

# Scott & Bethany Palmer

## The Money Couple



The Money Couple, **Scott and Bethany Palmer**, have 35 years of combined financial planning experience. They're financial advisers and financial communication experts who lead the financial planning company Envoy Financial, representing 12,000 clients. Scott and Bethany are popular motivational speakers and frequent guests on radio and television programs across the country. They co-authored *Cents and Sensibility* (Cook, 2005) and *First Comes Love, Then Comes Money* (HarperOne, 2009). Scott and Bethany enjoy living in Colorado with their sons, Cole (7) and Cade (5).

Most of us have strong, deeply ingrained ideas about money. As financial communication experts, the Palmers have found that many couples need help learning to communicate about money to prevent clashing ideas from destroying their relationship. Scott and Bethany answered the following questions submitted by MOPS moms, related to building strong financial communication in the family:

**ANNE M., OHIO:** Do you have any tips on how to keep healthy communication between one spouse who mostly makes the money and budget, and me, the spouse who's mostly responsible for spending that money to provide for our family and household?

In working with thousands of couples, we find it's normal to have one person in the relationship that's primarily responsible for the finances. It's imperative that open, clear and transparent conversation is taking place. We strongly encourage you to have a monthly meeting we call "the money huddle."

When one person handles the money, it's easy for there to be lying about money and secret spending. We call this "financial infidelity." The "money huddle" will not only help you continue to agree about your budget, but also to discuss the changes in your family needs and household expenses.

**ANGELA L., ARIZONA:** How can we creatively teach our children about money? I want to make it fun and something that just comes naturally so they don't go through the pain of poor money management later.

It's important that you and your husband have strong financial communication. Modeling this to your children will give them a positive outlook on money. Start with understanding your child's money personality — the pros and the cons. The five money personalities are: Saver, Spender, Security-Seeker, Risk-Taker and Flyer (see sidebar for complete descriptions). This can be a fun way to start.

Another idea is to get three shoe boxes and label them, Giving, Saving and Spending. Every time your kids receive money, teach them how much money goes into each box. This is a great way to teach them basic financial principles.



LEFT: The Palmers' sons Cole and Cade.

**TRACEY L., GEORGIA:** My husband doesn't understand what needs to go into the budget and won't discuss it. He's the Saver, I'm the Spender. I have to "break budget" every month because of things he won't budget for such as gifts, play dates and hobby money. How can I help him understand where all the money goes when he won't listen to me?

There are many opportunities for "financial infidelity" to creep into your relationship. You may feel you have to spend in secret; and your husband may feel he needs to protect the budget. This is a recipe for disaster, but a common problem for couples.

Start with identifying the level of financial infidelity in your relationship. Take the financial relationship quiz we've developed that's available on our Web site [themoneycouple.com](http://themoneycouple.com). This is a fun way for you both to know where you stand and gives you a great place to start.

It's time to forget about the past, start fresh and agree that financial communication needs to become a priority in your relationship.

**TANYA W., OREGON:** My husband contributes 17 percent of his paycheck into his 401K; the company matches 6 percent. I want to back off of that in the current economics; he doesn't. Would you suggest contributing less, even down to 10 percent and having more cash on hand than investments?

Taking advantage of employer 401k plans is important. But it's

also important that you don't damage your relationship by insisting he contributes the amount you're suggesting. Talk to your husband about a compromise. Remember it isn't an "all or nothing" situation. A suggested compromise would be to drop the percentage for a period of time and then increase it later.

**ANNE M., OHIO:** When you haven't been communicating about money as a couple, where should you start and what should some of the topics cover? Congratulations! You've identified one of the most difficult steps in financial communication — getting started. The first step is to implement one of our financial communication tools called "the money dump." This is a process where you "dump" all of the good and bad aspects of your financial relationship on to paper.

Starting the communication process will give you a foundation for future money conversations. After you're done, identify the categories of finances you want to focus on. Be sure to take it slow and don't expect perfection.

**DAWN W., ILLINOIS:** I feel like all we do is pay bills. And I am the one who does it. How do I make him understand I really could use some help before I mess something up and it becomes a big argument?

We often see this challenge. One person does the finances, and the other isn't satisfied. We suggest you talk to him about splitting the financial responsibilities. Explain to him that you feel overwhelmed and worried his financial expectations won't be met. The finances in your family should be seen as an opportunity for you to work together and become closer in your relationship.

## What's Your Money Personality?



After working with thousands of couples over the years, the Palmers determined that people have one of five money personalities listed below. As with any personality inventory, there will be shades of grey. Very few people live out their money personality in every situation. So when you look at the money personalities, focus on your normal impulses.

If spending money gives you a rush, you're probably a Spender, even if your financial situation means you hardly ever buy anything. If buying something at 75 percent off retail makes you giddy, you're probably a Saver. Learn more about each of these personalities in the Palmers' new book, *First Comes Love, Then Comes Money*.

**The Saver:** These are the penny-pinchers of the world. They hate parting with their money and believe just about everything is overpriced. If a Saver finds a dollar in her coat pocket, she leaves it there.

**The Spender:** Spenders love to buy, buy, buy. Some like to buy for themselves; some like to buy for others. But money never sticks around too long for a Spender. If a Spender finds money in her coat pocket, she runs to Starbucks to spend it.

**The Risk-Taker:** The entrepreneurs, the inventors, the people on the cover of *Fortune* magazine. All Risk-Takers. They aren't afraid of losing everything if it gets them closer to having everything.

**The Security-Seeker:** If you know a planner, you know a Security-Seeker. They like knowing their financial future is locked in. They can tell you how much is in their retirement account, how much life insurance they have and all the reasons why both of those are very good ideas.

**The Flyer:** Flyers just don't think about money. We call them Flyers because they "fly by the seat of their pants" when it comes to financial planning. In other words, there is no plan.

Once people discover their money personalities, their spending habits (or lack-of-spending habits), their fears about money and their fights about money all start to make sense. And when two partners figure this out together, they see past arguments about money in a different light.

Scott and Bethany said they are both primarily Spenders. However, they are secondarily the exact opposite. Scott is a Security-Seeker; and Bethany is a Risk-Taker.

How do they get along? "Splendid when it comes to spending," they said. "But if an investment opportunity comes along ... the conflict begins!" Just recently Bethany saw a piece of raw land that appeared to be the opportunity of a lifetime, Scott wasn't so sure. The result? "After much research to accommodate Scott, the land was purchased — compromise, compromise, compromise with a couple of money huddles in between," Bethany said.

