

**Family Matters 5: MONEY MATTERS**  
**Proverbs 22:1-7 (6/5/16)**

- 22 A good name is more desirable than great riches;  
to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.**
- <sup>2</sup> Rich and poor have this in common:  
The LORD is the Maker of them all.**
- <sup>3</sup> The prudent see danger and take refuge,  
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.**
- <sup>4</sup> Humility and the fear of the LORD  
bring wealth and honor and life.**
- <sup>5</sup> In the paths of the wicked are snares and pitfalls,  
but those who would preserve their life stay far from  
them. <sup>6</sup> Train a child in the way they should go,  
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.**
- <sup>7</sup> The rich rule over the poor,  
and the borrower is slave to the lender.**

Several men are in a locker room. A cell phone, sitting on a bench with no one close by, rings. A man walks over and hits the hands free speaker button to answer it. Everyone else gets quiet.

"Hello," the man says. "Honey, it's me," says a woman on the other end. "Are you at the club?" .... "Yes."

WOMAN: 'Well, I'm at the mall, and I found this really beautiful leather coat. It has a fur collar, too. And guess what? It's on sale. It's only \$1,000. Is it OK if I buy it?'

MAN: 'Sure, go ahead if you like it that much.'

WOMAN: "Well, I also stopped by the Mercedes dealership and saw the new Models. There's one that's just perfect for us."

MAN: 'How much?' WOMAN: '\$70,000'

MAN: 'OK, but for that price, it better have all the options.'

WOMAN: 'Great! Oh, and one more thing...that house I fell in love with last year...it's back on the market. They're only asking \$450,000 now.' MAN: 'Well, give them an offer of \$400,000. They'll probably take it.'

WOMAN: "Oh, that's wonderful, honey. I'm so excited—I just love you! See you later!" MAN: "Okay...Bye."

.....The man hits the button to end the call. The other men in the locker room are staring at him—mouths...hanging open. That's when he asks: '**Anyone know whose phone this is?**'

Well, somebody's going to have some problems with "money matters!" But it hasn't been long since our whole society seemed to be functioning like that—remember?

Extravagance was in! Living beyond one's means was the norm. "Buy now, pay later" was the slogan that fueled our booming economy—but smart people knew it couldn't last—and it didn't! Lots of lessons were learned—the hard way!

So, **WHAT'S OUR PROBLEM WITH MONEY MATTERS?** Well, it's all centered around this bit of wisdom: **"If your outgo exceeds your income, your upkeep will be your downfall."**

Many people's outgo exceeds their income, and it weighs on every aspect of their lives, dragging them and their families down.

Years ago, people in the know began warning us about the increasing levels of consumer debt in our nation. Not only were most people not saving, they were spending more than they were making—resulting in a negative savings rate.

So I decided to teach a class on the dangers of indebtedness. In the process, I discovered that we in the church are not exempt from these excesses.

I learned then that about half of us who use credit cards pay off the balance in full each month. The credit card companies don't like folks like us. They keep coming up with new ways to entice us to go into debt so we'll have to pay them interest!

The other half of us don't pay off our balance each month—and some pay only the minimum required. Now, recent reforms—yes, those evil government regulations--forced the card companies to at least put on our monthly bills what this means long term. Let me give you an example:

Let's say you carry a balance on your credit card of \$8,000. Your interest rate is 18%. Now, follow this: you never charge another penny to that card; however, you only pay the minimum required each month.

How long do you think it will take you to pay off that \$8,000 debt???—25years!!! And get this—you will have paid a total of over \$24,000—3 times as much as you originally spent!

So...that new TV you found on sale for \$500 ends up costing you \$1500 by the time you pay it off—some deal, huh?!? That \$5,000 dream vacation you had to have has now set you back \$15,000, and you can hardly even remember it!

Do you see what we're doing to ourselves and our futures? And what's more, all this stuff we acquire on credit is not making us happier. The Bible warns that it can even do the opposite!

Maybe you saw this news article that came out earlier this year—it began: **"Almost two in three Americans don't have enough savings to pay for a \$500 car repair or a \$1,000 emergency room bill, according to a new Bankrate.com report.**

**Only 37% of U.S. adults have enough savings to pay for these unexpected expenses. 23% would reduce their spending on other things to make ends meet, 15% would use credit cards and another 15% would borrow from family or friends."**

If necessary, 58% of respondents said they would cut back on eating out, followed by lesser percentages who would decrease what they're paying for cable, coffee, and cell phones. The smallest percentage of all were those who said they would reduce their consumption of alcohol in order to save money.

The article concluded: **"This proves that an emergency savings cushion is more than just a personal finance cliché, yet most Americans are ill-prepared for life's inevitable curveballs."** (January 6, 2016, PRNewswire)

Remember the "housing bubble" in '08 and the resulting financial collapse—how could we forget? That didn't just affect those who were being irresponsible—we all were affected!

If you owned a home or had a 401k or 403b plan, you were hurt. Many lost their jobs and their health insurance. For many, this led to financial ruin.

The collapse was painful for almost everyone--except for a few people who were on the inside, saw what was coming because they had helped to create the problem, and were able to take advantage of the situation.

I don't like all the anger we see in our nation, but I do understand why it's out there. There's a lot of misplaced blame, too, because there are those in politics and business who have a vested interest in who's held responsible for mistakes that were made.

