

Ask the Budget Guy

Submitted by Allen Gunter

Warning! Danger! Step Away From Your Wallet!!

Once upon a time, Christmas was celebrated with small often home-made gifts symbolic of God's great gift to us. Over the years, the list of people that we absolutely have to get presents for has grown, and the Christmas season generates most all of the profits for most retailers.

From a financial perspective, Christmas has become the most dangerous time of year, and this year looks to be worse than most. Even well before Thanks-giving and the traditional start of Christmas shopping, many stores were already having "special" one-day, 50% off Christmas sales. Their goal is quite simple: To separate you from as much of what God has entrusted to you as they can.

So here are the Budget Guy's three rules for avoiding that January hangover when the Christmas bills come due:

1. Decide how much you can spend...
...BEFORE you ever set foot in a single store or point your cursor at an "Add to shopping cart" button. If you use a budget to manage your money, you already know how much you have to spend. If not, get started on developing a budget NOW so you're ready for next year!
2. Make a list...
...of everyone you want to give a present to, and how much you can spend for that present. If your total spending on the list is more than the amount in Step 1, change your list. (Don't forget, grand-parents and favorite aunts are particularly fond of home-made presents!)
3. Stick to Steps 2 and 3...
...like super glue wrapped in steel bands and encased in cement.

Got a question for the Budget Guy? Leave a message for Allen Gunter at the church (892-3580, ext. 122) or send an email to BudgetGuy@SHPC.org. Everything is kept totally confidential.