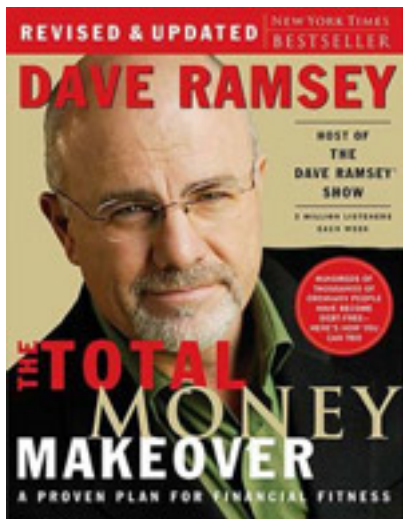


(Style on a Dime) The road to financial freedom

Written by Marcia Humphrey

Wednesday, 02 September 2009 15:35



A few days ago, while changing my bedding, I discovered a book underneath my bed on the topic of financial freedom. The author was Dave Ramsey and my mind immediately went back to a time, about eight years earlier, when my husband and I began taking steps toward financial soundness. While living in Huntsville, AL we learned of this man who hosted a call-in radio show about money management www.daveramsey.com .

I'll never forget the first time I heard his program, I thought, "He is really making good sense!" One of my favorite parts of the show was on Fridays, when people who had recently become debt-free, were invited to call in and literally yell, "I'm debt-free!!!" To my surprise, as each caller gave a brief testimonial of his or her journey to financial-freedom, I found myself encouraged and genuinely happy for them. In addition, more and more I desired to be a caller who could one day scream, to the top of my lungs, "I'm debt-free!!!"

After becoming a faithful listener of his radio program, I was thrilled to find out that he would be in our area conducting a live seminar. While we had already started following much of his advice on money matters, it was wonderful to hear his entire presentation and get further information on financial fitness. What was so appealing to me is that Dave kept it simple; he did not try to talk over our heads. He was just a regular guy who had experienced having money, going broke, and finally climbing from under the weight of debt to enjoy financial peace. He gives the kind of advice your grandma would give-the kind that makes common sense. I hope you keep reading.

Go and Give

We've all heard it said that "you reap what you sow." Could this principle be relevant during a discussion on debt-riddance? I'd argue that this principle is always relevant. Here's the deal; regardless of what you are facing in life-during times of plenty or in times of need-whenver you take your mind off of yourself and help someone (without expecting anything in return) you bestow two blessings: one for the helped and one for the helper (you). In truth, we were created to relate to others, and when we do, it lifts our spirits in an inexplicable way. Although giving doesn't cause your problems to instantly disappear, it can help you experience a sense of peace that relieves pressure. I dare you to try it.

Family First

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If you are married, it is crucial that you and your spouse are in agreement on spending, saving, and debt reduction. If you are considering marriage, for your sake, get marriage counseling, and make sure finances are discussed in detail! While every family has a different way in which they manage money, the important thing is that you agree upon the way in which income is used. Together, work out a realistic budget and stick to it.

Destroy the Plastic

Mounting credit card debt and late fees can seem to bury you deeper into a hole. Instead of hiding from creditors' phone calls, decide to regain control of the situation. Call all of your creditors and let them know of your plan to pay up (then keep your word). Resist writing hot checks (you know you can't afford those overdraft charges-you need that money to shrink your debt!).

Think Big Picture

If you are torn between which bills to pay with your last \$50, think practically. Always pay necessities first. Your electric bill and water bill always trump the Macy's bill (just remember to call Macy's and let them know when they should expect your payment).

Envelope System

Decide that cash is where it's at! Adhering to your predetermined budget, begin using cash-only for clothes, grocery, gas, entertainment and miscellaneous items. Each category gets its own envelope, which will help you stay on track.

Buddy System

Accountability is such a powerful tool. If you want to overcome an obstacle, prayerfully consider with whom you might share your goals, so that you can feel encouraged and supported.

Do you really desire to be debt-free? We do! After aggressively and persistently paying off credit card debt and car loans (we no longer buy car loans-cash only), our only debt is our home. Trust me when I tell you that as soon as we knock this last one out, we're going to throw a huge mortgage-burning party and you may even spot us riding through town yelling, "We are Debt-Free!!!!" We would love it if you joined us in our quest. In the meantime, check out Dave Ramsey books, online information, radio shows, and on television. Decide today to begin or continue your journey toward freedom-spiritual and financial (they go hand in hand). Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a low cost. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.