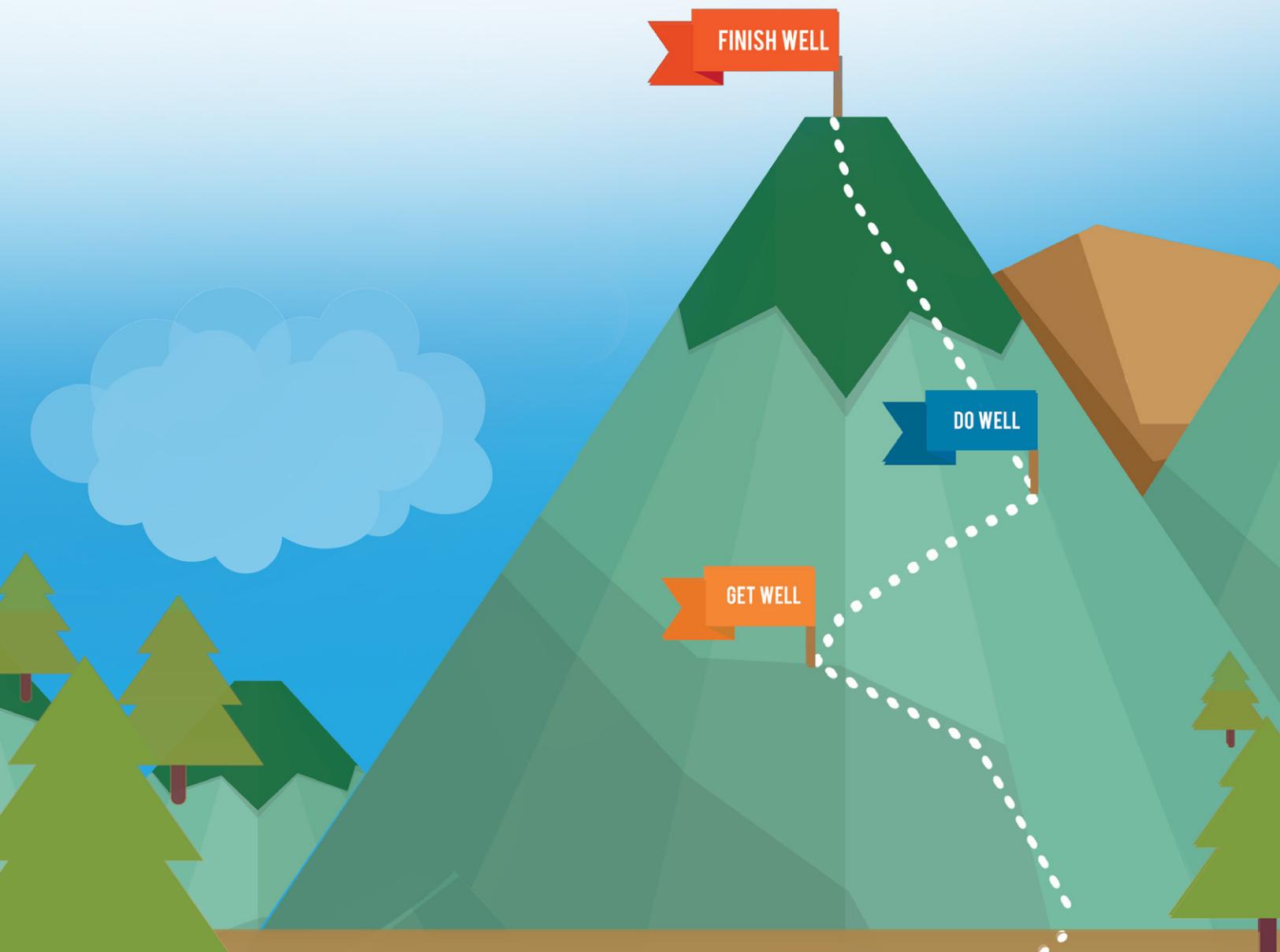




YOUR JOURNEY TO TRUE FINANCIAL FREEDOM

# Get Started Guide





# Get Started Guide

## YOUR JOURNEY TO TRUE FINANCIAL FREEDOM

### ***So what is true financial freedom and how do you know when you've arrived?***

We believe it is a journey. It is possible to be completely debt free, giving generously, saving regularly—even wealthy—and not experience the true financial freedom God intends for His people.

