a stewardship journey*. So, we developed the Stewardship Well Done Journey to meet people wherever they are and help them take their best next step.

Have you ever considered that you are on a stewardship journey? Where has your journey taken you?

How might wise counsel from a biblical perspective help you take your best next step? How do you think financial counsel from a biblical perspective might differ from secular financial counsel?

What benefits can you hope to obtain from the Stewardship Well Done Journey?

The team at FM Financial wants to remove barriers to engagement with financial professionals. Often people feel inferior or even guilty over their approach to finances, especially when put in a place of vulnerability with a financial professional. FM Financial views its work as a *ministry* – we serve real people with varying approaches to finances. We do not judge; we assist, assess, counsel, advise, and seek the best for every client we have the privilege of working with. Ultimately, our goal is to be a trusted source of help that will come alongside each client and help them realize the joy and freedom that can be experienced through living out the nine waypoints.

What is your personal comfort level with financial professionals?

How might that comfort level change if you knew you were meeting with a trusted partner who would seek your best interests and help you take your best next step?

How can I prepare to take part in the Stewardship Well Done Journey?

As with much in life, the more effort you put in, the more you will get out of the *Stewardship Well Done Journey*. Be committed to the whole process. Begin today by prayerfully pausing to consider your priorities – what really matters in your life and why? Priorities set the tone for the entire journey and that is why they are they first waypoint. Our priorities become the targets for our financial goals and therefore help us shape the overall approach to our finances.

Although the nine waypoints of the journey are basic, they are often overlooked. Be prepared to focus and implement each waypoint for a truly healthy and biblical approach to your finances.

And don't be afraid to start dreaming! What would it be like to live in a household where financial discussions were not a point of tension? How peaceful would it be to live debt-free? What else could you focus on if your financial situation was stable? How wonderful would it be to teach your children and grandchildren to have a healthy relationship with money … and to live it out before them?

How does the journey help individuals and churches?

The journey builds accountability into our individual financial lives, setting us free to focus on our priorities. As each of us becomes a better steward of the assets entrusted to our care, the more we can accomplish together for the Kingdom. What a joy it is to be able to care well for our loved ones and help support the ministries we are passionate about!

Is there some way you wish you could care for your loved ones, but have been hindered by finances?

Name one ministry that you care about deeply. How might the *Stewardship Well Done Journey* help you support that ministry in a way that perhaps you think is out of your reach?

Focus on the Word – **Stewardship**

His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"
(Matthew 25:21)

In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a Master who entrusts his wealth to several servants. Each one is given a portion of the Master's wealth and asked to use it to produce more. When the Master returns to check in on his servants, they are asked to present their *increase* based on their faithfulness to invest what they have been given.

What has God entrusted to your care? In addition to thinking of financial assets, name a few talents or abilities God has given you. Additionally, name a portion of your time that could be given to Him.

How do you see yourself in this story? What is your role?

In the end, the servants who brought an increase of the Master's wealth heard these words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master's happiness!"*

What does it mean to be both "good" and "faithful"?

Many of us believe we will hear Jesus say these words to us when we die and are in His presence However, we can hear those words now, in the day-to-day stewardship of what we have. How might this thought change your life today?

Write a short prayer asking God to help you surrender anew your life, time, talents, and treasures. Ask Him to graciously and lovingly guide you to a place where your living is fruitful and multiplies for the Kingdom of God. Ask Him for an open heart as you embark on your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

In Summary

When you view your life – time, talents, resources, health, relationships – from a stewardship perspective, everything changes. This is especially true when it comes to finances. You are to be congratulated for taking the time to intentionally explore this area of your life.

If you are working through this guide with a small group, discuss reasons why we don't often pay more attention to our finances and why we are reluctant to talk about them with others. Also, take a look at the nine waypoints and discuss which one grabs your attention the most and why. Commit to being accountable to each other throughout the study and to prayerfully approaching this study together.

If you need a coach to help you with your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey.*

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Take time to write out the goals you have for this journey.
- ☐ Start a list of financial questions you would like to have answered.
- ☐ Begin gathering your financial information to give you perspective as you travel on the journey (bank accounts, brokerage accounts, retirement accounts, insurance, budget, debt information, etc.).
- ☐ Consider who you might ask to serve as a financial accountability partner.
- ☐ Commit to praying about your finances regularly.

Let's work together! | fmfinancial.org | (517) 750-2727

Get in touch!

Notes:

Priorities

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #1
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The first waypoint on the
Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Priorities**:

*Determine what **life priorities** matter most.*

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.
(Matthew 6:33)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

Why does the journey begin with **Priorities?**

The Scriptures teach us in Proverbs 4:23 to "Keep your ***heart*** with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (NKJV). And, in Matthew 6:21, Jesus teaches, "For where your treasure is, there your ***heart*** will be also" (NIV). These two passages point to our ability to choose and decide our own life priorities. What is in our hearts tends to guide our choices in our finances as well as every area of life.

> *"It's one thing to make financial decisions in a vacuum, it's another to make financial decisions based on what's in your heart."*

What does your heart lead you to focus on in your life?

Priorities, Motivation, and Busyness

To help identify your unique life priorities, consider this: Priorities are what get you out of bed every morning. Whatever motivates us to work and engage with our families and communities also points to what matters most to us.

What gets you up in the morning?

Often our priorities are blurred by the busyness of life. However, the things that keep us busy do not always reflect our true priorities.

How does the busyness of your life potentially lead to neglecting the things most important to you?

It is possible to be busy without really knowing why. That often feels like simply spinning in circles. It is much more desirable to be "busy in the right direction" or "busy in a meaningful way".

For you, what is the difference between being *busy* and *busy in a meaningful way?*

What shapes our **Priorities**?

Too often, we allow our priorities to be shaped by media and the world. Many people may be tempted to consider their God-given calling and resulting priorities to be inappropriate or even silly in light of how the world thinks. Viewing priorities through the lens of the Kingdom of God ensures they will be on point and in line with God's ways regardless of how out of line with the world's thinking they may be.

How do your priorities reflect the Kingdom of God? Have you ever seen them as unimportant, inappropriate, or even silly because they seem to conflict with the priorities of the world?

Dissonance?

Sometimes what we say our priorities are and the way we live our lives conflict. This causes dissonance, especially when it comes to financial decisions. One way to test this in your own life is to ask yourself if your schedule and your expenditures reveal your true priorities.

How might your priorities conflict with the way you live your day-to-day life? What can you do

> *The way you spend your time and resources can reveal what your true priorities are."*

Constantly giving in to instant gratification can also cause dissonance when it comes to priorities. Rather, discipline, patience, hard work, and doing small things over time are the keys to seeing priorities come to fruition. There are no easy answers or quick fixes. Listening carefully to the Holy Spirit can help you recognize areas of dissonance, make plans for change, and develop the disciplines necessary to see your true priorities fulfilled.

Can you think of a time recently when you allowed instant gratification to affect a financial decision?

Is the Holy Spirit revealing any areas of dissonance to you right now?

Sorting Through Our **Priorities**

Perhaps you have many priorities before you and you're not sure where to begin. To address them all at once seems impractical and unattainable. While each person is different, most people tend to be successful in achieving what they set out to do when they tackle one item at a time. Intentionality with the one thing that weighs most heavily on your mind is the best place to begin. Progress provides motivation to tackle the next most important thing – and the next. Over time, with diligence and discipline, you'll see that you *can* accomplish your priorities.

Do you have an unrealized priority that tugs at you – even keeps you awake at night? What is it?

Committed to the Kingdom of God

Sometimes when God lays a priority on your heart, it may seem to go against conventional financial thinking. It might not be easy, but obeying His plan is always worth it.

