
Onramp To A Hopeful FINANCIAL FUTURE



by Miles DeBenedictis

We grew up never going without. “We can’t afford that” was rarely spoken by my parents. I never heard my parents argue about money. In fact, I can’t say that I ever remember my parents arguing period. That’s not to say that they didn’t argue, they just didn’t argue in front of my siblings and me. But though my parents rarely said “we can’t afford that” I remember when, at 16 years old, they filed for bankruptcy. It didn’t make any sense to me. I thought everything was just perfect, financially speaking. I was wrong.

There are probably a number of good things that came out of that difficult event in my parents lives. In much the same way there are a number of very good things that have come out of the failure of our

“there are a number of very good things that have come out of the failure of our country's financial and economic system in 2008.”

country's (and the world's for that matter) financial and economic system in 2008. Don't misunderstand, the collapse devastated many. But one of the good things that came out of it is that a lot of people were challenged to rethink their own personal financial picture.

That's exactly what happened to me at 16. I hadn't even really begun to earn money, but I was already beginning to think differently about it. I had a job. Not my first (certainly not my last), but one in which I had (like my parents) just wasted a lot of cash. My golf course job brought me a significant amount of tips, but by the time I finished that endeavor, I had relatively little to show for it.

Right at the same time I discovered something that would help me change the way I saw, understood and worked with money. I've never been particularly exceptional at math. Many Americans feel the same way. In fact a study done by Ogilvy PR found that over a third of Americans (36%) feel that they can't do math. While I may not feel that way, I've never been great at it. But as a sophomore in high school I discovered just how easy it was to develop a simple, but effective budget using a spreadsheet application like Microsoft Excel.

That's what I want to share with you here. Not Excel, but a simple strategy for budgeting that has taken me from wasting money as a high school student to buying two homes and providing (with my wife) an wonderful life for us and our four kids, without debt. And understand, doing so has not required a huge income; when we bought our first home, my wife and I had a combined income of less than \$100,000 a year. Such a life is possible, but it requires a plan and enough discipline to implement and follow the plan.

Instant versus deferred gratification

A short time ago I spoke with a friend (in his mid-60's) who shared his concern that he'd probably never be able to sell his 2,500+ square foot home as the desires of Millennials have shifted from that of their Baby Boomer parents to smaller, versus larger homes. A brief search online does seem to confirm this view. "Tiny homes" are kind of a big deal these days. Be that as it may, I'm not convinced that Millennials don't desire 2,000 square foot or larger homes. I just don't think they ever feel they'll be able to afford such a home. Understandably so. As I write this (July 2016) the median home price in San Diego, California—where I live—is \$509,500.

A half million dollars for the average home! That's a lot of money. When you add to that the tighter lending requirements post-2008, the lower than average (Millennial) employment rates (12.8% unemployment in March of 2016) and higher than average student loan debt (\$1.2 trillion in the U.S.), it's no wonder that more Millennials are opting to continue living with the parents longer than any other time in recent history. For most, the prospect of owning a home comparable to the one they grew up in seems unfathomable. So, let's build 400 square foot tiny homes!

Or maybe we just need to work toward the goal of home ownership, but that's not easy. Especially when you consider that, at least in America, we've been bred for instant gratification. We don't want to wait for anything! We have Amazon same day delivery. We

get entire seasons of shows released at once on Netflix and Amazon Prime. Who wants to wait for next week's episode? I want to binge watch the whole season now! With that as our cultural expectation, it's hard to imagine working toward the goal of purchasing something like a home, or anything for that matter.

But **deferred gratification** is a sign of maturity. Toddlers want what they want when they want it, and throw a fit when they don't get it. By the time you're an adult (i.e. in your 20's), hopefully you've begun to learn the important lessons of deferred gratification; some things in life (a lot actually) require it.

