



How to Control Spending



THE CHALLENGE

A look at your bank statements and bills reveals that your money is slipping away like sand that slips through your fingers. You have been married for only a short time, and your spending is out of control. Is your spouse to blame? Not so fast! Think as a team, and consider some factors that may have caused *both* of you to get into this predicament.*

* Although this article is directed to newlyweds, the principles discussed apply to all married couples.



WHY IT HAPPENS

Adjustment. If you were living at home before you got married, you may be new to the world of paying bills and sharing expenses. It could also be that you and your spouse have different approaches to money. For example, one might be more inclined to *spend* while the other is more inclined to *save*. It takes time for a couple to adjust and develop an agreed-upon method of handling money.

Procrastination. Jim, now a successful businessman, admits that when he was a newlywed, his poor organizational skills cost him dearly. “Because I delayed paying bills,” he says, “my wife and I ended up spending thousands of dollars in late fees. We ran out of money!”

The “invisible money” trap. It is easy to overspend when you cannot see the money leaving your wallet or purse. That may be the case if you handle most of your transactions by credit or debit card, Internet purchasing, and electronic banking. The lure of easy credit can also make it easy for newlyweds to overspend.

Whatever the cause, money issues can tear at the seams of your marriage. “Most couples report money as a top problem, no matter how much they have,” says the book *Fighting for Your Marriage*. “Money is a ripe area for conflict.”

Like weeds in a garden, debt that is ignored will simply grow—and grow



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Resolve to cooperate. Instead of blaming each other, work as a team to bring spending under control. Decide at the outset that you will not allow this issue to drive a wedge between you.—*Bible principle: Ephesians 4:32.*

Set up a budget. Write down all of your expenses, no matter how small, for a month. That will help you to figure out where your money is going and to identify any unnecessary expenditures. “You have to stop the bleeding,” says Jim, quoted earlier. “That’s a saying in medicine *and* in business.”

Make a list of your necessary expenses, including food, clothing, rent or mortgage, car payments, and the like. Put a ‘price tag’ next to each category, projecting how much it will cost you within a given time, perhaps a month.—*Bible principle: Luke 14:28.*

“The borrower is a slave to the lender.”
—Proverbs 22:7

Allocate funds each month for separate expenses (food, rent, fuel, and so forth). Some do this by putting cash in envelopes, one for each expense category.* If an envelope becomes depleted, they will either stop spending in that category or transfer money from another envelope.

Rethink your view of possessions. Happiness does not depend on having the latest things. After all, Jesus said: “Even when a person has an abundance, his life does not result from the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15) Often, your spending habits indicate whether you believe those words.—*Bible principle: 1 Timothy 6:8.*

Make adjustments. “Things like cable TV and going out to eat may sound affordable at first, but they can hurt financially in the long run,” says Aaron, who has been married for two years. “We had to learn to say no to some things in order to live within our means.” ■

* If you pay electronically or by credit card, keep a written record in each envelope, rather than cash.

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another.”
—Ephesians 4:32.

“Who of you wanting to build a tower does not first sit down and calculate the expense?”
—Luke 14:28.

“Having food and clothing, we will be content.”—1 Timothy 6:8.



**MICAH AND
MEGAN**

“Even if one person in a marriage handles the finances and pays the bills, *both* should be fully informed about their financial status. Communication goes a long way in preventing problems.”



**DAVID AND
NATALEINE**

“Plan ahead. Don’t assume that all the money you have in the bank is available to spend. If you don’t keep money in reserve, you’ll never be prepared for emergencies, such as car repairs.”