On the other hand, it is also possible to experience true financial freedom very early in your journey. This type of freedom is based largely on the condition of your heart and attitude, not just the condition of your finances.

Often we get so involved in the day-to-day activities of earning a living and raising a family that we forget our real purpose: to glorify God. Consequently, trivial problems such as buying a new car or advancing in our career begin to crowd our hearts, and God's plan is no longer our priority or focus.

Living as stewards of everything He entrusts to us - our time, talents, and resources - requires contentment. If we are to find true contentment, we must establish some basic guidelines:

1. A reasonable standard of living.
2. A habit of giving.
3. Godly priorities.
4. A thankful attitude.
5. A trusting spirit.
6. A pursuit of God's will.
7. A resistance to financial fear.
8. A deep trust in God's promises.

On the back of your **Money Map**, you will see a declaration of your role as a steward. These five guidelines are intended to keep you focused on placing your trust in God, finding contentment, and ultimately becoming His good and faithful steward. Say them aloud.

In the days ahead, we hope you'll return to these truths and hide them in your heart. Look up and memorize the verses that go with each. Allow the principles to become rooted deep within your heart.

On the next pages you will find links to resources to help you make progress on your journey for each destination. You can also visit the **Resources section** and **Blog** at [crown.org](http://crown.org) to find more help for each destination!



# DESTINATION ONE

## *Build Emergency Savings*

**By freeing yourself from your financial burdens, you become more capable of serving the Lord and being a faithful steward of His resources. This will bring you contentment.**

### **Track spending and create your spending plan**

If you do not already have a budget, creating one can actually be freeing! It can bring you peace and break the bonds of being a slave to money.

You can get started by downloading the [Easy Guide to a Budget You Love](#).

You can also find encouragement and help in [Crown's library of budget articles](#). A good place to start is the [6 Money Myths That You Need To Stop Believing](#).

*The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets.*

Proverbs 21:20 TLB

### **Save \$1,000 for emergencies**

This is a crucial step! It may sound counterintuitive, but you should save at least \$1,000 before working towards other goals - including paying off debt. An emergency savings account gives you something to fall back on in case of unplanned expenses, and helps you avoid using your credit card or accumulating debt. The habit of saving is completely necessary to finding financial freedom.

Start by downloading [13 Ways to Save For Your Emergency Fund](#). This will help kickstart your savings lifestyle, which can help you break the debt cycle.

Don't let it overwhelm you! [Start with what you can](#) and you will see it start to add up. Remember if you can save \$10, you can save \$100, and eventually you can save \$1,000!

### **Start giving regularly to the Lord**

Your home church is a great place to start your giving, and you may also have other ministries that you would like to support. You might not be able to give a full 10% of your gross income at this point, but you can always begin with 2%, 5%, etc.

#### **Tips to Start Tithing:**

- Consider giving first to the Lord before paying other bills.
- Commit to a percentage to tithe and do it consistently.
- Give the same percent on bonuses, commissions, and other unexpected income.
- This may be a step of faith for you, but it is one the Lord will honor.



# 2

## DESTINATION TWO

### Pay Off Credit Card Debt

**Congratulations, you have completed Destination One and are one step closer to reaching true financial freedom! Have you celebrated this achievement?**

#### Pay off credit cards

Your goal in this destination is to pay off all your credit card debt. It is typically the debt with the highest interest rates and therefore the most expensive debt that you have. By paying off your credit cards, you will make rapid progress towards having more income available to eliminate any other debts.

The first step is to stop using your credit cards and develop a debt payoff plan.

You can do this with the [Debt Snowball Calculator](#). We even have a mini [video series](#) designed to walk you through the process step-by-step.

