

Pursuit of Freedom



Helping you create freedom in your life

Prologue

As I sit contemplating what I really want to do with my life, I cannot come up with a good answer.

I enjoy doing a lot of things. I want to travel. I want to be involved in my church. I want to go on missions trips. I want to coach my kids' sports team. I want to play sports. I want to be an inventor. I want to run my own business. I want to spend a lot of time with my family. I want to travel.

I want to do a lot of things.

My problem is that in order to do some of these things, I cannot do the other things as much as I want to – at least during the time I am focusing on one.

For example, I have met many business owners that do not have the time to coach their kids' sports team or even spend much time with their kids. I do not want to be that guy.

You have probably met that guy. He's the one that runs a successful company (or has a high paying job). He might even be on his third marriage. His kids love him, but they never really spend much time with him. Professionally, he is very successful, but most of the other areas of his life are lacking.

On the other hand, there are people that have a great family life. They get to spend a lot of time with their family, but they just have an average job

I am definitely not saying there is anything wrong with that.

I am also not saying that there is nobody out there that has a successful company/job and a great family life. There are plenty of people out there that do. However, I truly believe that they are in the minority.

Of course, everybody defines success differently. A job that one person thinks is average, another person may think is amazing. And, what one person thinks is a great relationship with his kids, another cannot figure out why his kids do not want to spend more time with him. I personally know people that have sold their very successful business, moved to sunny Florida, and have all the time (and a lot of money) to do what they want. However, now they are constantly giving their (grown) children money to make up for lost time spent with them. The kids may be happy with the money, but they would probably have preferred to have their parents around more when they were growing up.

It is a balancing act in which many people fail, including me.

I cannot count the number of business ideas that I have had. I honestly believe that most of them could make somebody very wealthy.

Of those that I have actually tried, I have stopped for one reason or another. I have sold some, I have closed some, I still run some, and some are currently set aside. I will also most likely purchase my dad's painting business when he is ready to retire.

Most of the ones I have just stopped working on have been because of lack of time. My most recent business venture has been put on hold for that reason. I would go to work all day and come home and work a few hours in the evening. I was working so much that I did not feel like I had sufficient time with my family.

Sure, some people would tell me that I should have worked really hard for a few year (and possibly more), get the business to a point where other people could run it, and then sit back and enjoy life while I make a lot of money.

Who is to say that it would actually work out that way? And who is to say that I wouldn't get so involved in the company that my family life started to suffer significantly?

Nobody can answer those questions. Personally, I would rather live in a shack with my family than a mansion without them.

I may pick that business up again in the future, but no matter what happens with that business, I can guarantee that I will pursue other business ventures.

When I graduated college, I really disliked reading. I read so much in college that I couldn't stand to read anything for a while.

I finally got turned on to some motivational books, and I haven't stopped reading since. Now I spend a lot of time reading all sorts of subjects. I read books, blogs, websites, etc. I love to read...and listen to audio books.

I would read about people that started a business from scratch and sold it for a few million dollars. I thought that was what I wanted to do.

Then I would read about somebody that sold everything they owned and traveled the world. I thought that would be cool. Maybe I could try that...or at least a variation of that with my family.

Then I would read about someone that has devoted their life to coaching and/or teaching kids. That sounds like it could be pretty cool. At least I would feel like my life had purpose.

After a lot of reading, business ideas and really deep thinking, I realized that what I really wanted in life was to be free to do whatever I want.

I want to be able to coach my kids' sports teams, I want to travel, I want to volunteer at my church, and I want to run my current businesses and start new ones. I want to do it all.

When I read about someone doing something cool, I want to try it. My bucket list could be an entire book. Some of the things are really cool and some are boring but would make me feel really good.

When I was reading all the books, I noticed that a lot of them say the same things. They may say it differently, but the result is the same.

Somebody else has already written everything that I put in this book. There are entire books based on one chapter in my book. There are even books based on just a couple paragraphs in my book.

But after all of my reading, I have not found it all in one place. That is why I decided to write (or compile) this book.

I will cite more in this book than you are used to reading in other books.

Why?

