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# Restoring Our Finances

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First Episcopal District Bible Study

## The Year of **RESTORATION**

### Key Verse:

*For where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also.*

[Matthew 6:21]

### Study Passage:

*Luke 15:11-24*



### THE RECKONING

Financial bondage is real and can be a major obstacle that prevents us from seeking God's purpose for our lives. We want money we don't have; we spend money we can't afford to spend; and we borrow money and put ourselves into debt – all which hinder our relationship with God. Some of us are so far in debt that we can never see ourselves getting our heads above water.

For others, our finances have become such a stronghold on our lives that we are blinded to the direction God may have for us. We cannot see what can be for what is.

Many of us think the key to our happiness is money, or that we will have more power if we had more money. Often, the decisions that we make

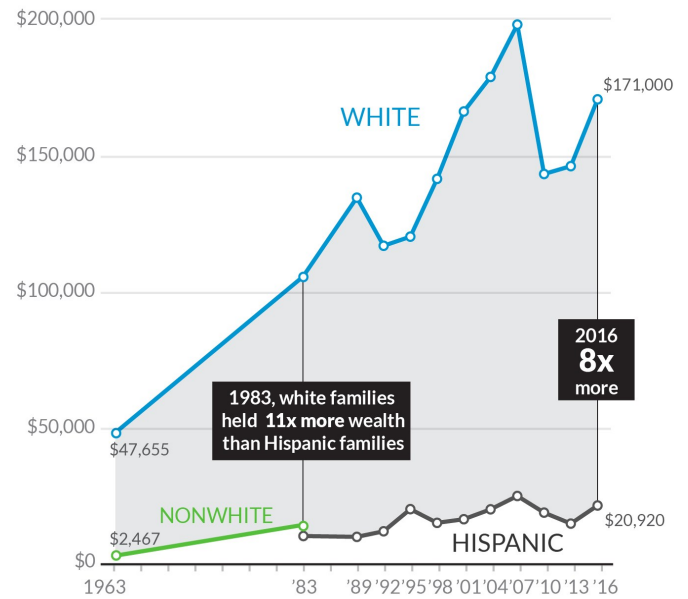
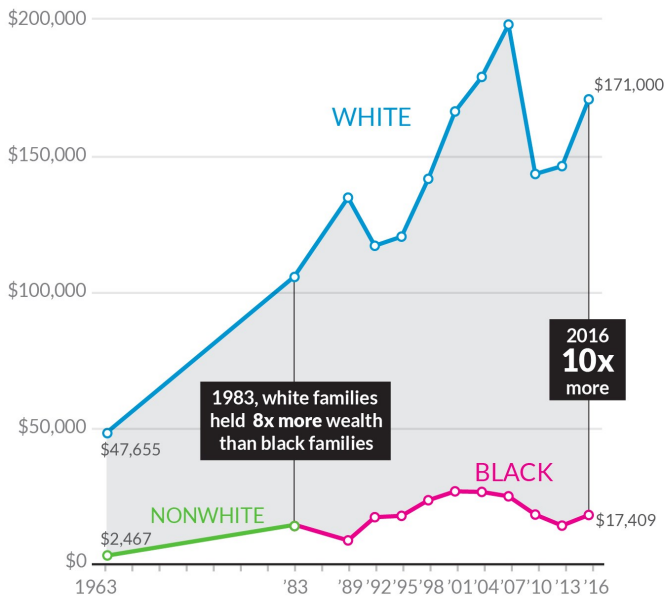
that lead to financial bondage have roots in deeper, more serious issues that we have not dealt with. We need to be delivered from believing that money is a cure for everything that sickens us and that it holds the key to us having power and self-esteem.



Your personal and business decisions should honor God. If you are not able to tithe, if you are living from

paycheck to paycheck, if you find that you are always arguing with those close to you about money, if your finances and your handling of them is stressing you out, it's time to restore your finances. Managing your finances should not feel restricting or like a hindrance. If done well, good financial management leads to freedom.

## Median Family Wealth by Race/Ethnicity, 1963–2016



Source: Urban Institute calculations from Survey of Financial Characteristics of Consumers 1962 (December 31), Survey of Changes in Family Finances 1963, and Survey of Consumer Finances 1983–2016.

Notes: 2016 dollars. No comparable data are available between 1963 and 1983. Black/Hispanic distinction within nonwhite population available only in 1983 and later.

