



What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Indebtedness?

**September 2, 2021 Thursday Indepth Bible
Class of the Trilacoochee church of Christ**

America, The Debtor Nation

- The national debt is 29 trillion dollars
- \$86,200.00 per citizen
- \$228,400.00 per taxpayer (<https://www.usdebtclock.org>)
- The average American's personal debt is \$52,940, including mortgages, home equity, auto, student, and personal loans, and credit card debt.
- Currently, there are more than 600 million credit cards held by Americans; that's two for every man, woman, and child in the country.
- Last year, credit card debt grew by almost \$100 Billion (<https://www.businessinsider.com/personal-finance/average-american-debt>)

America, The Debtor Nation

- Debt is one of the most discouraging things on this earth.
 - Many Christians don't seem to understand it very well.
 - The world doesn't appear to understand it at all.

America, The Debtor Nation

- Symptoms of financial bondage:
 - Charging the necessities of life (food, clothing, fuel)
 - Borrowing money to pay fixed expenses (rent, utilities)
 - Creditors writing and calling for their money
 - Tempted to be dishonest about money
 - Unable to contribute at church or help in the community
 - Frequent arguments with spouse and family about money
 - Unaware of how much one owes
 - Uncertain about how much it takes to survive each week

What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Indebtedness?

- Spending choices come from spiritual decisions
 - Phil. 4:11-13 - “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”
 - The Bible addresses this at length, even though it is seldom taught in the home and almost never taught in Bible classes and sermons.
 - Therefore, we learn about debt and its management from our culture; and, our culture encourages it.

What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Indebtedness?

- We cannot borrow our way into prosperity.
 - The Bible talks more about money than faith and prayer combined; this isn't because God cares about money, but because we do
 - The way we feel about money is a product of our faith
 - Luke 12:13-15 - "Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' 14 But He said to him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?' 15 And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'"

What Is Written?

- Debt is a form of slavery
 - Prov. 22:7, 26-27 - “The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender... 26 Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, One of those who is surety for debts; 27 If you have nothing with which to pay, Why should he take away your bed from under you?”
 - Until we are debt-free, we will be enslaved to our past choices; the consequences will follow us until the debts are paid in full.

What Is Written?

- Debt prevents peaceful rest
 - Neh. 5:3-5 - “There were also some who said, ‘We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine.’ 4 There were also those who said, ‘We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards.’”

What Is Written?

- Debt is the temporary, lazy path to revenue
 - Ecc. 5:4 - “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed”
 - Prov. 6:10-11 - “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep. 11 So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.”
 - Prov. 21:5, 20 - “The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty... 20 There is desirable treasure, And oil in the dwelling of the wise, But a foolish man squanders it.”

What Is Written?

- Debt is God's metaphor for sin
 - Amos 2:6-8
 - Matt. 18:21-35
 - Rom. 6:16-23
- Debt compromises our ability to provide
 - Prov. 13:22 - "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous."
 - Prov. 22:3 - "A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished."

What Is Written?

- Debt reduces our ability to be generous
 - Prov. 3:9, 27 - “Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase... 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so.”
 - 1John 3:17 - “But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”
 - Matt. 5:42 - “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”
 - Jesus taught that we lend to those who are in need. If the act of borrowing was a sin; Jesus would be advocating our complicity with the sins others by lending to them.

What Is Written?

- Debt conflicts with a hard working mindset. It is more than a number; it is a way of thinking.
 - Ex. 22:14 - “If a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it becomes injured or dies, the owner of it not being with it, he shall surely make it good”
 - Prov. 6:6-8 - “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, 8 Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest.”

What Is Written?

- Prov. 10:4 - “He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.”
- Prov. 13:11 - “Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, But he who gathers by labor will increase.”
- Prov. 14:23 - “In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty.”
- Col. 3:23 - “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men”

What Is Written?

- Going into debt for material desires erodes spiritual life
 - Ecc. 5:10 - “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase.”
 - Mark 4:19 - “The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful”

What Is Written?

- 1Tim. 6:10 - “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”
- Heb. 13:5 - “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”
- Matt. 6:21, 31-32 - “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

What Is Written?

- It is wrong not to repay our debts
 - Psalm 37:21 - “The wicked borrows and does not repay, But the righteous shows mercy and gives.”
 - It is not necessarily a sin to incur debt; it is a sin to refuse to repay it.
- One cannot serve God and material desires
 - Matt. 6:24 - “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”
 - When we are in debt, it consumes our thoughts, influence, and life.