Because why should I attempt to rewrite something that someone else has said so well. As I said before, I see the same things written differently in multiple books. It seems as though authors are rewriting good material and calling it their own. They just put their own spin on it.

I would rather give credit where credit is due. As you will see, I personally wrote a fair amount of this book. I just do not see the point in rewriting good material, so I can call it mine. Plus, I do not feel as though I am a very good writer.

I would rather compile good information and fill in the gaps. I want you to get as much out of this book as possible.

I did not, however, purchase material and then put it in this book. Everything that I cite can be found for free.

Enjoy!

Introduction

It's a Tuesday evening around 6 o'clock, and I am still at the office. Jessica, the office manager, walks by and notices that I am still working. She asks me why I haven't left yet, and I tell her that I still have a couple hours of work to do. She reminds me that I have a two year old daughter and a two week old son at home. I tell her that I understand, but the work needs to get done.

I have always been a hard worker. I worked for my dad growing up, and he taught me how to work hard. It has always bothered me when I see lazy people.

Fast forward a few years...

I am back working for my dad. He runs a very successful painting business, and I am his right hand man. I am the only person working for him (at this time), so I guess I have to be his right hand man.

It's the middle of February. We are usually slow at this time, but I am working 50-60 hours every week. Since we are usually slow at this time of the year, we have already let our summer help go. Now we do not have enough work for three people, but my dad and I can get it all done if we work long hours. Besides, it is much easier to work longer hours than train someone to paint the way we want them to paint.

You might be wondering why we don't just hire one of the guys we let go that helped us over the summer. We don't do it for a few reasons. One of the guys that helps us teaches during the school year, some of them take other jobs, some of them work odd jobs on their own, and we just don't want to hire some of them back.

My dad actually goes to Florida a few times each winter. He usually starts around January and finishes up around spring break. Every time he goes, I get a little more anxious to go myself. I would much rather be hanging out on the beach than working 50 hours a week. I realize that there has to be something more than this.

I do not mind the hard work, but working so hard all the time means that I get little time to do what I really want to do.

As I already mentioned, I want to do a lot of things. Sometimes I want to go on a vacation. Sometimes I just want to go play with my kids in the back yard.

Chapter One

What Does Freedom Mean to You?

What comes to mind when you think about freedom?

You may be thinking about people that are not free, such as slaves.

You may be thinking about being rich.

You may be thinking about being able to do whatever you want.

Personally, I want to be able to do whatever I want.

Being wealthy does not necessarily mean that you are free. I have met a lot of people that make a lot of money, but they are nowhere near to being free. They work 60 hours a week, and when they are home, they are usually thinking about work that still needs to be done.

On the other side of that though, I have seen people that have no job and very little money, but they are not free. They are so broke that while they do not have to work 40 hours a week, they do not have any money to do what they want.

I do not want to be in either one of these situations. I believe there is a balance. The exact balance of money and time is different for everybody.

For example, I follow a blog at <http://www.discovershareinspire.com/>. I love what this family is doing. They do not have a lot of money, but they do have a lot of free time. They have cut out all the unnecessary expenses, and they focus on what they want.

They describe their life as this...

“We are normal people who were living a normal life— until we decided the world was too big to stay in one place, so we began *living deliberately* and designing our life the way we *really* wanted it to be.

Now we’re homeless (on purpose) and extremely nomadic. We love to wander, explore and **DISCOVER** new things.

Our aim is to live simply, maximize our freedom, and escape the mundane.

People sometimes think we’re strange (or worse), and they usually agree we’re pretty unconventional. But **we believe that life is meant to be extraordinary.**

We dream with eyes wide open. And we dream big.”

I read almost every post of theirs. They do not live exactly the way that I want to, but they have inspired me to live a little bit more, well...deliberately. I have laid out my goals, and I am currently working towards them.

The main point that I take from the Denning's's' blog is to DO WHAT YOU WANT. Whether you want to work every day of the week and be rich or you want to live modestly and do whatever you want every day.

Define your goal and then make it happen

Why I wrote this book

I listen to podcasts and audio books most of the time while I am working.

After listening to what seemed like my 100th book, I decided to make a change.