I have found that budgeting is an issue of deferred gratification. Some people seem to think that establishing a budget is like entering into a monastic life of continual self-denial. It's not about denial of satisfaction, but deferral. Sure, you could just get a credit card and buy what you want when you want it or take that vacation you really want to go on. There are dozens of credit card companies itching to extend you the privilege. "Don't leave home with out it!" "It's everywhere you want to be!" "It pays to discover!" It's "priceless." Except that it's not!

Currently the average American household has more than \$15,000 in credit card debt, at an average of 14.62% annual percentage rate. That means that the average American is wasting \$2,193 a year. But hey!, it's only costing you a minimum payment of \$185 a month! You can afford that, right!?! Except that your \$15,000 balance will take you more than 30 years to pay off and ultimately cost you nearly \$85,000. It sure pays to discover how foolish that math is! Priceless almost.

So, what's the answer? Well, as has been said, **"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail."** I don't think there is anything better you can do to prepare for the future than to establish a simple budget. It will take you where you want to be. Frankly, you never leave **your** home with out one. And honestly, it's less pricey than you realize.

Setting up your budget

First, we need the tools. And in our day, those tools are free! That's right, what I'm selling is completely free. Whereas I had to build my first budget in the rather pricey Microsoft Excel back in 1997, you can do what I'm going to teach you with an easy and free tool. But first, you need a Google account. You may already have one! If you use Gmail, or YouTube, or Google Hangouts, or have an Android phone, then you have a Google account. If you don't have one, simply go to accounts.google.com and create a new account. It will literally take you 5 minutes, if that.

Once you've created and logged into your Google account, navigate your web browser to pastormiles.com/mybudget. This will take you to a spreadsheet file called "Budget Templates.xlsx" in the Microsoft Excel format, but we'll be using Google Sheets to open, build, and edit your budget. Google Sheets is a free application that you will be able to use with your free Google Account.

When your browser opens to the budget template spreadsheet we will want to open and edit it using Google Sheets. To do so look for the menu called "Open" in the upper middle of your screen, and click the down arrow to the right of the "Open" menu, and then select "Google Sheets" from the menu. As soon as you do so the file will be converted to a Google Sheets spreadsheet and you will be taken to a new window in your web browser with our budget templet opened and ready to go. This is the place we will beginning building your budget.

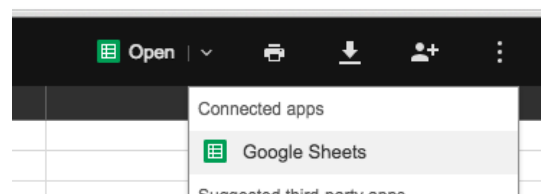


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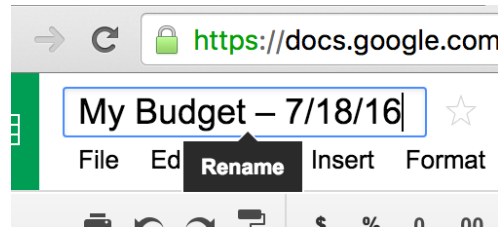
Create account

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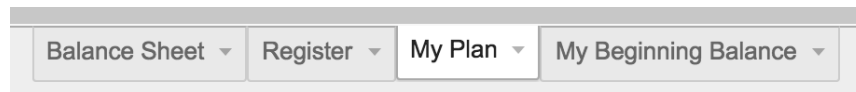


	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1								Current Balance	\$0.00	
2										
3		Date	Note/Payee	Category	Deposit	Withdrawal	Rec.	Memo/Notes		
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
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Once you've opened your budget template in Google Sheets, let's change the name of the file to something other than "Budget Template.xlsx". To do so, simply click on the words "Budget Template" in the upper left, which give you the ability to change the name. You can change it to whatever you want, but I recommend that you also add today's date to the name, just so you can easily find it in the future, if you end up making new files. Once you've renamed your file, simply click anywhere else in the browser window to deselect the renaming feature.