> *"Define what is most important and make a plan."*

What would it look like to set your priorities based on your God-given calling and a worldview rooted in the Kingdom of God?

What priority is God calling you to pursue? What plan can you put in place to make it happen? How might the guidance of an understanding professional make all the difference?

Priorities –
Focus on the Word

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:33)

When it comes to our priorities as followers of Christ, our primary purpose is to seek the Kingdom. This changes our course of action in the direction of the eternal.

As you examine your priorities, which ones focus on the eternal? Are they first on your priority list?

Would any of your priorities fit under the category of "all these things?" Are you trusting in God's promise to meet them in accordance with His Word?

Write a short prayer asking God to help you organize your priorities with eternity in mind first, and express your trust in Him to meet all your needs. *Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* Amen.

In Summary

Identify your most important priorities and carefully assess if there is any dissonance between what you say your priorities are and where your time and resources are spent. Make a plan to begin focusing on one priority at a time and allow patience and diligence to do their work. Clearly stating your priorities will give you purpose, help make hard decisiones, and bring harmony to all areas of your life, including your finances.

If you are working through this guide in a small group, share stories about how you have seen God work in the area of priorities. Provide assistance to each other as you commit to discerning God's unique priorities for each life. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Pray for God-given clarity regarding your priorities.
- ☐ Complete the Priorities Worksheet.
- ☐ Compare your calendar and your expenses with the priorities you have stated; ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of dissonance in your life.
- ☐ If married, have an open and honest discussion with your spouse about priorities; if you are single, have this conversation with a close friend.
- ☐ Consider if having a mentor might help you define and stick to your priorities.

Notes:

Priorities –
Worksheet

Write out 5 life priorities. *If married, have your spouse write out 5 priorities (separately). Then discuss.*

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Consider your current schedule and expenditures. Do they align with the priorities you have stated? Where is there dissonance?

Write out three concrete steps you will take regarding your priorities.

1.
2.
3.

Commit to praying regularly about your priorities.

Accountability plan for living out my priorities:

Budget

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #1
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The second waypoint on the Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Budget**:

Prepare *and* ***follow*** *a budget that* ***includes tithing and giving*** *all along the way.*

Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.

(Proverbs 21:5 NLT)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

How do **Budget** and **Priorities** intersect?

While the waypoints on the *Stewardship Well Done Journey* can be handled separately, there is logic to their order and they work best when they are all in harmony. So how does a budget relate to the first waypoint, priorities? With your priorities clearly defined, you use your budget to funnel money in the direction of your priorities. Simply put, your budget is an expression of your priorities. We all have needs that are part of a budget. But we also have wants and desires. Your priorities identify what is most important to you so you can be sure those items are an important part of your budget. When priorities and budget are in sync, they "talk" to each other and inform one another.

Put another way, your priorities are the why, and your budget is the how. Not every priority requires money – it may require time and attention – but if money is required, your budget is the funding source.

Also, when it comes to budgeting, people tend to be more willing to allocate their funds to something they have identified as deeply important to them. They are less willing to allocate funds a certain way simply because someone else told them to.

> *"If my priorities are reflected in my budget, I'm going to be willing to make sacrifices every day to see that those priorities are carried out."*

How can you see a budget as being beneficial to help you fund the things that matter most to you?

Budgets allow us to be introspective – they express in a very tangible way what is important in our life. We can look to our budget to see two very important things: 1) Am I on track with my priorities? and 2) Am I spending my resources in a way that is pleasing to the Lord?

How would you respond to the two last questions? Are you on track with your priorities? Are you spending your resources in a way that is pleasing to the Lord?

Three Words that Express the Benefits of **Budgeting**

A budget leads to *freedom*.

Often, people see budgets as restrictive – something that fences you in and judges your spending. However, when a budget is used as a tool to funnel your money in the direction of your God-given calling, that is ***freeing***, not restrictive.

How have you experienced the freedom that a budget can bring? If you don't have a budget, can you see how a budget could lead to freedom for you?

A budget leads to *peace*.

Peace is a state of wholeness and well-being that rests deep in the soul of a person. Having a budget in place that reflects your priorities, and acting upon that budget, can provide a sense of well-being.

Have you experienced peace when it comes to your budget? If not, what might you change to make this possible?

A budget is *life-giving*.

A budget is also **life-giving.** If we have dollars allocated in places that we can clearly see are accomplishing our God-given priorities, it gives us a sense of living a life well done. Many stressors detract from our lives, but the results of strategic budgeting can add **life-giving joy**.

What are the financial stressors in your life that detract? How could a budget be life-giving for you?

Would you be more willing to engage with a budget if it began with a dream for good, rather than a perception of personal restriction?

Budgeting and Stages of Life

When is the best stage of life to engage with a budget? Is it when we're young and just starting out in adulthood, when we start a family, when we change jobs, or when significant life events occur?

The answer is that all the above are appropriate times to begin or revisit a budget. Whether you are 20, 40 or 80, it is always good to review your budget and make necessary adjustments.

When was the last time you reviewed your budget? Do you find periodic reviews to be helpful?

> *A budget is one of the first places you go when your life circumstances change and you ask, 'Now what?'".*

Budgeting and Milestones of Life

Any time your life circumstances change, it is good to *evaluate your budget.*

It is especially helpful to re-evaluate your budget any time your financial situation changes. For example:

- If you get a raise
- If you receive an inheritance
- If you sell your home
- If somebody loses a job
- If you get married
- If you get divorced
- If you have a child (or another child!)
- If you are considering taking on a new debt

Are you currently experiencing a significant change in your life circumstances? How can a budget help you during this time of shifting realities?

The Simple Keys to **Budgeting**

While there are many things we can say about budgeting, it really comes down to three simple keys.

Give

What are you going to give? Allocate a percentage of your income based on your priorities.

Save

What are you going to save? Allocate a percentage of your income based on your priorities. Even if you have to start small, it is important to build the discipline of saving into your budget.

Spend

After funds have been allocated for giving and saving, the rest is left for spending. This is what you use to pay bills, finance your needs, and fund priorities not in the give and save categories.

The order of these three simple keys is intentional. But it may seem backward to the way most people have approached budgeting. Many people fund the spend category first, then save, then give ... if there is anything leftover. Flipping these categories around to give first, save second, and spend third, takes time and discipline, but pays off in the end.

Do you think give, save, spend, is the right order for budgeting? Why or why not?

Budget –
Focus on the Word

Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity,
but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty. (Proverbs 21:5 NLT)

The act of preparing a budget can feel like "good planning and hard work," but the focus is on where it leads. Notice that the word "prosperity" is used to describe where good planning and hard work guide us. We must remember that proverbs are not the same as promises. This proverb does not *guarantee* prosperity if you employ good planning and hard work; it simply (but wisely) states that prosperity is a likely outcome of good planning and hard work.

Have you ever mistaken a proverb for a promise? What is the guiding, foundational wisdom in Proverbs 21:5?

We must take care to understand that "prosperity" is often confused as immediate financial abundance, and our desire for instant gratification usually confuses the term even further. There are many ways God "prospers" us that may not involve financial gain.

What other ways might the good planning and hard work of budgeting lead to prosperity besides financial gain?

There are two primary characteristics of God's children who budget well - **diligence and generosity.**

Define those two terms in your own words.

Digilence is:

Generosity is:

Write a short prayer committing to a budget as a disciple of Jesus who wants to develop both diligence (good planning and hard work) and generosity (open-handedness with our abundance). Commit and consecrate both to Him.

Don't Be Discouraged!

If you struggle with a budget or struggle to make ends meet, please do not be discouraged. Budgeting is hard work! God has promised to give wisdom to those who pray (James 1:5), so be sure to pray about your budget. Control the things you can control, and leave the rest with God. You might also want to consider talking with a friend or a professional. It will require vulnerability, but getting fresh ideas and support is worth it. Also, remember that small changes over time amount to great things.