I thought of all my past experiences. I thought that everything would be ok if I could just make more money. Besides, I have spent a lot more time than the average person studying what to do with my money once I have it. I feel like I have a pretty good idea of how to invest my money if I were rich. But, who knows what would really happen if I did have a lot of money.

But, I realized that I had been thinking about things wrong the whole time. I thought that I wanted to make a lot of money. I don't necessarily feel like I need to be rich. I just wanted a plenty.

I sat down one day and started thinking about what I really wanted in life. I've read a lot of books and blogs about how people are living the life they really want. I realized that not all of them are rich. Almost every single one of them has something else though.

They have FREEDOM.

They may not have made a lot of money, but they were doing what they wanted to do. Some of them live on pennies a day. They don't spend a whole lot, but they would not trade their life for anything.

That is what I want. I want to have the freedom to do whatever I want.

And that is why I am writing this book.

Because I couldn't find all (or even most) of the information in one place, I decided to put it in a book. These are the topics that I believe will help create freedom in your life.

Chapter Two

Get Out of Debt

For most people, being free involves being out of debt. I have realized that it is pretty hard to be free when you have to work every day just to make enough money to pay your bills.

I am a huge fan of Dave Ramsey. I have to say that I do not agree with everything Dave says, but I do agree with most of it.

If you owe money to someone else, you work for them. You go to work to make money just so you can make your payments. Then, you get a raise. You start making more money, so now you can pay a little extra money towards those loans.

Unfortunately, most people do not do this. They get a raise, so they buy a bigger house, a nicer car, or a boat. It's a vicious cycle that puts people in more and more debt. Then they lose their job or have unexpected bills, and they cannot make their payments.

I cannot count the number of people I have seen in this situation. As long as their income continues, they will seem ok. However, if it even drops a little, they will lose their house. I have seen it at all income levels too.

I do not want to put myself in this situation. Sometimes I take a lot of crap for it, but I drive a 2000 Saturn (in 2014) with over 200,000 miles on it. I have been tempted at times to buy a nicer car, but I have decided to keep my old car. When we moved to our farm house, we decided that we will need a truck. Instead of rushing out to buy something right away, we waited to find a good deal. My dad's neighbor told him that he was moving out of the county in a couple months and needed to sell his old truck within about a week of moving. He had a 1994 Chevy with about 175,000 miles on it. He was asking only \$800, and I agreed to purchase it at that price. I take care of my vehicles. They both run well, and I do not have to put much money into repairs. So I now have two "beater" vehicles that I paid for with cash. I love it. We did, however, buy a little nicer for my wife, but we still paid cash for it.

My dad has told me a story a few times now about a guy that he thought was pretty wealthy. As I mentioned before, my dad owns his own painting business, and this guy hired my dad to paint his brand new house. This is a house that was worth a few hundred thousand dollars back in the 80's. The job went smoothly, and my dad got paid. The guy called my dad back a few months later to repaint a room because he wanted the color changed. My dad walked into his living room, and he only had a couple lawn chairs sitting there. My dad asked him if he was going to be moving in soon, and the guy told him that he was living there already. He had just spent all of his money on his house, so he didn't have money for furniture.

I think about that story all the time and how I do not want to be that guy. I guess that's why I live in a small two bedroom house with my wife and three kids. I have to admit that we used to have a little bigger house...not much bigger though. We purchased this house because it has a lot of land with it. But, instead of building a bigger house on the property right away, we decided to live in our "tiny house" and save money.

I cannot say that I am perfect. I spend money all the time that I regret later. I make mistakes just like most people. I am working on it though.

Below are the baby steps created by Dave Ramsey. Follow these as closely as you can, and you will be on your way to being out of debt.