What Is Written?

- Don't make financial decisions driven by fear.
 - Matt. 25:24-25 - “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’”

What Is Written?

- Acknowledge our true source of blessings
 - 2Cor. 9:10 - “Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness”
 - God is the One who provides our finances. Our jobs are not our source of income; God is
 - Matt. 6:26 - “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

What Is Written?

- Maintain a generous spirit
 - Prov. 28:27 - “He who gives to the poor will not lack, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses”
- Work with what you've got
 - Rom. 13:8 - “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law”
 - Luke 19:17 - “And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’”

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- Have a written plan; create an itemized list of all expenses in their order of importance
- List needs, wants, and desires separately.
 - Needs are life's basic necessities: food, clothing, employment, home, and medical coverage
 - 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.
 - Desires are the goods and services we choose not essential to our survival, safety or well-being.

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- Determine essentials for living
 - Eliminate unnecessary living expenditures, and look for services around the home that can be done without outside cost.
 - 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 a marketable hobby.

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- Think before buying.
 - If our families are in debt, evaluate every purchase
 - Prov. 24:3 - “By knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches”
- Is it a necessity?
 - Have I assessed whether it is a need, a want, or a desire?
 - Does the purchase reflect my Christian ethics?
 - Can I continue to engage my desires while I owe others?
 - Is this the best possible buy I can get, or am I purchasing only because I have a credit card?
 - Is it a highly depreciative item? Am I buying something that will devalue quickly? Does it require costly upkeep?

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- When we choose to handle our finances God's way and consistently practice it, we will find ourselves cared for.
 - The question is: Do we trust Him enough to believe and act on this?
 - Matt. 6:33-34 - "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."
 - Phil. 4:19 - "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
 - "God's work, done God's way, will not lack God's support."
(Hudson Taylor)

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- Spend less than you earn; spending choices come from spiritual decisions.
 - We must make this decision and then work every day to make it happen.
 - This principle is essential to financial strength and the reason why many people get into debt.
 - The alternatives are to spend only what we earn, or spend more than we earn; both are harmful in the long term.
 - The problem is usually not in earning it, but in managing it.
 - 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.
 - We must be willing to change our behavior; we must be willing to spend less than we earn.

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- We must learn to be content with what we have.
 - Phil. 4:11-13
- How do I learn to live contentedly without becoming complacent or discontent?
 - Learn gratitude
 - Rejoice with others when they are blessed. It will eliminate the peer pressure to compare or compete.
 - Honor God and His wisdom for living by practicing it long term; we can adjust and learn to be content with the new conditions
 - Control thoughts and feelings
 - Prov. 21:20-21 - “He who follows righteousness and mercy Finds life, righteousness and honor.”
 - Being wealthy or being poor is not an indicator of righteousness

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- Avoid the use of debt to satisfy desires.
 - Luke 12:15 - “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”
 - Greed is repackaged in our culture as need.
 - In personal debt, advertisers are the drug manufacturers, the credit industry is the dealer, and the media is the enabler.
 - “Man has confessed to every sin except for greed.”
(Francis of Assisi)
 - It is much easier to see greed in others than in ourselves.

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- Protect ourselves from impulse purchases.
 - Get in control by setting a budget; a budget is a set of pre-made decisions.
- Guard against impatience.
 - Cultivating delayed gratification is the way to protect against impatience.
 - Diligently protecting our savings plan will change our thinking about waiting to make a purchase.
 - This is counterintuitive in a culture that tells us we must get it now.
 - We must draw lines and be vigilant; if we don't draw the line, it will be drawn for us by others.

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- Give generously
 - Set long term goals for giving
 - Luke 6:38 - “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”
- Five facts that will facilitate our giving:
 - God owns it all
 - God is first
 - God doesn't need our money
 - Giving to God is a need that I have
 - We can afford to give

A Biblical Plan For A Debt-Free Life

- Set long term goals
 - Matt. 6:19-20 - “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”
- Six things we need to know about setting long term goals:
 - We can't take it with us, but we can send it on ahead.
 - How we manage our money testifies about whether we believe what we say we believe.
 - If we aim at nothing, we will hit it every time.
 - Long term rewards have no short cuts.
 - The certainty of economic uncertainty.
 - Don't fall into the trap of thinking prosperity is the answer; it is not; security in the Lord is.

What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Indebtedness?

- Remember that great wealth is not synonymous with great joy.
 - 1Tim. 6:6 - “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”