Now that we've changed the name, let's move on to our first steps in building our budget. To do so, find the four tabs at the bottom of your screen called "Register," "Balance Sheet," "My Plan" and "My Beginning Balance." At the start you'll be in the "Register" tab, but we need to begin building our budget in the "My Plan" tab, so click there.



Once you've clicked there you'll see some data that looks like this...

Average Monthly Income		\$0.00			
Expense Item		Monthly Avg. Cost	Balance		
Item 1		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 2		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 3		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 4		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 5		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 6		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 7		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 8		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 9		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 10		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 11		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 12		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 13		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 14		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 15		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 16		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 17		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 18		\$0.00	\$0.00		
Item 19		\$0.00	\$0.00		

The sections highlighted in green are the areas we're going to focus on. Our first step will be entering our income in the green box to the right of the words "Average Monthly Income." Some will find this to be easier than others as not everyone has a fixed monthly income. For those who's work schedules and pay are consistent, it's easy, but if you don't have a consistent schedule or pay, you'll have to look back at your pay over the last six months to determine what your average monthly pay is. To make this easy, use the monthly average income tool on the right side of the sheet. Simply enter your monthly income the green boxes to the right of "Month 1" through "Month 6" to determine your "My average"

What's My Monthly Average Income?		
My average		\$0.00
Month 1		\$0.00
Month 2		\$0.00
Month 3		\$0.00
Month 4		\$0.00
Month 5		\$0.00
Month 6		\$0.00

What's My Monthly Average Income?		
My average		\$7,325.00
Month 1		\$5,600.00
Month 2		\$8,200.00
Month 3		\$7,500.00
Month 4		\$5,550.00
Month 5		\$9,500.00
Month 6		\$7,600.00

In the example, my average is \$7,325 a month. Enter that number in the green box to the right of "Average Monthly Income"

1			
2	Average Monthly Income		\$7,325.00
3			
4			

Next we need to add "Expense Items" to our budget. These are items or categories of items that you spend money on monthly. These items are more broad than specific. In other words, you won't have an item called "Milk" but you will have an item called "Groceries." Here's an example of what it might look like.

You may have more than the example, or you may have less. I've provided 30 spaces, I recommend that you do your best to keep it under 30. I also have found it very helpful to change item 30 to "Extra."

Item 29	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Extra	\$0.00	\$7,325.00

Expense Item	Monthly Avg. Cost	Balance
Auto Ins.	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Auto Loan	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Auto Reg.	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Cable TV/Internet	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Cell Phone	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Charity	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Credit Cards	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Electricity	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Emergency/Save	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Entertainment	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Fuel	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Groceries	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Health Insurance	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Home Ins.	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Home Loan/Rent	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Home Tax	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Kids school	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Life Ins.	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Student Loan	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Vacation	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Water/Trash	\$0.00	\$7,325.00
Item 22	\$0.00	\$7,325.00

Now that you've established your budget categories, we need to build our budget off of the Monthly Average Costs of those items. Again, some of these are simple, some take a little more work. None of them will be impossible to determine. If you have a car that you've financed, then you know exactly how much the payment is for that car each month. If you have a cell phone, the cost is probably fairly consistent. Your rent and student loan payments (if you have them) will likely be the same. But utilities (electricity, water, trash, etc.) are not always consistent. In such instances, there are several things you can do.

One way to determine the average of inconsistent bills is to average the cost yourself. Look at your past 6 bills, add the cost of them together and divide by 6. If you didn't save those bills you can typically find them online or simply call the company holding the bill and ask what the average bill is on the account. Most companies can tell you very quickly.

Additionally, you'll notice on my example that I've categories like "Auto Insurance," "Auto Registration," "Home Insurance" and "Home Tax." Typically these bills come twice a year or annually. Though the bills come infrequently, we still want to plan for them monthly so that we're not surprised when we come (that's the genius of a budget). When you have such bills, then simply take the annual total (i.e. \$1,600 a year for Auto Insurance) and divide by 12. Or, use the "What's the monthly average cost?" tool on the right side of the sheet. (A helpful tip, if you get a number like the one below—\$133.33—I find it helpful to simply round up to the nearest whole number, i.e. \$134).