In Summary

Regardless of your place in life or your circumstances, a budget is a powerful tool to help you live a life of freedom and peace. Adhering to a budget is not restrictive, but life-giving.

If you are working through this guide in a small group, share your stories about how you have seen God work through your budget. Provide assistance to each other as you commit to aligning your budget with your God-given priorities. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Commit to praying over your budget.
- ☐ Complete the Budget Worksheet or a similar exercise.
- ☐ Track your spending; there are many apps available to help.
- ☐ Make a covenant with yourself (and spouse, if applicable) to live within your means.
- ☐ If you already have a budget, evaluate if changes need to be made.
- ☐ Set realistic short and long term budgeting goals; celebrate milestones as you reach them.
- ☐ Schedule annual reviews of your budget.
- ☐ Talk with a friend or professional for budget guidance.
- ☐ Choose an accountability partner to help you stick to your budget.
- ☐ Brainstorm ways to make additional income to help make ends meet (be creative!).

Notes:

Budget – Worksheet

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Your Personal Overview

To have a balanced budget means that your giving, saving and spending do not exceed your income. This is a critical component as you move through the *Stewardship Well Done Journey.*

If you are having trouble reaching a balanced budget, it is a good idea to reach out to a trusted friend or professional. Don't lose hope! With prayer and discipline, you can get there!

Income

Consider these common sources of income and add any others you receive:

- **After-Tax Salaries, Wages, Tips**
- **Social Security / Disability Income**
- **Support Payments / Pension Income**
- **Other Income (side jobs, rental, etc.)**

Source of Income	Monthly Amount	Annual Amount
Wages/Salary/Tips Job 1		
Wages/Salary/Tips Job 2		
Wages/Salary/Tips Job 3		
Social Security or Disability		
Support Payments		
Pension		
Other:		
Other:		

Total Monthly:

Total Annual:

Giving/Saving

Consider these common ways to give and save, adding others specific to your situation:

- **Tithe to Local Church**
- **Gifts to Ministries / Charities / Persons**
- **After Tax Retirement Contributions**
- **Savings Accounts and Other Investments**

Way of Saving	Monthly Amount	Annual Amount
Tithe		
Gifts to Ministries/Others		
College Fund		
IRA/Roth/Retirement		
Deposit to Savings		
Other Investments		
Other:		
Other:		

Total Monthly:

Total Annual:

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Spending
(Living Expenses/Debt)

Consider these common living expenses and debt, adding others specific to your situation:

- Mortgage Payment or Rent
- Groceries
- Utilities (electric, gas, water, sewer)
- Car Payment
- Car Fuel and Repairs
- Insurance (car, home, health, life)
- Entertainment and Restaurants
- Internet, TV, Cell Phone, Streaming Services
- Debt (see waypoint #6 for more details)

Expense or Payment	Monthly Amount	Annual Amount
Mortgage or Rent		
Groceries		
Utilities		
Car Payments		
Car Fuel and Repairs		
Insurance		
Entertainment/Restaurants		
Internet/TV/Cell/Streaming		
Debt		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		

Total Monthly: ______ Total Annual: ______

Budget –
Worksheet

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Your Personal Overview

	Monthly Amount	Annual Amount
My Income		
My Giving & Saving		
My Expenses & Debt		
The Difference		

Notes:

Essential Documents

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #3
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The third waypoint on the
Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Essential Documents**:

Draft a basic estate plan *including a will or trust and powers of attorney.*

Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

(Psalm 90:12)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

What are **Essential Documents**?

The following documents are essential to give voice to your specific wishes and priorities:

Last Will and Testament

Goes into effect when you pass away and allows you to name the person(s) you would like to be in charge of your estate – distributing the assets you have to the people and places you have named. If you have minor children, a Last Will and Testament also allows you to name the guardian(s) for your children.

Financial Power of Attorney

Allows you to name someone to take care of your finances anytime you are unable during your lifetime. It also addresses what kind of activities/actions that person can take on your behalf.

Health Care Power of Attorney

Names a person to make medical decisions for you in a situation where you are unable to communicate in any way. The document also allows you to give guidance to that person. Living will provisions are often part of this document. They allow you to communicate your desires regarding life support and artificial nutrition and hydration.

Do you currently have a Last Will and Testament, Financial Power of Attorney, and Health Care Power of Attorney (with living will provisions)?

☐ YES When were they signed? ☐ NO

Do they express your current wishes?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Essential Documents and Financial Planning

The financial planning process can help you make informed decisions regarding your essential documents. Various scenarios can be run to take into account different cash flows with your funds. What comes out of those scenarios is an estimated value of assets at the end of life that can help you plan for how those assets are to be distributed.

Have you recently taken stock of what you own and considered how you would like it to be distributed when you pass away?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Who should draft your essential documents?

While templates for these documents are available online, it is best to seek a professional who can customize documents to your specific needs and circumstances. A Christian professional can also assist in preparing these documents in alignment with your biblical stewardship perspective.

Why are essential documents part of the Stewardship Well Done Journey?

Good stewardship is not only about how we handle our resources while we are living, but also how they are distributed after we pass away. None of us can predict when something catastrophic will happen. It may be tomorrow, or it may be years from now. It is best to have your essential documents in place now to be prepared.

Have you ever considered that we need to practice good stewardship in life and in death?

How might this view of stewardship change your perspective?

What happens if you don't have essential documents in place?

There are a number of people who choose to do nothing regarding the arrangements handled by essential documents. For those people, the laws of the state where they reside have made a plan for them. But often it is not the plan you would want. Therefore, it really is important to have some kind of documentation in place to see to it that your wishes are carried out in the way you desire and that your loved ones are cared for.

How is not having your essential documents in place an example of poor stewardship?

Procrastination is often the reason someone does not have essential documents in place. What does the Bible have to say about procrastination? Here are a few verses to get you started: Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 5:15-17, James 4:17, Proverbs 24:30-34.

> *"Essential Documents will set you free in a time of tragedy to be a family, to love on your loved ones, to focus on the things that you should focus on."*

Essential Documents at Work

Preparing essential documents is a real gift to your loved ones. You're not doing these documents for yourself; you're doing them because you love your family.

Does this perspective motivate you in a new way concerning your essential documents? How?

How can essential documents help you focus on your family in a time of tragedy?

How might God be asking you to provide for your family or the ministries you love through your essential documents?

"Part of the Stewardship Well Done Journey is allowing God to work through ordinary things like essential documents or a budget."

How might God be asking you to use your essential documents in an extraordinary way?

Essential Documents –
Focus on the Word

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
(Psalm 90:12)

Consider for a moment that this verse suggests we need to be taught to number our days. What do you think that means and why?

This verse also suggests that numbering our days helps us "gain a heart of wisdom." How would you describe the connection between numbering our days and gaining wisdom?

Numbering our days is typically not a pleasant conversation for many people, but the Lord promises that we will gain a heart of wisdom if we do. Wisdom changes us and changes our responses. Wisdom is the difference between living care-free and care-full. The wisdom that comes from being taught by the Lord to number our days will lead us to responses like our essential documents. They help us to live carefully, not carelessly.

How does this relates to the priorities you established in the first waypoint?

In Summary

If you are working through this guide in a small group, share your stories about how you have seen God work through your own or someone else's essential documents. Provide assistance to each other as you commit to considering your essential documents from a stewardship perspective. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Complete the Essential Documents Worksheet.
- ☐ Pray about how God might use your essential documents in extraordinary ways.
- ☐ Make an appointment with a Christian professional to complete your essential documents; FM Financial can facilitate this, if desired.
- ☐ If you have essential documents, make sure you know where they are located; let your personal representative and power of attorney agents know where they can be found.
- ☐ Make a commitment to review your essential documents every three years (or sooner if there is a major life change) to make sure they fit your current life circumstances.
- ☐ Consider having a conversation with your family about your essential documents. As appropriate, share where they can be found, who is involved, and any other information you wish to convey.