And if you need one-on-one help eliminating your overwhelming credit card debt, contact [Christian Credit Counselors](#). One of their trained debt counselors will help you develop a debt management plan to pay it all off faster and with less interest.

*The borrower is slave to the lender.*

Proverbs 22:7 NIV

#### Increase savings to one month's living expenses

Calculate your monthly living expenses and then use [Crown's Savings Calculator](#) to help reach your goals. Try these [8 savings hacks to help you save even more](#).

#### Increase giving to Lord through your time, talent, and money

Start by reading this blog about [what the Bible says about giving and saving](#).

Consider volunteering a portion of your time each week at your church or a ministry you are passionate about. Take time to pray about increasing your the amount you're giving at this point. Step out in faith and trust God to provide when you put Him first!

#### Look for creative ways to increase income

Check out [10 Creative Ways to Increase Your Income](#). God created you to fulfill a unique purpose through your work. If you are confused about what you have to offer, take the [Career Direct Assessment](#). You will learn how God designed you, identify your talents and objectives, and begin to flourish in your career.



# 3

## DESTINATION THREE

### Pay Off Consumer Debt

You have just conquered one of the most difficult stages of the Money Map. Your choices are opening your life to the Lord's blessings.

#### □ Pay off all consumer debts

Now it's time to tackle your consumer debt - that's car loans, furniture, student loans, etc. Use the [Debt Snowball Method](#), just like you did to pay off your credit cards!

Remember you can accelerate your debt reduction by putting extra income toward your plan. Consider adjusting your standard of living, even for a short time to get that debt knocked out! Read this article on [how to get out of debt](#).

*Keep out of debt and owe no man anything*

Romans 13:8 NASB

#### □ Increase savings to 3 months' living expenses

Now that you have an emergency savings account established, it's time to plan for the "what-if's" of life - the roof leaking, getting laid off from work, a major medical expense, etc.

You will want to estimate how much money you would need to live for 3 months and then use the [Savings Goal Calculator](#) to help you work toward that goal.

#### □ Increase giving to the Lord's work

Here are some ideas:

- Consider volunteering a portion of your time each week at your church or a ministry you are passionate about.
- Pray about increasing your percentage of giving at this point. Aim for your giving to be at or above **10% of your gross income**.
- Make sure you are giving to a reputable organization.
- If you have benefitted from the work of a non-profit, highly consider giving back through volunteering or donating.

*"God never intended for everyone to give the same amount or in the same way, but each should give bountifully and cheerfully."*

- Larry Burkett

# 4

## DESTINATION FOUR

### Adjust Your Plan

You are almost half of the way through the Money Map! And with your debts paid off and your savings growing, it's time to reexamine your goals and long-term plans. As you work through this destination, spend time in God's Word and in prayer as you seek His guidance for your life.

#### Adjust spending plan accordingly

Compare your current spending plan with these [guideline budget percentages](#). Are you on track? You will probably need to make adjustments since you have your debts paid off! Look for ways you can increase giving and savings. And keep an eye out for these [3 little things that can wreck your budget](#).

*For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

#### Start saving for major purchases

Are you ready to buy a home or looking to renovate yours? Maybe your car has seen better days and you need to be prepared to [buy a car](#) in the future. (Remember this is a depreciating asset so the goal is to buy used and pay cash!)

Here are [5 things you should spend money on to save money](#) and [5 things you should never finance](#).

#### Start saving for retirement

Be a wise steward of your money. It's important to trust in God and not to hoard your wealth. You don't need to try to protect against every eventuality. Take time to pray and plan for the future. Consider [what the Bible says about retirement](#).

As you start to save, ask yourself these questions, "Why should I retire?", "What will I do?", "What if my retirement plan fails?", "When should I retire?", and "What if I can't retire?".

Check out these must-read articles on [how to save for retirement](#) and the [mistakes to avoid](#).

#### Increase savings to 6 months' living expenses

Continue to grow your savings. Revisit the [Savings Goal calculator](#). Remember that this money is to be kept in an account that you can easily withdraw from without a fee.