1. Save \$1,000 to start an emergency fund.
Before you pay any debt down, save \$1,000 for emergencies. This can be from selling things you do not need or just not spending that money when you receive it.
2. Pay off debt using the debt snowball
This is my favorite step. Basically, it is saying that you should pay off your smallest debt first. Once you pay that one off, you take the money you would be paying on that payment and pay it on the next smallest debt. So now you are making the normal payment plus the extra payment that you would be making on the debt you just paid off. Continue to do this until everything is paid off but your house.
3. Save 3-6 months of expenses
This step goes along with step 1 (saving \$1,000) but it provides a little more buffer. Once you have this step completed, you are able to withstand any short-term drops in your income.
4. Invest 15% of household income into Roth IRAs and pre-tax retirement
Investing 15% of your household income should be fairly easy at this point given that you shouldn't have any debt other than your house. This is actually one area where I do not agree with Dave 100%. I do believe in investing, and I do believe in investing at least 15%. However, I believe that there are other ways to invest that 15%. For example, I like real estate and precious metals as investments. I think that you should invest in Roth IRAs and pre-tax accounts too. I would rather be more diversified into other things than just the stock market.
5. College funding for children
One thing to think about here is how much your child (or children) will need to go to school. It may be overwhelming trying to save 100% of the money all of your children will need for college. So, focus on saving what you can afford.
6. Pay off home early
The hard part here is to figure out how much money you are putting towards step 5 and how much you are putting towards your home. There isn't really a definitive answer. I think it all depends on the age of your children, how much money you think they will need for college and how much you have left on your mortgage. This answer is going to be different for everybody; therefore, your percentages will differ.
7. Build wealth and give
I am a huge proponent of giving – whether its money or time. Giving money to someone or an organization feels good but not nearly as good as volunteering your time for a good cause. There have been times that I haven't donated much. I never seemed to have enough money to donate. My wife and I finally decided that we were going to give no matter what. Things have just seemed easier since then. There are still times when things get tight, but we always have enough now.

If you want to read more about Dave's "baby steps", check out his book [The Total Money Makeover](#).

I came across these quotes online. There are a lot of quotes on debt, but I think that going through every one of them may help get the point across.

While going through the list, pick out a couple quotes that help keep you stay motivated to get out of debt. Write them down, and put them somewhere you will see them every day.

“Some debts are fun when you are acquiring them, but none are fun when you set about retiring them.”
-Ogden Nash

“Good times are when people make debts to pay in bad times.”
-Robert Quinlin

“What can be added to the happiness of a man who is in health, out of debt, and has a clear conscience?”
-Adam Smith

“It is the debtor that is ruined by hard times.”
-Rutherford B. Hayes

“We all think we’re going to get out of debt.”
-Louie Anderson

“The man who never has money enough to pay his debts has too much of something else.”
-James Lendall Basford

“I’m in debt. I am a true American.”
-Balki Bartokomous

Proverbs, Sayings, and Unknown

“He who promises runs in debt.”
-The Talmud

“It is poor judgment to countersign another’s note, to become responsible for his debts.”
-Bible

“Debts are like children: the smaller they are the more noise they make.”
-Spanish Proverb

“Interest on debts grow without rain.”
-Yiddish Proverb

“There are four things every person has more of than they know; sins, debt, years, and foes.”
-Persian Proverb

“The only man who sticks closer to you in adversity than a friend is a creditor.”
-Unknown

“Before borrowing money from a friend, decide which you need most.”
-American Proverb

“In God we trust; all others must pay cash.”

-American Proverb

“Promises make debt, and debt makes promises.”

-Dutch Proverb

“Christmas is the season when you buy this year’s gifts with next year’s money.”

-Unknown

“A hundred wagon loads of thoughts will not pay a single ounce of debt.”

-Italian Proverb

“Running into debt isn’t so bad. It’s running into creditors that hurts.”

-Unknown

“A church debt is the devil’s salary.”

-Henry Ward Beecher

“The borrower is servant to the lender.”

-The Bible

Benjamin Franklin (and other dudes like him)

“Rather go to bed supperless, than rise in debt.”

-Benjamin Franklin

“When you get in debt you become a slave.”

-Andrew Jackson

“Tis against some mens principle to pay interest, and seems against others interest to pay the principle.”

-Benjamin Franklin

“The second vice is lying, the first is running in debt.”

-Benjamin Franklin

“Never spend your money before you have it.”

-Thomas Jefferson

“Lying rides upon debt’s back.”

-Benjamin Franklin

“I say to you never involve yourself in debt, and become no man’s surety.”

-Andrew Jackson

“Creditors have better memories than debtors.”