What's the monthly average cost?		What's the monthly average cost?	
Annual Cost:	\$0.00	Annual Cost:	\$1,600.00
Monthly Cost:	\$0.00	Monthly Cost:	\$133.33

Now work your way through each of your expense items and enter the monthly costs in the green boxes to the right of each category.

Though this may take awhile, it's important that you take the time as this is the monthly plan that is going to help you get on track. As you enter the monthly average cost of each item you will see the "Balance" on the right decrease. This shows you how much money remains after each cost is factored against your monthly income. If your expenses ever exceed your income balance, the balance will become a negative number and be highlighted by being a red bold number (i.e. **-\$77.00**). Should this happen, you'll need to adjust your budget, because unless you're the federal government, there is no room for deficit spending in real life.

Once you've finished entering the monthly average costs into the budget plan it should look something like this.

Expense Item	Monthly Avg. Cost	Balance
Auto Ins.	\$125.00	\$7,200.00
Auto Loan	\$415.00	\$6,785.00
Auto Reg.	\$27.00	\$6,758.00
Cable TV/Internet	\$70.00	\$6,688.00
Cell Phone	\$90.00	\$6,598.00
Charity	\$720.00	\$5,878.00
Credit Cards	\$500.00	\$5,378.00
Electricity	\$175.00	\$5,203.00
Emergency/Save	\$385.00	\$4,818.00
Entertainment	\$75.00	\$4,743.00
Fuel	\$200.00	\$4,543.00
Groceries	\$550.00	\$3,993.00
Health Insurance	\$450.00	\$3,543.00
Home Ins.	\$110.00	\$3,433.00
Home Loan/Rent	\$1,800.00	\$1,633.00
Home Tax	\$85.00	\$1,548.00
Kids school	\$150.00	\$1,398.00
Life Ins.	\$65.00	\$1,333.00
Student Loan	\$225.00	\$1,108.00
Vacation	\$100.00	\$1,008.00
Water/Trash	\$85.00	\$923.00
Item 22	\$0.00	\$923.00

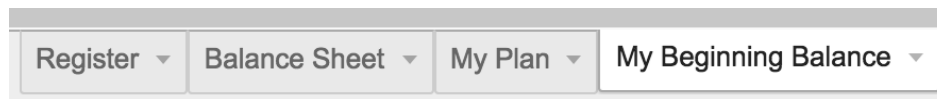
The example above is probably not your reality. Though, if it were, you'd be in a pretty good situation with nearly \$1,000 extra income each month. Whatever you ultimately end up with there are two things we don't want and can't have.

First, we cannot have a negative balance. Remember, no deficit spending. If you have negative balance then you ***must*** cut spending somewhere. If you have a "dinner out" or "entertainment" item, or some other discretionary item, it may need to be reduced or removed to bring your budget back into balance.

Second, we don't want to have any money leftover in our budget. Therefore "Item 30" that I previously recommended should be called "Extra," should absorb any leftover money.

Item 29	\$0.00	\$923.00
Extra	\$923.00	\$0.00
Budget Total	\$7,325.00	

Ultimately your budget should end with a \$0.00 balance and a “**Budget Total**” equal to your “**Average Monthly Income**”. If that’s the case, you’ve successfully set your budget. Now we can move on to the next tab at the bottom of the screen called “My Beginning Balance.”



Once there you’ll see the following.

Currently in account		\$0.00	
Item	Amount	Balance	
Auto Ins.	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Auto Loan	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Auto Reg.	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Cable TV/Internet	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Cell Phone	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Charity	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Credit Cards	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Electricity	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Emergency/Save	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Entertainment	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Fuel	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Groceries	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Health Insurance	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Home Ins.	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Home Loan/Rent	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Home Tax	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Kids school	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Life Ins.	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Student Loan	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Vacation	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Water/Trash	\$0.00	\$0.00	

On this tab we will now disperse money that you currently have in your bank account into the category items that you’ve built on the “My Plan” tab. If your bank account is empty, then you don’t need to do anything with this tab. If you have a negative account balance in your bank account, then you really need this budget! Most people will have at least something in their bank account. Whatever that amount is, put it in the green box to the right of the words “Currently in account.”