#### Retake the MoneyLife Indicator and revisit goals

Compare your first MLI report (from the start of the Money Map) to the results of your new report. Do you see improvement? Determine your revised financial goals - especially for your 3 lowest scores - and record each goal in all 9 key areas of beliefs and behaviors.

# 5

## DESTINATION FIVE *Save for the Future*

Hopefully completing Destination Four was refreshing and eye-opening as you move into the last stages of the Money Map. All your work is giving you the ability to make an impact for the Lord which will last for generations.

### Continue saving for major purchases and retirement

Allocate your savings according to your goals and re-evaluate your planned major purchases by asking these five questions:

1. Is it necessary?
2. Does it reflect my Christian ethic?
3. Does my spouse agree with this purchase?
4. Does it add to or detract from my family?
5. What will the upkeep costs be, and can I afford them?

As you continue saving for retirement, make sure to prepare your family. If you are married, each spouse should be fully trained in all financial matters. Don't put off creating a will or a trust. Use the [\*Planning Your Legacy – Will And Trust Planning Guide\*](#) to get started.

*Steady plodding brings prosperity.*

Proverbs 21:5 TLB

### Continue to save up to 12 months' living expenses

Re-evaluate and make a plan for how you will use your savings. Be careful to not dip into your savings for investments or impulse buys. There are also ways to save other than just in your bank account. Consider building up your pantry with non-perishable food and having a water supply in case of emergencies.

### Create education/college funds for each child

Encourage your child to put thought into their future plans. The [\*Career Direct Assessment\*](#) is an online service that helps students uncover God's unique design for them and learn what type of education and career would allow them to fill their perfect role in His Kingdom.

If you want to help pay for your child(ren)'s education, you will need to decide if ***you should have an education savings account***. There are plenty of ways your child can get a ***degree debt-free*** and ***avoid student debt***.

### Increase giving to Lord's work

Through prayer and time in God's Word, reconsider what needs He has put on your heart. Continue giving until those needs are met. Remember that you cannot, and do not need to, meet every need in the world, only those which God has shared with you. If you can, increase your tithe. You may also want to look into [\*asset giving\*](#).

# 6

## DESTINATION SIX *Invest Wisely*

**Congratulations! Making it to Destination Six is a major accomplishment! As you move forward, start thinking about sharing the joy with others that you have found through your journey.**

### Buy an affordable home

Of course it's best not to have a mortgage at all, but we recommend saving a minimum of 20% for a down payment before considering buying a home. **Remember that's not the only expense you need to save for before buying a home!** You will also need to do some research before securing a mortgage; **start here with everything you need to know about mortgages.** Purchasing a home isn't the right answer for everyone, so consider **when it makes sense to rent or buy.**

*Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight; you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.*

Ecclesiastes 11:2 NIV

### Begin prepaying home mortgage

Start adding what you can directly toward your principal on top of your regular monthly payments. Even an extra \$100 a month can save you thousands in interest over the life of your mortgage. Use our **mortgage prepayment calculator** to see how much you will save! Consider putting your bonuses and tax returns towards your mortgage after you have generously given from them.

### Diversify investments

Investments should not change your lifestyle or cause stress or worry for you or your family. Don't allocate money for investing if your family budget doesn't allow for it. Remember that you are investing God's money. Always pray about your investments and ask yourself if they are a good use of God's resources. Start by reading about **what the Bible says about investing** and **everything you need to know about mutual funds.**

### Increase giving to Lord's work

Be sure that you have a plan for any unexpected income. Know ahead of time what percent you want to spend on yourself, give to the Lord's work, or put aside for taxes.

Have you ever wondered if you should tithe on gross or net income? **Read this blog** to find out.



# DESTINATION SEVEN

## *Leave a Legacy*

**Congratulations! You have made it to Destination Seven! It's been a lot of hard work and dedication, but you are growing as a faithful steward! As you begin to think about preparing for your retirement and your estate, keep in mind that the most important thing you will leave to your family is not money or a home - it is their knowledge of your faith in Jesus Christ.**

### Evaluate Kingdom impact for next generation

There are many types of "legacies" one can leave behind - financial, spiritual, material, etc. Saint John Chrysostom said, *"If you wish to leave much wealth to your children, leave them in God's care. Do not leave them riches, but virtue and skill."* It's important to invest now in order to leave a Kingdom-minded legacy that will impact generations to come. Read this article on [raising faithful stewards](#).