Notes:

Essential Documents – Worksheet

As you begin to think about your essential documents, ask the following questions:

1. **Who would you like involved in your estate plan?** Specific roles to consider include: a) personal representative (executor) of your will; b) trustees of a revocable living trust (if applicable); c) agents for a General Durable Power of Attorney; and d) agents for a Health Care Power of Attorney.
2. **If you have minor children, who would you like to serve as guardian? Also, who would you like to be the trustee of a trust that holds and distributes funds on their behalf?**
3. **How would you like your estate distributed? Will it go 100% to your kids? Would you like funds held until your kids reach a certain age? Would you like to include anyone else? Would you like to include a distribution to any ministries that you supported during your lifetime?**

As you prepare for a meeting with a professional who can draft essential documents for you, gather the following information:

☐ **Names, addresses, telephone numbers, and birthdates for your children.**

☐ **Names, addresses, and telephone numbers for persons you want to play a particular role in your estate plan.**

☐ **Estimate of the assets / liabilities in your estate**, such as: a) bank accounts; b) real estate; c) securities; d) retirement accounts; e) life insurance; f) mortgage; g) loans; and h) any other asset or debt. You may find it helpful to gather your most recent statements for these assets / liabilities.

☐ **Copies of any estate planning documents you currently have in place (will, trust, powers of attorney, etc.)**

☐ **Names and addresses of ministries you want to continue supporting through your essential documents.**

By spending the time to think about the questions above and gather the information listed, you will be well on your way to having a productive meeting with a professional. Be sure to jot down any questions you have about essential documents so you remember to ask them in your appointment.

Emergencies

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #4
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The fourth waypoint on the Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Emergencies**:

Assess ***insurance needs*** *and build / maintain* ***3-6 months of living expenses.***

The prudent see danger and take refuge,
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

(Proverbs 27:12)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

Why do we address **Emergencies** in the Stewardship Well Done Journey?

Preparation is the key. In our lives we all will deal with emergencies both great and small. When we are prepared, we can address emergencies without disrupting our budget and impacting our priorities.

Biblical Precedent for Preparation

In Genesis 41:1-47, Joseph is guided by the Lord to prepare for a coming famine. As instructed, he stores up extra during the seven years of plenty and when the seven years of famine come, there is food for the people of Egypt, as well as their neighbors.

Have you ever sensed the Lord asking you to prepare for an emergency?

Does saving for emergencies feel like a contradiction to your faith and trust in God?

How have you dealt with financial emergencies in the past? Does your plan need adjustment?

Saving for **Emergencies** – An Act of Love

As you consider the "why" of saving for emergencies, take into account your family. Saving for emergencies can minimize the burden on loved ones when you are adequately prepared. An emergency fund also brings peace to families. Financial emergencies simply become an inconvenience, not a dire situation.

Have you ever considered that saving for emergencies is an act of love for your family? How does that thought change your perspective?

Practical Steps to Preparing for **Short-Term and Long-Term Emergencies**

1. Begin by systematically setting aside funds until you reach a $1,000 emergency fund. This will help you greatly in caring for short-term emergencies as they arise.
2. Gradually build that fund until you have three-to-six months of your salary saved. This will prepare you for longer-term situations due to the loss of a job or a medical emergency.
3. As you begin to save for emergencies, budget an amount to set aside each week/month. Even starting small can lead to big returns in the long run. If you tap into your emergency fund, be sure to budget to refill it.
4. Put boundaries around your emergency fund to keep from spending it unnecessarily.
5. Remember that your journey is unique to you. Engaging a professional to help you discern how much to save for emergencies based on your financial situation might be helpful.

How much do you currently have set aside for emergencies? Does it represent three-to-six months of your income?

If you don't have an emergency fund, how much can you assign to your budget each week/month? Do you have a savings or other account where it can be safely set aside?

How would you define an "emergency"? What qualifies as a good reason to use your emergency fund? What doesn't qualify?

Long-Term Planning and Insurance Policies

For many of us, our largest asset is our ability to earn an income. When a situation occurs that disrupts that income, insurance policies can assist us in maintaining our financial picture over the long-term. To assess your needs to a greater degree, it helps to engage a professional. A trusted advisor can help you confront and examine the tough "what if?" questions.

Preparing in advance and thinking about an emergency before it happens allows you to think much more clearly than if you wait until the emergency occurs."

Have you had the difficult "what if?" conversations with your family? Have you engaged with a professional?

Connecting **Emergencies** to Other Waypoints on the Journey

1 You have insurance and an emergency fund so your **Priorities** can continue uninterrupted.

2 You use your **Budget** to systematically set aside funds for emergencies.

3 Your **Essential Documents** address who will help manage things when you are in an emergency situation.

Emergencies –
Focus on the Word

The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty. (Proverbs 27:12)

Faith and trust in God are always part of our lives. Planning is also wise and encouraged in Scripture, as seen in Proverbs 27:12. How do you reconcile them in a cohesive way? How do they work harmoniously together?

In Psalm 44:5-8, the psalmist uses the following example of the Israelites going to battle:

> "Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes. I put no trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; but you give us victory over our enemies, you put our adversaries to shame. In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever."

The Israelites know their victory comes from the Lord and not from their own effort – yet they go to battle and fight. "I put no trust in my **bow,** my **sword** does not bring me victory."

As you think about planning for emergencies, what are your "bow" and "sword"? What are some ways you might put too much trust in them?

How do Philippians 4:6 and Philippians 4:19 give you peace as you think about planning for emergencies?

Write a short prayer asking God to help you plan and yet always trust in Him.

In Summary

If you are working through this guide in a small group, discuss how planning for emergencies has helped you navigate a difficult time. Also share how your faith in God sustained you in a time of emergency. In your group, pray for one another that the Lord would provide the wisdom and guidance needed to adequately prepare for emergencies, and yet express your complete faith and trust in God as you pray – knowing that He alone sustains us in times of need. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Pray that God would guide you and give you peace as you prepare for emergencies and trust in Him.
- ☐ Make a plan to save $1000 to start an emergency fund. Include this as a line item in your budget.
- ☐ Decide what type of account to use for your emergency fund.
- ☐ Put boundaries around your emergency fund by documenting acceptable / unacceptable uses.
- ☐ Once you have saved $1000, make a plan to save 3-6 months of income to fully fund your emergency fund. Include this as a line item in your budget.
- ☐ If your emergency fund is fully funded, make sure you have a place in your budget to replenish it as needed.
- ☐ Review your current insurance policies – auto insurance, home / renters insurance, health insurance and health savings plans, life insurance, disability insurance, long-term care insurance, etc.
- ☐ Document insurance contact information and details for your loved ones after you pass away.
- ☐ Make sure the beneficiary designation(s) on your insurance policies are up to date (if applicable).
- ☐ Meet with a professional to make sure your emergency fund and insurance policies are tailored to your specific needs.

Notes:

Retirement

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #5
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The fifth waypoint on the Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Retirement**:

Make monthly contributions to ***capture all 401(k) and 403(b) matching funds.***

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens.

(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

A Definition of Retirement

Retirement conjures up many images of taking life easy and not going to work. However, a better definition of retirement can be summed up in the question, *"When do you want to be financially independent?"* Financial independence can open you up to follow a calling of God that perhaps you've not been able to fulfill while working.

How do you define retirement?

Retirement as we know it today is not found in the Bible. But what biblical principles or stories might give us insight into how retirement fits into the *Stewardship Well Done Journey*?