Currently in account	\$758.22
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Once you’ve established what is currently in your account we want to disperse that to the categories you’ve previously created. As you add money to those categories in the green

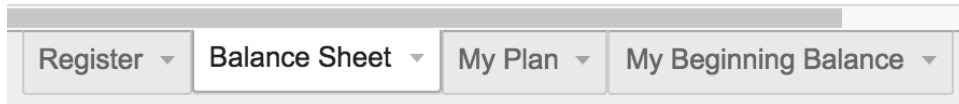
boxes to the right of each category, it will deduct it from the balance in your accounts. You can use the money however you want to. It's simply going to establish where your money is going and how it is being used. As on our previous tab we cannot end with a negative or positive balance. The goal is to disperse all the money you currently have in your account into the items you've created and to end with a \$0.00 balance. In the end your total dispersed funds should be equal to the amount currently in your bank account.

Item 29	\$0.00	\$0.00
Extra	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total	\$758.22	

At this point, your budget has been established. You are one step closer to a hopeful financial future. Now we need to understand how to use this budget to stay on track.

Using your budget

From this point forward you will not need to look at the two tabs (“My Plan” and “My Beginning Balance”) we’ve just worked on again. All of your work from now on will be focused on the “Balance Sheet” and the “Register” with about 90% of your time on the “Register.” Be that as it may, let’s start with the “Balance Sheet”



On this tab you will see all the items we created on the “My Plan” tab and all the balances you added to those items on the “My Beginning Balance” tab, the total of which will be equal to the balance currently in your bank account.

29	Item 29	\$0.00
30	Extra	\$0.00
	Total	\$758.22

On the “Balance Sheet” tab there is only one green box. This is the only box on the entire sheet we will ever use.

My Balances	Pay Periods	0
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It is this green box that we will use each month to add money to each item in your budget. It’s simple! Every month that you get paid, simply increase the number in the green box by 1. When you do so you will instantly see the balances increase by the amount that we established on the “My Plan” tab. Try it! As I said, it’s simple.

At this point there are usually a couple of questions. First, “What happens if I get paid weekly or twice a month? This is setup for 1 pay period a month?”

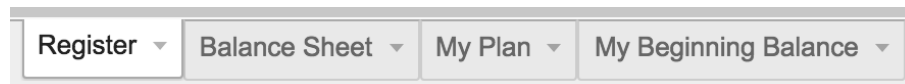
Yes, you’re right, it is. There certainly are ways to set this up for weekly or by-monthly pay periods, but to reduce the complexity and make this useable for as many people as possible I’ve decided to build this for monthly pay. If you’re paid weekly or twice a month, just increase the “Pay Periods” number once a month. In the end you’ll accomplish the same thing. The goal is to plan for how

My Balances	Pay Periods	1
	In Account	
1	Auto Ins.	\$275.00
2	Auto Loan	\$415.00
3	Auto Reg.	\$82.00
4	Cable TV/Internet	\$70.00
5	Cell Phone	\$90.00
6	Charity	\$720.00
7	Credit Cards	\$500.00
8	Electricity	\$225.00
9	Emergency/Save	\$485.00
10	Entertainment	\$75.00
11	Fuel	\$200.00
12	Groceries	\$550.00
13	Health Insurance	\$450.00
14	Home Ins.	\$185.00
15	Home Loan/Rent	\$1,800.00
16	Home Tax	\$285.00
17	Kids school	\$150.00
18	Life Ins.	\$140.00
19	Student Loan	\$225.00
20	Vacation	\$153.22
21	Water/Trash	\$85.00
22	Item 22	\$0.00

your paychecks will be used. Ultimately that's exactly what this will do.