-Benjamin Franklin

“Buy what thou hast no Need of and ere long thou shalt sell thy Necessaries.”

-Benjamin Franklin

“Live within your means, never be in debt, and by husbanding your money you can always lay it out well.”

-Andrew Jackson

“Those have a short Lent, who owe money to be paid at Easter.”

-Benjamin Franklin

Funny... well, some of them at least...

“If I owe you a pound, I have a problem; but if I owe you a million, the problem is yours.”

-John Maynard Keynes

“If you think nobody cares if you’re alive, try missing a couple of car payments.”

-Earl Wilson

“This would be a much better world if more married couples were as deeply in love as they are in debt.”

-Earl Wilson

“When a man is in love or in debt, someone else has the advantage.”

-Bill Balance

“Debt, n. An ingenious substitute for the chain and whip of the slavedriver.”

-Ambrose Bierce

“No man’s credit is as good as his money.”

-E.W. Howe

“Today, there are three kinds of people: the have’s, the have-not’s, and the have-not-paid-for-what-they-have’s.”

-Earl Wilson

“Forgetfulness. A gift of God bestowed upon debtors in compensation for their destitution of conscience.”

-Ambrose Bierce

“Some people use one half their ingenuity to get into debt, and the other half to avoid paying it.”

-George Prentice

“A man who pays his bills on time is soon forgotten.”

-Oscar Wilde

“I like my players to be married and in debt. That’s the way you motivate them.”

-Ernie Banks

“Ten million dollars after I’d become a star I was deeply in debt.”

-Sammy Davis, Jr.

Writer’s writers

“A man in debt is so far a slave.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

“He that dies pays all debts.”

-William Shakespeare

“Debts are nowadays like children begot with pleasure, but brought forth in pain.”

-Moliere

“Wouldst thou shut up the avenues of ill, Pay every debt as if God wrote the bill.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Neither a borrower nor a lender be; for loan doth oft lose both itself and friend.”

-William Shakespeare

“Debts and lies are generally mixed together.”

-Francois Rabelais

“There are but two ways of paying debt: Increase of industry in raising income, increase of thrift in laying out.”

-Thomas Carlyle

“Poets, like friends to whom you are in debt, you hate.”

-William Wycherley

“He looks the whole world in the face for he owes not any man.”

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

“Who goeth a borrowing. Goeth a sorrowing.”

-Thomas Tusser

“Debt is the worst poverty.”

-Thomas Fuller

“Speak not of my debts unless you mean to pay them.”

-George Herbert

“Youth is in danger until it learns to look upon debts as furies.”

-Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton

“Small debts are like small shot; they are rattling on every side, and can scarcely be escaped without a wound.”

-Samuel Johnson

“Do not accustom yourself to consider debt only as an inconvenience; you will find it a calamity.”

-Samuel Johnson

Government, Politics, and other boring topics

“Blessed are the young, for they shall inherit the national debt.”

-Herbert Hoover

“I found this national debt, doubled, wrapped in a big bow waiting for me as I stepped into the Oval Office.”

-Barack Obama

“A liberal is someone who feels a great debt to his fellow man; a debt he proposes to pay off with your money.”

-Gordon Liddy

“I go on the principle that a public debt is a public curse.”

-James Madison

“A billion here, a billion there, sooner or later it adds up to real money.”

-Everett Dirksen

“You cannot spend your way out of recession or borrow your way out of debt.”

-Daniel Hannan

“Debt is a prolific mother of folly and of crime.”

-Benjamin Disraeli

“Simply put, unsustainable debt is helping to keep too many poor countries and poor people in poverty.”

-Bill Clinton

Modern ‘Gurus’

“Debt is dumb. Cash is king.”

-Dave Ramsey

“Debt can turn a free, happy person into a bitter human being.”

-Michael Mihalik

“Chains of habit are too light to be felt until they are too heavy to be broken.”

-Warren Buffett

“If you’re thinking of debt, that’s what you’re going to attract.”

-Bob Proctor

“Debt is normal. Be weird.”

-Dave Ramsey

“If you have debt I’m willing to bet that general clutter is a problem for you too.”

