

What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Indebtedness?

(Conclusion; Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction:

- A. Previously
 1. America, the debtor nation
 2. Spending choices come from spiritual decisions
 3. What is written?
- B. Conclusion: a Biblical plan for a debt-free life

I. A BIBLICAL PLAN FOR A DEBT-FREE LIFE

- A. Have a written plan
 1. Create an itemized list of all expenses in their order of importance
 2. List needs, wants, and desires separately.
 - a. Needs are life's basic necessities: food, clothing, employment, home, and medical coverage
 - b. Wants are choices about the quality of goods we consume: dress clothes versus work clothes, steak versus hamburger, a new car versus a used car.
 - c. Desires are the goods and services we choose not essential to our survival, safety or well-being.
- B. Determine essentials for living
 1. Eliminate unnecessary living expenditures, and look for services around the home that can be done without outside cost. We assume "expenses" are essential only because of the messages of our society.
 2. Consider purchasing essentials from a consignment shop or thrift store, repair or refinish furniture and cars, learn to do your own home repairs when possible, shop for groceries at discount markets, learn to cook at home instead of restaurants, grow a garden, cultivate marketable hobby
- C. Think before buying
 1. If our families are in debt, evaluate every purchase - Prov. 24:3
 2. Is it a necessity?
 - a. Have I assessed whether it is a need, a want, or a desire?
 - b. Does the purchase reflect my Christian ethics?
 - c. Can I continue to engage my desires while I owe others?
 - d. Is this the best possible buy I can get, or am I purchasing only because I have a credit card?
 - e. Is it a highly depreciative item? Am I buying something that will devalue quickly? Does it require costly upkeep?
 2. When we choose to handle our finances God's way and consistently practice it, we will find ourselves cared for.
 - a. The question is: do we trust Him enough to believe and act on this? - Matt. 6:33-34; Phil. 4:19
 - b. "God's work, done God's way, will not lack God's support."
(Hudson Taylor)

- D. Spend less than you earn; spending choices come from spiritual decisions.
 - 1. We must make this decision and then work every day to make it happen
 - 2. This principle is essential to financial strength and the reason why many people get into debt.
 - 3. The alternatives are to spend only what we earn, or spend more than we earn; both are harmful in the long term.
 - 4. The problem is usually in not earning it, but in managing it.
 - 5. Spending choices come from spiritual decisions. Often, we tend to think that God gets His portion of our income, and then I get to do what I want with the rest of it.
 - 6. We must be willing to change our behavior; we must be willing to spend less than we earn.
- E. We must learn to be content with what we have - Phil 4:11-13
 - 1. How do I learn to live contentedly without becoming complacent or discontent?
 - a. Learn gratitude
 - b. Rejoice with others when they are blessed. Eliminates the peer pressure to compare or compete
 - c. Honor God and His wisdom for living by practicing it long term; we can adjust and learn to be content with the new conditions
 - d. Control thoughts and feelings - Prov. 21:20-21
 - e. Being wealthy or being poor is not an indicator of righteousness
- F. Avoid the use of debt to satisfy desires - Luke 12:13-21
 - 1. Greed is repackaged in our culture as need.
 - 2. In personal debt, advertisers are the drug manufacturers, the credit industry is the dealer, and the media is the enabler.
 - 3. "Man has confessed to every sin except for greed." (Francis of Assisi)
 - 4. It is much easier to see greed in others than in ourselves.
- G. Protect ourselves from impulse purchases
 - 1. Get control by setting a budget; a budget is a set of pre-made decisions
 - 2. Just like dieting and exercise where we must pre-decide what we are going to eat and avoid a buffet, when we set no budget and treat life like a spending buffet, we will bulge until we are bankrupt
- H. Guard against impatience
 - 1. Cultivating delayed gratification is the way to protect against impatience
 - 2. Diligently protecting our savings plan will change our thinking about waiting to make a purchase
 - 3. This is counterintuitive in a culture that tells us we should get it now
 - 4. We must draw lines and be vigilant; if we don't draw the line, it will be drawn for us by others
- I. Give generously
 - 1. Set long term goals for giving - Luke 6:38
 - 2. Five facts that will facilitate our giving:
 - a. God owns it all
 - b. God is first
 - c. God doesn't need our money

- d. Giving to God is a need that I have
 - e. I can afford to give - Luke 12:15
- J. Set long term goals - Matt. 6:19-20
 - 1. Six things we need to know about setting long term goals:
 - a. We can't take it with us, but we can send it on ahead
 - b. How we manage our money testifies about whether we believe what we say we believe
 - c. If we aim at nothing, we will hit it every time
 - d. Long term rewards have no short cuts
 - e. The certainty of economic uncertainty
 - f. Don't fall into the trap of thinking prosperity is the answer; it is not; security in the Lord is.

Conclusion:

A. Robert Robinson was born in 1735 (1790); as a young man, he enjoyed getting into trouble with his friends, drinking, gambling, and bullying. At age 17, he heard a sermon by George Whitefield on Matthew 3:7-9 - "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.'" Afterward, Robinson realized his need for salvation in Christ. The Gospel changed his life, and he became a preacher. He also wrote several hymns, including his best-known "O Thou Fount of Every Blessing."

"O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!" It brings to mind the apostle Paul's words: "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2Cor. 5:14-15).

We can't earn God's love and grace. But because He gave it to us, how can we help but love Him in return by living for Him. As debtors, we are called to live each day for Jesus who gave Himself for us. Those who know God's grace, show God's grace.