The second question I often get at this point is, "But what if I get paid less (or more) than what was just added to my accounts? Should I change my monthly income on the "My Plan" tab?"

Great question. No! Do not change the "My Plan" tab. But we will have to make an adjustment, which we'll talk about as we move to the final tab.



We now come to the fourth and final tab of our budget. This is where virtually all of your work will be done, going forward. In the future your budget will open to this tab (as it is tab #1 on the spreadsheet), which will help make your work easier. Also, you will only switch to the "Balance Sheet" to add your monthly pay to your budget, and also to see how much money you have available for each item.

The budget register works very much like a standard accounting program or check register. The purpose of this sheet is to deposit to and withdraw money from your budget items. That being the case, let's begin where we left off with the second question above.

What if last month's pay was higher or lower than what was added to your accounts on the "Balance Sheet"? If your pay was higher, you're happy! If it was lower, not so much. But either way, we will need to make a balance adjustment. That will take place here on the register.

Previously we established our budget with an average monthly income of \$7,325.00. But let's say that your income for this last month came in at \$7,622.75. That means you made \$297.75 more than you planned. That's great. Now we just need to determine what to do with that money. It's your prerogative. You can add it wherever you want it to go. Maybe your electricity bill is higher this month, as you've been using your AC more this summer. You can add some of it there. Perhaps you've been driving more and your fuel bill is a bit higher. Add some of it there. Or maybe everything is working just fine and you'd like to add all of it to your vacation budget. It's up to you!

Date	Note/Payee	Category	Deposit	Withdrawal	Rec.	
8/1/2016	Pay Adjustment	Fuel	\$97.75			
8/1/2016	Pay Adjustment	Electricity	\$100.00			
8/1/2016	Pay Adjustment	Vacation	\$100.00			

Just like with any check register or accounting program register, set a date for the transaction, enter a payee, select the category that the money is going into and put the amount in the deposit cell. It's that simple!

This is also the way that every transaction will work going forward. Yes, this will take a bit of your time, but in my experience, it is time well spent. You will never have a hopeful financial future unless you take the time to plan for that future with a budget. This simple program makes that planning possible. Each time you add a transaction, selecting a category and depositing or withdrawing money it will be represented on your “Balance Sheet.”

So, when you pay your mortgage or rent payment of \$1,800.00...

Date	Note/Payee	Category	Deposit	Withdrawl
8/1/2016	Pay Adjustment	Vacation	\$100.00	
8/5/2016	Citi Mortgage	Home Loan/Rent		\$1,800.00

It will deduct that \$1,800.00 from the “Home Loan/Rent” budget item on the balance sheet.

14	Home Ins.	\$100.00
15	Home Loan/Rent	\$1,800.00

Before Transaction

14	Home Ins.	\$100.00
15	Home Loan/Rent	\$0.00

After Transaction

With

this simple process my wife and I have been able to keep our financial house in order, and I’m certain that it can help you do the same. If you use it.

Now there are a few more things to point out.

First, you may be wondering “what are “rec.” and “Memo/Notes” for on the “Register” sheet?”

Rec. is what I use each month (or though out the month) when I get my bank statement or look at my accounts online. To keep track of transactions that have “gone through” on my bank account I check them off as “Yes” on the “Rec.” cell, so that I know the transaction is reconciled.

Category	Deposit	Withdrawl	Rec.	Memo
Fuel	\$97.75		Yes	
Electricity	\$100.00		Yes	
Vacation	\$100.00		Yes	
Home Loan/Rent		\$1,800.00	No	

You may wonder “Why is this necessary?” Really it’s a small tool I added just to help me. You may never use it, but as a plan ahead on transactions, knowing that I have a mortgage payment or auto insurance payment coming, I will enter the transaction into my register before it actually clears my bank. Then when I reconcile my bank statement to my budget spreadsheet I can easily see which transactions have gone through and which have not. Use it, or don’t; I’ve just found it to be helpful.