What might retirement set you free to do for the Lord and His kingdom? How does this relate to the priorities you established in the first waypoint?

Retirement is active – a time to continue your God-given calling in a new and fresh way. There is gratification in serving others and making the most of our retirement years.

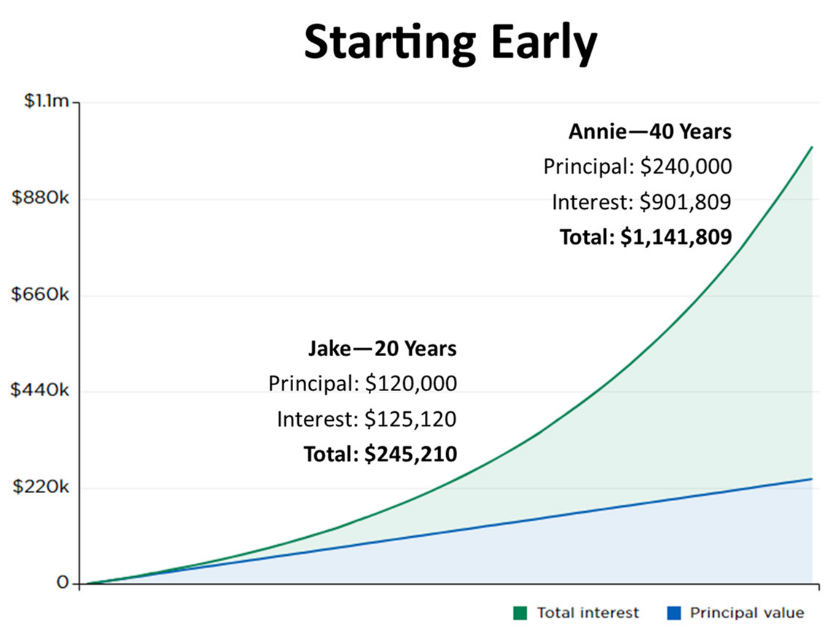
What might you do to serve others if you your working every day?

Why is it important to start early when planning for retirement?

Starting as early as possible allows your investments to compound for a longer period of time. For instance, if your investments double every ten years, then the more decades you have for your investments to grow, the better.

Consider the following example:

Annie saves $500/month in her retirement account for 40 years. With 6.5% compounding interest, her investment ($240,000) will be worth over $1.1 million. Her friend, Jake, started saving later. He saved $500/month for 20 years. With 6.5% compounding interest, his investment ($120,000) will be worth approximately $245,000.



If you haven't started early, **the key is just to start saving**. If you begin later in life you might need to save extra, but it is still possible to make significant progress in saving for retirement.

Where are you on the journey to retirement? Did you start saving early or later in life?

How can I leverage my retirement options?

Many people are not taking advantage of matching retirement savings offered through their employer, such as a 401(k) or 403(b) fund. Leveraging those matching funds is one helpful way to build retirement savings.

What retirement options are available to you in your employment? Have you taken advantage of them? Why or why not?

If your employer does not offer a retirement savings plan there are other options available to you. A Traditional or Roth IRA is a good way to begin saving on your own. A financial adviser can be helpful to go through all the options available in your particular situation.

Final Thoughts

We have touched on several concepts regarding retirement. However, at this point on the *Stewardship Well Done Journey*, we are simply stressing that you make monthly contributions to capture all 401(k) and 403(b) matching funds. This is basically free money you don't want to lose! After that, if you have consumer debt, it is generally better to pay down the debt before directing more funds toward retirement. Waypoint #7 – SAVE is the step where, among other saving, you can focus on fully funding your retirement.

Retirement –
Focus on the Word

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

The wisdom of Scripture reminds us that life plays out in “seasons.” There are seasons of growing up, being educated, emerging into adulthood, going to college or beginning your career, starting and raising a family, and approaching retirement.

It is wise to identify not only what season you’re in, but to see the big picture and prepare for other seasons of life yet to come. Such is the case with retirement. When you’re young, you may not understand the importance of saving for retirement, but with wisdom, you can save and prepare for a day when you can be financially independent.

What season of life are you in now?

What is God calling you to do in your current season of life? How is He calling you to prepare for your next season?

Looking back, what wisdom might you give to someone experiencing a season of life you have already lived through?

Write a short prayer asking God to help you recognize your current season in life and see the big picture for your future.

In Summary

If you are working through this guide in a small group, discuss various ways you have prepared for retirement and how planning has helped you dream about fulfilling your God-given calling. In your group, pray for one another that the Lord would provide the wisdom and guidance needed to adequately prepare for retirement, and yet express your complete faith and trust in God as you pray – knowing that He alone sustains us. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey.*

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Pray about what God might be calling you to do for Him in retirement.
- ☐ Review your priorities and consider how you can continue them in retirement.
- ☐ Talk with your employer about the retirement benefits offered.
- ☐ Set up automatic contributions to capture all matching funds.
- ☐ Remember to ask about retirement benefits anytime you are interviewing for a job.
- ☐ Begin to explore retirement options outside of your employer (Traditional IRA, Roth IRA, etc.).
- ☐ Consider meeting with an adviser for retirement advice tailored to your situation.

Debt

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #6
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The sixth waypoint on the
Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Debt**:

Pay off *all credit card and consumer debt.*

Let no debt remain outstanding,
except the continuing debt to love one another.

(Romans 13:8)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

Is all **Debt** bad?

It is best to avoid debt whenever you can. However, it's not always possible. Two good rules apply when considering going into debt:

1. **Avoid debt on deprecating assets.** When you are purchasing an asset that begins to immediately depreciate in value – things like appliances, household furnishings, or even vehicles – it is best to avoid debt.
2. **Debt on appreciating assets makes better sense.** When you are purchasing an asset that appreciates in value – things like a home or even education – that makes better sense. However, you should always enter into debt with caution and a plan to eliminate the debt as soon as possible.

Consider any financial debt you currently have. Is it for appreciating assets, depreciating assets, or both?

What plans do you have in place, or would you consider, to pay down your debt sooner?

Dealing With the Personal and Emotional Side of Being in **Debt**

Debt can often cause feelings of shame. The enemy uses shame to keep us from living a victorious and hopeful life. Shame leads some people to hide their true financial situation. Shame also leads to fear of revealing your situation, even in the safety of a sound counseling environment.

What emotions have you experienced because of debt? Can you relate to shame and/or fear?

What lies does the enemy tell about money and debt?

Debt keeps us from being the person God wants us to be.

The burden of debt can keep us from being all that God has called us to be. Debt can also hold us back from dreaming about the possibilities our life can hold. Bringing our debt into the light can cause the burden to lift and encourage us to dream about the life God has called us to.

What God-given dreams are you holding back because of debt?

How would your life be different if the burden of debt was lifted?

Debt can cause tension in families.

Marital relationships and family dynamics can be greatly affected by the tensions that arise from meeting debt obligations.

How have your marriage and family relationships been affected because of debt?

What steps might you take to repair relationships damaged because of debt?

Steps to Get Out of **Debt**

1. **Look at your debt honestly.** You need to be willing to "flip on the light switch in the dark room" of your debt and have an honest look at it.
2. **Step up to your debt.** Be methodical in making payments and honoring each commitment you made.

These two steps open the door for shame to be removed and steps to be taken in the direction of freedom. Scripture reminds us that "The borrower is slave to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). Therefore, begin to take back your life from the bondage of debt by stepping up to your commitments.

Have you tended to step up to your debt or step away from it?

How can the brave step of honesty about your debt be an exercise in freedom?

It is also important that you make a commitment to stop going into debt.

If you are trying to stop a water leak, you must plug the hole. This may seem obvious, but it represents a radical shift in thinking. Write out your commitment and sign/date it. Keep it where it will serve as a constant reminder and steer you back on course as needed.