URBAN INSTITUTE

## RECLAMATION

Financial ruin is not the final verdict and our financial failures do not have to define us. No matter how far we may have strayed financially, “returning home” by surrendering our finances to God is the key to financial wholeness.



## RECOVERY

The parable in Luke 15:11-24 tells the story of a young man who was the younger son of a certain man. This younger son asked for his inheritance, received it, mismanaged it and found himself in a bad way, so decided to return home. The younger son’s share of the estate was one-third of his father’s wealth (Deuteronomy 21:17). The firstborn son gets a double share, so this younger son was entitled to one third. In most cases, he would have received it at his father’s death. The younger son initiated this early inheritance which also showed a disregard for his father’s authority. After spending his portion so quickly on foolish things, he ended up persuading a local farmer to hire him to feed his pigs. According to the Law of Moses, pigs were unclean animals and were not to be eaten or used for sacrifices. Jews were not even allowed to touch them. For a Jew to stoop to feeding pigs was a great humiliation. He had actually hit “rock bottom”. Sometimes our spending habits and handling of our finances can make us hit “rock bottom” also. This is sometimes what is needed before we can come to our “spending” senses and make us look up to the one who can help us.

## Luke 15:11-24

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’



<sup>22</sup> “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

## RECONSTRUCTION

Our key verse, Matthew 6:21 causes us to think about what we value most. Do we love God more than we love money? When we are spending and spending, often we are using our money for selfish reasons. There is nothing wrong with having money or wealth. The Bible is clear: it is not money, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil. When we love money more than we love God, then we have a problem. When we spend foolishly, we are mismanaging our funds and end up having money troubles. Debt overwhelms us, our bills start piling up, and we feel we will never get above water. Do we wonder why we don’t have more? Maybe God doesn’t give us more because we don’t do well managing what we already have.

1. Was it wrong for the younger son to ask for his inheritance early? Would you feel differently if he hadn’t wasted it?
2. How significant is it that his father received him with open arms? Is there a lesson here?
3. Would the son have learned more from his mistakes if his father didn’t receive him as well and instead made him as one of his servants?
4. Does this warm welcome from his father lead us to believe that we can mismanage our funds with no consequences?



## RENEWAL

To restore our finances, we need to:

**GET CLOSER TO GOD** - To get closer to God, we have to dig into His Word and act on what He requires us to do. The Word in Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to “Trust in the Lord with all our heart and to lean not to our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledge Him and He will direct our paths.” As in anything we do in our lives, we need to ask God to help us make the right decisions regarding our finances. If you take the time to listen, He will help you curb that unbeneficial appetite for spending.

**BUDGET** - Make a budget and stick to it. Set up a plan for your spending and getting out of debt. Pay down what you have without accumulating more debt. One of the biggest mistakes we make is that we say we want to be debt free, yet we keep spending. Your plan should include immediately stopping use of credit cards and beginning to pay down the one with the highest interest first. Still pay on the others (at least the minimum if you have more than one, which is likely), but pay larger amounts on the one with the highest interest and get it paid off. Once that is done, completely pay off the next highest interest card with larger payments while continuing to pay at least the minimum on the others. Continue this process until they are all clear. During this period, what you can't pay for in cash or from your debit card, (which is money in your account), you don't need.

**TAKE SMALL STEPS** - It is important to not worry about what others have, things they may be doing, or places they may be going. So what if you see someone get a new car? Your time will come. So what if you can't take that vacation others are taking? Take one you can afford and save for that big one. Don't underestimate how important it is to take baby steps at first and build yourself to larger ones. The key is to be consistent.

**DON'T GET DISCOURAGED** - When you make God your priority, He will supply your needs. When we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our heart. You may feel you only have a little after paying your tithes first, then paying on your debt. Don't underestimate what God can do with the little. Little becomes much, when we place it in the Master's hand. When you continue to tithe even through your struggles, God will not only meet your needs but bless you with wisdom in handling your other matters.



## REVIVAL

1. While you may not have wasted an inheritance, can you think of examples of how you may have spent excessively and ended up with too much debt?
2. How will you better manage what belongs to God and what belongs to you? Are there obstacles you need to overcome to move to financial freedom?
3. Taking an honest evaluation of your circumstances, will restoring your finances assist you in being more committed to giving to the church in a way that honors God?
4. What can the church do to assist congregants and the community in restoring their finances?