Memo/Notes are for just that. What was this transaction to Amazon.com? It was a book I bought for my daughter or something I purchased for our vacation.

Date	Note/Payee	Category	Deposit	Withdrawl	Rec.	Memo/Notes
8/9/2016	Amazon	Extra		\$27.99	Yes	Hammock for vacation

You may also wonder, “How do I do a transfer from one item to the next?” This is something I have to do pretty regularly, it’s not that big of a deal. Simply enter two transactions like the following.

Date	Note/Payee	Category	Deposit	Withdrawl	Rec.	
8/10/2016	Item Transfer	Extra		\$150.00	Yes	
8/10/2016	Item Transfer	Fuel	\$150.00		Yes	

This simply moves money on your balance sheet from “Extra” to “Fuel” (or whatever item you need to move from/to). It won’t show up on your bank statement, but you’ll be able to keep track of where your money is going and how it is being used.

Furthermore, any time you receive additional money, that is not figured into your monthly income (i.e. a gift, or some other extra income), make sure you deposit that into the item(s) you’d like it to go into. If you receive a birthday or anniversary card with \$100.00 check in it, then maybe you want to deposit that in your bank account and place it in your vacation budget.

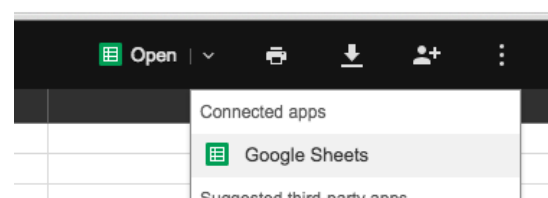
Date	Note/Payee	Category	Deposit	Withdrawl	Rec.	
8/12/2016	Birthday Gift	Vacation	\$100.00		Yes	

Anytime you receive or spend money, you want to keep track of that in your budget. You’ve worked hard for your money, this is how you make your money work for you. As you begin to track your cash, you’ll be amazed at how helpful it is to know exactly where your money is being spent.

One final tip

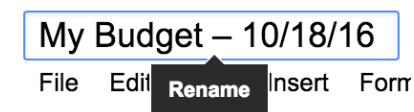
This budget spreadsheet is setup for 2,000 transactions. It likely that you will get to the end of those at some point. While I could add 10,000 rows, eventually you’ll need to start a new sheet, which is what I do about every quarter. I find that about each quarter I have to make minor tweaks to my items and amounts, so I just plan on starting with a fresh budget template ever 90 or so days. How do you do that?

Simple! Start over again by downloading a fresh copy of the Budget Template.xlsx file from get.mybudget.help. When your browser opens to



the budget template spreadsheet open and edit it using Google Sheets by looking for the menu called “Open” in the upper middle of your screen, and click the down arrow to the right of the “Open” menu, and then select “Google Sheets” from the menu.

Once a fresh Budget Template file has opened in Google Sheets change the name of the file to whatever you want it to be (with the new date as apart of the file name) and you’ll be well on your way to starting fresh. Simply follow the steps I’ve already covered and you’re good to go. The only difference will be that when you set your “Beginning Balance” you will use the balances from the “Balance Sheet” on your old budget file to fill in the “Beginning Balances” on the new budget file.



It may seem like a bit of work, but once you've done it, you'll completely understand it.

On To A Hopeful Future

When my wife and I moved our family into our new home we had only one reservation. At the time only two of our four children could swim and we were moving into a home with a backyard pool. Our kids were especially excited about the pool, but to reduce the drowning danger we immediately invested in a removable safety fence around the pool. As simple as it was, that fence gave us instant peace of mind. In all honesty, it was an essential purchase, worth every penny, and then some.

Peace of mind is a wonderful thing. That's one of the great outcomes of establishing a financial plan with a budget. My hope is that this book and the budget spreadsheet I've created can help you do just that. There are all kinds of other tips and tools to help you along your way.