How Did I Get Here?

In order to break the habit of debt, it is important to ask yourself some important questions. How did you get here? What circumstances brought you to the place of going in debt? Was it feelings of "deserving" something you could not afford, or shopping as a coping mechanism? Was it expenses that outweighed income? Was it being unprepared for an emergency? Unless you can honestly face the "why" question, you are likely to repeat the cycle of going into debt.

Why are you in debt – what brought you this place?

Have you repeated the cycle of going into debt for unhelpful reasons? How can you break that cycle?

Increase and Decrease

Another positive step to get out of debt is simply to consider how you can:

Increase your income.

What can you do to generate additional income for your family and pay down extra on your debt?

Decrease expenses.

What spending can be removed from your expenses and applied to pay down debt?

At first it may seem like you are not making any progress with regard to your debt. But over time, with discipline, you will see great results as a reward for your intentionality and persistence.

In what areas can you increase income and decrease expenditures? Be creative!

> *An outside view of the situation can provide valuable perspective on your situation."*

Be Accountable

When it comes to debt, it is helpful to be in a relationship of accountability with a person or small group of trusted friends.

Who do you know that you could trust as an accountability partner regarding your debt and plans to pay it down?

Your debt may seem like a mountain that is too high to climb. **Don't be discouraged! You are not alone.** There are many real life people – young and old alike - who have paid down massive amounts of debt. It's never easy, and it often doesn't happen as quickly as we would like ... but it is possible! Pray about it, make a plan, and go for it!

Your Story

What is your debt story? Take a moment to honestly describe your debt situation. Then, begin to dream and describe your life if you were free from debt.

What are three steps you can take right now to change the trajectory of your story regarding finances and debt?

1.
2.
3.

How can contentment with what you have help set you free from debt?

Debt – Focus on the Word

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another. (Romans 13:8)

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Roman church because he knew that debt leads to bondage. However, he reminds us that there is one debt we should always remember and be ready to address, that is the debt of love to one another.

Why do you think Paul refers to our obligation to love one another as a "debt"?

As believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, we know that He paid a debt that we could never pay. His sacrifice on the cross purchased our freedom from sin and opens the way for eternal life. That creates for us a "debt", but not the kind that leads to bondage and shame. Jesus asks us to repay Him with love for God and one another. Jesus loved us so much that He gave His life, and we love Him so much that we share His love with others. That is the only debt that should remain outstanding in the life of Christ followers.

How does financial debt keep you from loving God and loving others?

Write a short prayer committing your life to repaying the debt of love because of Christ's sacrifice.

In Summary

If you are working through this guide in a small group, discuss the difficulty that debt has created for you honestly and openly. Share your insights from this lesson – what has impacted you and encouraged you to step up to your debt? Share your dreams for what life would look like if you were free from debt and pray for one another to realize these dreams. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Commit to praying about your debt. God sees and He cares!
- ☐ Use the Debt Worksheet or another tool to honestly create a picture of your total debt.
- ☐ Decide on a plan to methodically pay down your debt.
- ☐ Schedule a time to talk with a trusted friend or adviser if you need help with your plan.
- ☐ Choose an accountability partner to keep you on track; make a schedule to regularly check in.
- ☐ Write out your commitment to stop going into debt.
- ☐ Cut up your credit cards! Commit to only using debit cards or cash.
- ☐ Use an app to help you track spending.
- ☐ Brainstorm ways to increase your income or decease your spending – be creative!
- ☐ Celebrate whenever you pay off a debt!
- ☐ Dream about what you will do when you are out of debt and use it for motivation.

Notes:

Debt –
Worksheet

Your Debt Overview

Use a table similar to the following to take an honest assessment of your current debt:

Name of Debt	Amount Owed	Minimum Payment	Interest Rate

Total Monthly & Minimum Payment:

There are two common approaches to paying off debt:

Debt Snowball

Begin by making the minimum payment on ALL debts. Then apply all available funds to your SMALLEST debt. When that debt has been paid off – CELEBRATE! – and then apply all available funds to the next smallest debt. As you work your way up to your largest debt, the money you are able to apply each month “snowballs” to make a huge difference. This method gives you small victories more frequently, which can help you stay motivated. It is the most commonly used approach.

Debt Avalanche

Begin by making the minimum payment on ALL debts. Then apply all available funds to your debt with the largest interest rate. When that debt has been paid off – CELEBRATE! – and then apply all available funds to the debt with the next largest interest rate. The Debt Avalanche method helps you minimize the amount of interest you are paying over time.

Choose the method that motivates you the most and then stick to it! If you are having a hard time deciding which might be best for you, there are a number of online calculators you can use to help you decide. Simply search for “debt calculator”.

Save

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #7
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The seventh waypoint on the
Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Save**:

Set aside *more for retirement, education, future purchases, and charitable opportunities.*

Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears;
wealth from hard work grows over time.

(Proverbs 13:11 NLT)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

How does this waypoint differ from other saving on the *Stewardship Well Done Journey*?

Other waypoints on the *Stewardship Well Done Journey* that involve saving are *foundational* – they are critical to set you up for overall financial success. This step is about saving more for specific things like retirement or a major purchase.

While each journey is unique, it is generally best to first set aside savings for emergencies and to pay off all credit card and consumer debt before you start working on major savings goals. Saving for retirement is one of the most common priorities at this point. But beyond retirement, each person's savings goals will vary depending on the priorities they have set.

Additionally, this step goes beyond saving for short-term things (within the next five years) - for instance, saving for a child's college education over the next 13 years or saving for retirement over the next 30 years. The earnings on long-term savings become an important part of the equation at this point.

Do you have both short-term and long-term saving goals? What are they?

> "*Priorities inform the purpose behind your spending and saving.*"

Why is it important to know what we are saving for?

Some people may save without having any specific goal other than to amass wealth. Contrastingly, others may spend without considering that a lack of saving could be damaging to their financial situation now and in the future. Neither of those two approaches reveal any consideration of priorities. Understanding the "why" behind your saving informs how much to save and when it is appropriate to spend.

Overall, are you more of a saver or a spender?

What are the reasons you save? What are the reasons you spend?

Earn ... Save ... GIVE

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, suggested three primary principles regarding the use of money for followers of Jesus Christ. First, **earn all you can** – be diligent in your work and do your work as unto the Lord. Second, **save all you can** – be committed to a simple lifestyle so that you can save. And, finally, **give all you can** – be generous on every occasion as the Scriptures teach us. In doing so, Wesley believed we would be honorable to both God and other people.

> To all the rich of this world, I command you not to be wrapped in thoughts of pride over your prosperity, or rely on your wealth, for your riches are unreliable and nothing compared to the living God. Trust instead in the one who lavishes upon us all good things, fulfilling our every need. Remind the wealthy to be rich in remarkable works of extravagant generosity, willing to share with others. These spiritual investments will provide a beautiful foundation for their lives and secure for them a great future, as they lay their hands upon the meaning of true life.
>
> (1 Timothy 6:17-19 PAS)

The key is not to be wealthy simply for the sake of having wealth. Each of us is called to live a life of generosity with whatever resources God has entrusted to our care – whether it be little or much. Being generous allows us to make a spiritual investment in others as commanded by Scripture.

Have you been trusting your savings instead of trusting God?

How do John Wesley's principles align with your reasons for saving?

While we are all called to generosity, some have been given the spiritual gift of giving. Have you ever considered that having resources opens the door to a God-given calling to "works of extravagant generosity"? How does this shift your thoughts about wealth accumulation?