-Suze Orman

Kickin’ it Old School

“Debt is the slavery of the free.”

-Publilius Syrus

“A small debt produces a debtor; a large one, an enemy.”

-Publilius Syrus

“Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?”

-Socrates

“It shows nobility to be willing to increase your debt to a man to whom you already owe much.”

-Cicero

“It is thrifty to prepare today for the wants of tomorrow.”

-Aesop

Hard to categorize quotes...

“It takes as much imagination to create debt as to create income.”

-Leonard Orr

“A habit of debt is very injurious to the memory.”

-Austin O’Malley

“In the long run we shall have to pay our debts at a time that may be very inconvenient for our survival.”

-Norbert Wiener

“The impulse dances inside the debt.”

-Jareb Teague

“A mortgage casts a shadow on the sunniest field.”

-Robert Green Ingersoll

“One of the greatest disservices you can do a man is to lend him money that he can’t pay back.”

-Jesse Jones

“Debt is like any other trap, easy enough to get into, but hard enough to get out of.”

-Henry Wheeler Shaw

“Many delight more in giving of presents than in paying their debts.”

-Sir Philip Sidney

“Wars in old times were made to get slaves. The modern implement of imposing slavery is debt.”

-Ezra Pound

“Home life ceases to be free and beautiful as soon as it is founded on borrowing and debt.”

-Henrik Ibsen

“Debt is the secret foe of thrift, as vice and idleness are its open enemies.”

-James H. Aughey

“Worrying is like paying on a debt that may never come due.”

-Will Rogers

“One can pay back the loan of gold, but one lies forever in debt to those who are kind.”

-Malcolm Forbes

Grand Finale!

“Don’t let your mouth write no check that your tail can’t cash.”

-Bo Diddley

- <http://manvsdebt.com/debt-quotes/>

Resources:

[The Millionaire Next Door](#)

[Christian Debt Elimination Program](#)

Chapter 3

Get Rid of “Things”

As I mentioned in the last chapter, I enjoy reading <http://manvsdebt.com/>. This is the website that Adam Baker started to show how he sold his crap, paid off his debt, and does what he loves.

While I respect what Adam did, (just like with the Dennings) I do not want to do the exact same thing. I know that no matter where I go or what I do, I will always settle down at my home. So, I do not want to sell all my “crap” just to have to buy some of it back when I come back home.

I have two college friends that were in similar situations. One traveled and the other just had more freedom to do what he wanted. Because I do not want to give their names, I will call them friend one and friend two.

I was having a conversation with friend one about purchasing renters insurance from me when I was working at State Farm. He said he did not have anything in his apartment that had any real value. In fact, his most expensive item was his backpack. At the time, I kind of thought he was a little weird. Now, I wish I had been a little more like him. He was making decent money at the time, he just hadn't fallen into the trap of buying cool things to show off his money.

Friend two was different because he used his saved money to travel. I do not know if he had anything of real value, but I know he lived on a very strict budget. He had a full-time job that I would guess made him a decent amount of money, but he hardly spent any while he was home. Whenever I would see him though, he told me stories about traveling all over the world.

A lot of people (including me), want to actually start buying nicer things once they get their first full-time job out of college. I bought a new (to me) car pretty quickly. It wasn't that expensive, but I had to make a payment. Then I started buying other “cool” things. I never got myself into too much trouble, but I lost a little freedom every time I bought something.

In our society, it seems as though your happiness is measured in the amount of things you have. If you have a good job, you want to have a nice car. Then you want to get a nice house. Then, depending on your situation, you may want to get a boat or another toy. In between your larger purchases, you buy a nice tv, computer, and the latest iPad. You want to be able to show people that you have money.

Now I am not saying that the only reason you do this is to impress other people. There are certainly benefits to all of these items. However, a portion of the reason you purchase some items is because your friends have them.

Check out this great article from zenpsychiatry.com.

Get Rid of Your Stuff: Why Fewer Possessions = More Freedom, and 10 Tips for How to Get There

“Is it possible that the traditional American value of consuming, amassing possessions, and constantly trying to one-up yourself with bigger and better things might not be making you as happy as you think?”

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