I'm a firm believer in creating an "Emergency" savings fund as apart of your budget and working systematically to get out of debt by paying of one debt at a time. Whether you begin with the highest interest rate or the lowest. Or start with the highest balance or the lowest, I don't really care. Though I do agree with many planners that beginning with the lowest balance first helps create momentum, as paying of one debt and then another makes it like a winnable game. Additionally I think it's very important to be charitable, giving to others in need, and to build an investment portfolio to help you one day enjoy a future with less vocational demands upon your time.

But more than any of these things, I want to share with you the tip I think is greater than any other I could give. It's a tip that leads not to a hopeful financial future, but a hopeful eternal future.

You see, I'm not a "money guy." I'm not a financial planner by trade. I plan my finances the way I do because I think it's important to be a good steward of all that I have. I'm a Pastor. My primary vocation is teaching and preaching the Bible. But what I've discovered over the last 17 years of doing that is that the Bible has a lot to say about being a good steward. Not only a good steward of finances, but also of time, gifts, talents, abilities. Really on being a good steward of life, and that's what brings me to my most important tip.

In the Gospels Jesus tells a story about a wealthy farmer who basically hit it big time. His land produced more than ever, so much indeed that he could hardly contain the harvest. Therefore the rich man purposed to tear down his barns and to build bigger and better barns to hold all that he was to bring in. He looked forward to a day of ease and joyful living. Sadly, the rich man's focus was wrong, for Jesus said, "You fool, tonight you will die. And your barnful of goods—who gets it?"

At another place in the Gospels Jesus says, "what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?" Yes, it's good to know how you are spending your money and how best to plan for retirement. But ultimately, these are the truly important questions of life. That is why Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

I want you to have a hopeful financial future in this life, but more than that I want you to have a hopeful eternal future in heaven. Two thousand years ago Jesus became poor, giving His life on the cross, so that you and I, through His poverty, might become rich. That’s what the great news of the Bible is.

Every human being is hopelessly lost because of our failure to live according to God’s perfect standards. Our failures are called sin. Our sins are a debt that no amount of money could ever pay off. But God loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die for our sins on the cross, to pay the debt that we could never pay so that we might receive eternal life in Him.

As I’ve said, I hope that you are able to get your financial house in order. But if all that is accomplished through this work is a better earthly future for you and your family, I’m not sure I’ve succeeded. I want you to have an eternal future too.

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to consider these words. I hope that this short book will be a great benefit to you. I'm certain that my life is much better because of the truths written in this book, and I'm convinced that your life can be too. That is, if you implement the things I've written.

This eBook and corresponding budget template is provided with ***no additional support*** and will only help you if you actually use it.

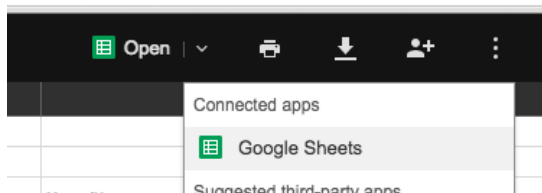
If you are interested in learning more about the eternal future available to you in Jesus Christ, please take some time to consider the resources available for free on my website (pastormiles.com), or those available at lifeinconnection.com, the site of the church I pastor.

Many Blessings,
Pastor Miles DeBenedictis

Appendix 1

Abbreviated Step-By-Step Setup

1. Create and login to a free Google account at **accounts.google.com**.
2. Once you've logged into your Google account, direct your browser to pastormiles.com/mybudget to open the "Budget Template.xlsx" file we will use to build your budget.
3. When opened, click the "Open menu in the top middle of your screen and select the "Google Sheets" option.



Google

One account. All of Google.

Sign in with your Google Account

A screenshot of the Google sign-in page. It features a large grey circle with a person icon inside. Below it is a text input field labeled 'Enter your email'. A blue 'Next' button is positioned below the input field. To the right of the button is a link that says 'Need help?'. The entire form is set against a light grey background.

[Create account](#)

One Google Account for everything Google



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