Practical Tips to Begin **Saving**:

1. **Put a line item in your budget specifically for saving.** Intentionality is essential in saving.
2. **Ask yourself two helpful questions as you save:**
   a. What is your goal? (What are you saving for and how much is needed?)
   b. What is your timeline? (When do you want to accomplish your goal?)
3. **It's good to engage a professional.** The longer time you have to save, the more your earnings can work for you in accomplishing your goals. A professional can help you decide what type of account is best for you.
4. **Developing the habit of saving is more important than the amount you save.** Get in the habit of saving, even if it is a small amount.
5. **Give and be generous all along the way as you save.** Don't succumb to the temptation to withhold giving because you are saving.

Which of these tips stands out the most to you and why? How is it helpful to you?

What is your primary takeaway about saving?

Save –
Focus on the Word

Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows over time. (Proverbs 13:11 NLT)

What stands out the most to you in this proverb?

There are many ways that money "quickly disappears". Some may be justifiable, like spending on emergencies, or critical circumstances, or even daily living expenses. Others are less justifiable, like "get-rich-quick schemes", not investing wisely, gambling, or other fast tracks to wealth.

Do you have experienced money that "quickly disappears"? What is your experience and your story?

Conversely, do you have personal experience with money that "grows over time"? How has hard work and diligent saving been a blessing to you?

Proverbs often contain both practical wisdom and spiritual wisdom. What practical wisdom do you take from this verse? What spiritual wisdom?

How does this proverb resonate with John Wesley's three principles (earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can)?

Write a prayer that God would make you a person who dilligently works to earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.

In Summary

If you are working through this guide in a small group, share your stories of saving and how God has blessed you through generosity – both in giving and receiving. In your group, pray for one another that the Lord would provide the wisdom and guidance needed to know why you are saving and to give all along the way. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Pray and ask God for wisdom to know why you save as well as how you can be generous.
- ☐ Review your priorities and determine how they inform your savings goals.
- ☐ Write out your short-term and long-term saving goals; be sure to include a timeline for each.
- ☐ Include a line item in your budget for your savings goals.
- ☐ Set up direct deposit into your savings/investment accounts.
- ☐ Consider meeting with a professional for guidance on savings goals, types of investment accounts, diversification, and risk tolerance for your savings. FM Financial can facilitate this, if desired.
- ☐ Engage with a friend for accountability in developing good saving habits and meeting your goals.

Notes:

Plan

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #8
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The eighth waypoint on the
Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Plan**:

Engage a professional *for* ***comprehensive financial planning*** *and* ***investment management.***

Plans fail for lack of counsel,
but with many advisers they succeed.

(Proverbs 15:22)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

What makes this waypoint unique from the rest of the waypoints on the *Stewardship Well Done Journey*?

Planning is part of other waypoints on the *Stewardship Well Done Journey*, but each of the other waypoints can be engaged individually. This particular waypoint brings all of them together into one comprehensive plan for your overall financial picture. It takes into consideration how well you've done on all the other individual waypoints, and gives you a picture of your overall financial situation going forward to give you hope and peace.

If you have engaged with the other waypoints on the journey, how do you think you are you doing? Are the pieces fitting together? What is in place now for you that was not before?

> *"Planning is the step where we put it all together."*

Have you ever engaged a professional for a comprehensive financial plan? If not, is there a particular reason?

What is the biblical context to **Plan**?

Wisdom is found all through the Bible. As just one example, Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."

Furthermore, we see in the Bible that our faith is designed to be lived out in community. Romans 12:5 says, "So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Each part needs the others!

Jesus, when teaching His disciples about counting the cost of following Him, used this example in Luke 14:28: "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?" Planning, wisdom, and the encouragement to engage in community are all found throughout the pages of Scripture.

What other Scriptures can you think of that teach about the value of planning, wisdom, and engaging in community?

How can you apply these verses to your finances?

What are the benefits of working with a financial adviser?

1. A trained adviser has the knowledge and ability to pull together all the components of your financial picture into a wholistic plan.
2. Advisers are objective. They advise from an objective perspective, taking only your best interests into account when putting together a plan.
3. When your personal circumstances change unexpectedly, the advice from a trained, objective adviser can help you come to wise solutions to keep your plan on course.
4. A trained adviser can help you navigate the financial world. Advisers live in the financial world every day and bring all their knowledge and expertise to your personal situation, helping you get the most from your financial potential.

Which of these benefits resonates with you the most and why?

Have you experienced unexpected changes in your life that caused a shift in your finances? How might an adviser be of benefit to you during those times?

How do you select a financial adviser?

1. **It is critical that you find an adviser who is a fiduciary.** Fiduciaries are legally and ethically required to act with integrity in your best interest, providing you with peace of mind and confidence in their actions.
2. **Ask how your adviser is compensated.** There are many ways advisers can be paid for their services and there is no particular "right or wrong" method. It helps, however, to know how they are paid for the services they provide.
3. **Ask a trusted friend who they use for financial advice.** Referrals from trusted friends can be a great way to get connected.
4. **For followers of Jesus, finding an adviser with a shared biblical perspective is priceless.** Not only are they looking out for your best interest, but they see the world the way you see the world – through the lens of faith in Christ.

What are the advantages you can think of for working with a financial adviser that shares your Christian world view? How might that play out in practical ways?

What can I expect when I meet with a financial adviser?

1. **It is quite normal to feel a bit of discomfort when you first meet with a financial adviser.** Revealing the details of your financial picture to someone other than a spouse or close family member can feel uncomfortable, but don't let that discourage you from getting the wisdom and support you need.
2. **Expect to engage in conversation.** Your adviser will ask many questions about your financial picture and your life story. Be prepared to be an "open book" and share freely with your adviser. The better they know you, the better they are able to help.
3. **Advisers genuinely want to help you.** You will not experience judgment from your adviser concerning your situation or the choices you have made regarding your finances.
4. **Expext to continue the conversation with periodic meetings.** Just as you check in with your doctor or dentist from time to time, you will need to have regular "check-ups" with your adviser regarding your financial plan.

Do you generally feel uncomfortable discussing financial matters? What would help put you at ease?

How has this lesson encouraged you to consider a financial plan with a trusted adviser?

Plan –

Focus on the Word

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.
(Proverbs 15:22)

In our life of faith, we believe in wise counsel. In fact, every class, worship service, and convention we've attended is our desire to engage with wise, biblical counsel concerning how we live out our faith in everyday life.

It's likely you've personally met with a pastor or other trusted counselor regarding the deep matters of your faith. Knowing that God cares about the way we handle our finances, should we not also seek faith-based, wise counsel for our financial picture?

Have you ever considered that just as God calls ministers and missionaries, He might also call financial advisers to journey along with Christians in this life?

How do your faith and finances intersect? Does your faith inform your big financial decisions as well as the small?

In what ways has community encouraged you in your Christian life? How could community encourage you in your financial life?

Stewardship Well Done involves careful, thoughtful, faith-informed planning. Write a short prayer asking God to help you plan wisely. State your calling in your prayer and ask God to help bring it to full fruition through careful planning. Ask Him to lead you to a wise and trusted adviser who can help.

In Summary

If you are working through this guide in a small group, discuss which of the benefits of having a trusted financial adviser resonates the most with you and why. Talk about the biblical encouragement to live our lives in community and how community has enriched your faith. Discuss how the community of faith might spur each of us to be better stewards of our finances. Search the Word of God for wisdom in regard to these issues.

Finally, pray for and with one another that God would bring all the plans you discussed to full fruition. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ Pray and ask God to guide you and to help you be open as you consider meeting with a financial adviser.
- ☐ Ask your friends about their experience working with a financial adviser.
- ☐ Ask for recommendations to help you find a financial adviser. FM Financial can help connect you with an adviser who shares your faith perspective, if desired.
- ☐ Begin gathering the items listed on the Plan Worksheet to meet with a financial adviser.
- ☐ Make a list of questions you would like to ask a financial adviser.
- ☐ Ask your financial adviser how they are compensated if you are unsure.
- ☐ Commit to putting your fears aside and being an “open book” with your financial adviser.
- ☐ Consider if it is time for an update with your financial adviser; regular “check-ups” are helpful.