*You will know the truth,  
and the truth will  
make you free.*

John 8:32 NASB

### Pay off home mortgage

Hopefully you have been using the [mortgage prepayment calculator](#) and are on your way to paying off your home mortgage. Don't be fooled - the tax write-off you receive for making mortgage payments does **not** have a greater advantage than simply paying the mortgage off in full. Pay your mortgage off as soon as you are able. As you get closer, keep in mind that you will want to set up a home escrow account for taxes and insurance as your mortgage is being paid. And be cautious of the [reverse mortgage](#) once you do have it fully paid off!

### Finalize children's education fund

If the Lord has put it on your heart to send your child to college, do not rely on the government to pay for their education. Help your child to [find ways to fully fund their degree](#), and consider helping them through an [education savings fund](#).

### Confirm estate plan is in order

Research the different options and determine what is right for you. You can start with [The Most Asked Questions About Wills and Trusts](#). As you organize your estate, keep all of your information together so that anyone can easily understand it. Take time to make any decisions you need to concerning living wills, health directive, power of attorney, pour-over will, etc. There are many facets of estate planning. You will likely want to seek wise counsel to help you create a qualified estate plan. Crown has put together a kit to help you plan your legacy and you can [download it here](#).



# 7

## DESTINATION SEVEN (continued)

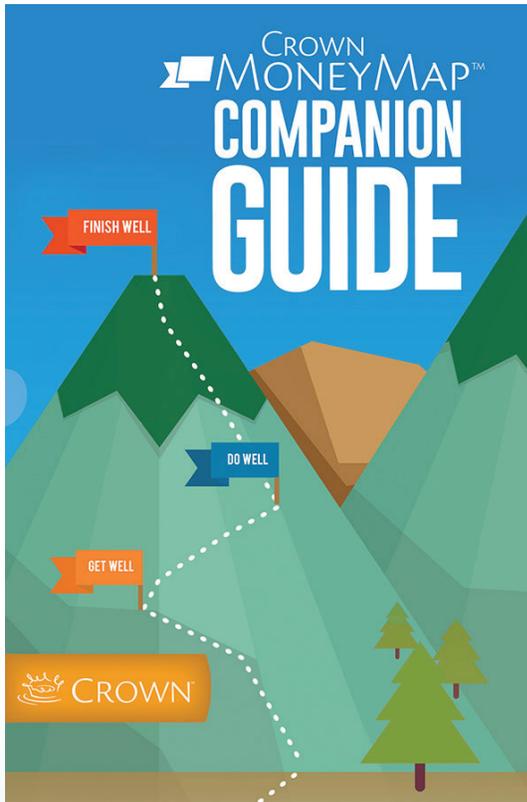
### Re-evaluate investments

As you continue investing, be sure that you have taken inflation into account. Earning too little on your investments is one of the greatest obstacles to investment success. It's not enough to just preserve what you have now. It's impossible to know exactly what rates inflation will take on, but you can start by assuming that it will at least mirror the past. Your monthly income will need to grow every year in order to keep the same purchasing power. Depending on your season of life, carefully consider the appropriate level of risk for your investments.

### Maximize generosity

Give prayerfully, exercising the same care as when you decide where to work, save, or invest. Also give without pride to experience God's blessing and joy, never give to impress people (Matthew 6:1-4). Giving should also be personal. It's the responsibility of every child of God to give. The advantages of giving are intended for each person, and each one must participate to enjoy the blessing of generosity.





# The Money Map Companion Guide encourages you as you reach your financial goals and eliminates stress.

Every step is accompanied by a biblical principle, devotional, real-life testimonies and practical application for accomplishing each destination.

You can order yours [here](#) as well as a **full-sized printed version of the Money Map.**





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