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Plan – Worksheet

When you engage with a financial adviser, the first comprehensive dive into your financial picture can be a little overwhelming. Doing a financial plan involves analyzing your present accounts and coverages to understand if any changes should be made now to protect your future. The more thorough you are in providing financial details, the better your adviser will understand your unique financial situation and be able to provide suggestions and solutions.

The following is a list of common information items a financial adviser may request from you:

- ☐ **Current income (if still working)**
- ☐ **Social Security income/estimated benefit**
- ☐ **Pension benefits**
- ☐ **Life Insurance, Health Insurance, and Long-Term Care Insurance coverage**
- ☐ **Statements for all bank accounts, investments, retirement accounts and annuities**
- ☐ **Real estate values, mortgage rates, payments, etc.**
- ☐ **General monthly budget**
- ☐ **Debt – credit cards, student loans, vehicles, etc.**
- ☐ **Any financial goals you would like to discuss – retirement, education, vacations, gifts, major purchases, etc.**

While no two situations are alike, these items will help an adviser start putting the pieces together so you can see a comprehensive view of your financial health. It might take a bit of work to gather all the information, but the perspective gained is well worth the effort.

Legacy

Personal / Group Study Guide for Waypoint #9
on the **Stewardship Well Done Journey**

Click here or scan the QR to watch the video

The ninth waypoint on the
Stewardship Well Done Journey is **Legacy**:

Use ***proven gifting strategies*** *to* ***maximize your impact*** *on the people and ministries you love.*

One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.

(Psalm 145:4)

Click any waypoint icon to jump to the corresponding Personal / Group Study Guide.

How does **legacy** relate to the rest of the *Stewardship Well Done Journey?*

Your legacy is a culmination of everything you've done in your life and is what you leave long after you're gone. It is a continuation of your priorities.

When it comes to legacy, you start with the end in mind; therefore, every step you take on your journey moves in the direction of your legacy.

What do you want to personally leave behind long after you're gone?

> *"Legacy is a continuation of our priorities."*

What steps are you taking today that are helping to build your legacy?

What is **legacy**?

When it comes to legacy, you can't be known for everything, but you should be known for *something*.

For many of us who follow Jesus, we can identify legacy as leaving a lasting impact on our relationships, family, and the ministries we love and support.

As a follower of Jesus, what lasting impact do you want to leave on your:

RELATIONSHIPS	FAMILY	MINISTRIES

What is unique about you that has nothing to do with finances? How might that attribute become a key part of your legacy?

What is unique about your ministry priorities that could be part of your legacy?

Leaving a **Lasting Legacy**

1. **Live your life with "open hands."** When you hold your talents and resources before God as an offering with open hands, He will use them to make a lasting difference in the kingdom.

How can you live your life with your hands open before God? Are there any areas of your life where you are living with closed hands?

2. **It's not what you have, but how you leave it, that makes a difference.** Often the small things in our lives are overlooked as not having a lasting impact, but they can – it's all in how we leave things.

What family "treasures" do you have that might have a lasting impact on your family, friends, and the ministries you love?

3. **Impact is not defined by amount.** The story of the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44) reminds us that giving all we have is a posture of the heart, not a matter of the amount we give.

What can we learn about legacy from the story of the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44)?

What steps can I take today to build a lasting **legacy**?

1. **Go on your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey* giving careful attention to each waypoint.**

How are you doing on your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*? How committed are you to each waypoint?

2. **The opportunity to leave a great legacy doesn't begin at death.** Consider leaving gifts to people and ministries you care about during your lifetime.

How is your legacy an active part of your life today? What can you begin to leave behind even now?

3. **Talk about legacy with your family.** Get them involved in the priorities you have for your resources.

Is your family involved in your legacy planning? Do you have shared family plans and goals for your legacy?

4. **Remember that appreciated assets make great legacy gifts.** Cash may be the easiest gift to give, but appreciated securities, real estate, etc. may offer more benefits.

What appreciated assets do you own that could be converted into income and/or ministry gifts?

Legacy –
Focus on the Word

One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. (Psalm 145:4)

This passage from Psalm 145 speaks to the generational nature of our faith. Part of our legacy as believers is how we commend the works of God to the next generation. Whether we are young or old, we should develop the habit of sharing our faith and life experiences across generations. We can all learn from one another.

How are you sharing God and His works with others cross-generationally?

Good stewardship does not always come naturally to us – it is most often a learned behavior that is part of our discipleship. Was good stewardship modeled for you and taught to you? How do you believe legacy is impacted by good stewardship?

Write a short prayer asking God to help you share your faith across generations. Ask Him to make part of your legacy be the impartation of your life's testimony to someone from another generation.

In Summary

If you are working through this guide in a small group, have a conversation about your legacy desires and then pray for and with one another that God would bring all of the plans you discussed to full fruition. Talk about people you know who have left a strong legacy. Be accountable to following through on prayers that need to be prayed and plans that need to be made and enacted to see your legacy become more and more of a reality.

If you need a coach to help you, FM Financial is here to help. Our professionals invite you to see how having a friend who understands your God-given calling makes all the difference in helping you walk out your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

Practical Next Steps

- ☐ As you regularly pray about your finances, specifically pray about your legacy and living with open hands.
- ☐ Write down 5 things you can do today to begin working on your legacy.
- ☐ Look at your appreciated assets to determine if using them as a gift could lead to multiple benefits.
- ☐ Consider what parts of your legacy you would like to give during your lifetime, and what can be given at death.
- ☐ Determine a time to meet with your family about your personal legacy, as well as the possibility of a family legacy.
- ☐ Have a conversation with a giving professional to learn more about specific tax-wise strategies of giving. FM Financial can facilitate this conversation, if desired.
- ☐ Remember to think wholistically about your legacy … not just financially!

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Dear Friend:

Congratulations on completing the *Stewardship Well Done Journey* workbook! We pray that you found the waypoints thought-provoking and impactful. It is our hope that the work you have done will lead to greater hope, peace, and joy in Christ.

We encourage you to keep traveling on your personal *Stewardship Well Done Journey*. The journey is never easy, and you may experience times of discouragement or frustration, but the work you put in is worth it! Let prayer, your priorities, and determination guide you.

As you encounter twists and turns in life, you will find it helpful to revisit various waypoints and make adjustments. For example, if you get a new job, you may need to revisit your budget and make sure you are capturing all available matching retirement funds. Perhaps when you become empty nesters you will want to review your priorities or begin saving toward a dream vacation. Don't forget - regular check-ups and modifications are an important part of the journey.

Traveling on the journey is always more enjoyable in community. Be willing to share your journey with others and learn from their experiences as well; celebrate victories and encourage one another. And remember, there are financial professionals who can help. You may find various professionals in your local area or faith community. If desired, FM Financial has coaches available to give you guidance on various waypoints. We would also count it a privilege to talk further with you about our core planning, investing, and giving services and help you take your best next step.

If you aren't sure what your best next step might be, you might find it helpful to take the **Stewardship Well Done Journey Assessment** at **fmfinancial.org**. A coach will review your responses and get back with you with a recommendation.

Again, thank you for traveling with us. May the Lord bless you as you continue traveling on your own *Stewardship Well Done Journey*.

With all glory to God,
Your friends at FM Financial

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FM Financial is the financial services ministry of FMCUSA.
We provide professional guidance and investment management from a biblical perspective in the areas of:

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- Focused retirement planning
- Comprehensive financial planning
- Meaningful legacy planning

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