There's plenty of blame to go around—and perhaps we all share in it to a degree—but some did things that were probably criminal; but they've never been held accountable.

As Christians, we need to be clear that God's word says that such taking advantage of the misfortune of others, or pursuing gains at the expense of others, is sinful! Not that those who do this stuff care; but WE MUST care, if we're true to our calling in Christ!

Here's the point I want to make. While what happened then was painful for most, it was far less painful for those who had been following solid financial principles—many of them rooted in Holy Scripture—teachings that relate directly to money matters.

Let's talk about debt. **WHY IS DEBT SUCH A PROBLEM?**

**A.** Because of debt, **long term goals are not met:** saving for retirement, funding the kids' education, putting a down payment on a house, or just having the resources to repair or replace things when they break.

**B.** Debt has **a negative effect on families.** The number one cause of divorce cited today is money problems. The couple is stressed out over their debt, and each one blames the other for purchasing so much stuff that they didn't need.

**C.** Debt also **affects our faith.** More debt means less giving, less participation in God's work, less fulfillment in our lives.

Jesus said '**where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**' Many people's hearts are all wrapped up in too much stuff and too many debts, and it's ruining their lives.

**D.** The **Bible warns us** that it's better not to borrow: **Proverbs 22:7** (our text) says, "**The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.**"

As long as you owe money, you are a servant (slave) to the lender. God wants us to be free, our allegiance being only to Him; but debt enslaves us.

**E. Still, the Bible does seem to allow debt.** Jesus told the parable of the talents (Matt. 25). One man took the money entrusted to his care and buried it. When the master returned and learned what the man had done, he rebuked him:

**“You wicked, lazy servant!...You should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.” (Matt 25:26-27)**

If borrowing and lending were against God’s will, I doubt Jesus would have told this parable. It’s better to avoid debt, but I believe we go too far when we say that all debt is wrong.

**F. If you must borrow, pay the loan back on time.** Be true to your word--keep your promise to the lender. Psalm 37:21 reads, **“The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.”**

Interesting combination, isn’t it? Evidently the righteous not only repay their debts, but manage to give generously as well! (Think the two are connected, maybe?)

In Romans 13:8, we’re told, **“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the debt to love one another.”** Paul tells Christians to stay current on their bills—to leave no debts unpaid.

In the Christian life, honesty and integrity matter. Pay what you owe when you owe it. And don’t get caught owing so much, you can’t pay. Being responsible in money matters is part of our witness.

**G. Debt is a tool that must be used wisely—and it’s necessary to distinguish between credit and debt.** Credit is a tool you use to purchase an asset. Debt is what results from making the purchase, but then delaying the payment.

If your credit is good, you can buy something today without paying for it immediately. Many of us put everything “on the card.”

If you are using credit wisely, though, you know you have the money to cover those purchases, and you pay the bill before it ever becomes debt—in other words, before any interest is due.

**H.** Sometimes, though, we make purchases that we cannot pay for immediately. So we **GO INTO DEBT. CAN THIS BE DONE WISELY?** Yes, I believe so. I'll try to explain.

1. You incur **a wise debt when YOU PURCHASE SOMETHING YOU TRULY NEED and the value of the item (WORTH) is at least as much as WHAT YOU OWE on it.** This means if you get into money trouble, you can still sell the item and pay off your debt.

Houses are a good example. A house is an important asset, and usually appreciates in value.

Not many of us can pay cash for a house, so it can be good stewardship to take out a loan for a house. Of course, even this good, worthwhile investment was ruined a few years back by greed.

In spite of this, investing is a legitimate tool for Christians to use to provide for their families and to serve God and others—but be careful. Any approach to investing that's all about getting something for nothing or getting rich at the expense of others has no place in the Christian life.

2. Now, let's look at a few examples of **UNWISE DEBT.** **a) Going into debt for something that will not retain its worth or produce anything of lasting value is unwise.**

**b) Buying more than we can afford, c) impulse buying, d) making non-essential purchases on credit when we know we don't have the money to pay for it; e) buying to keep up with or impress someone else...is unwise.**

I Timothy 6 tells us to **'flee from the love of money which is the root of all kinds of evil.'** You may need to put some distance between yourself and that credit card which has become a source of evil in your life. Flee from it—which brings us to this:

### **III. HOW DO WE SOLVE THIS PROBLEM OF DEBT?**

**A. First, CONFESS IT.** Get it out into the open where you and God can deal with it. Debt problems can be sort of like health problems. Denying it won't make it go away.

It's the same way with debt. We can get in completely over our heads—the whole time denying that we have a problem. We'll not make progress until we admit that our spending is out-of-control and our debts are overwhelming us. Confess it, and next:

**B. DEVELOP A PLAN.** 1) Determine where you are now with your finances and how you got there. What caused you to spend more than you could afford? Do you simply want too much?

Maybe you lack adequate skills in managing your money. Or, is it circumstances beyond your control—say, an unexpected change in your income? Once you understand how you got into a financial mess, you'll have better insight into how to get out.

2) Calculate exactly how much you owe, to whom you owe it, and how much each debt is costing you. This way you'll know which bills to pay off first: the ones which will make the most difference.

3) Stop going deeper into debt. There are three ways to do this: reduce your expenses, increase your income, or both.

Open your eyes and see the many things in your life that you think you have to have--but don't (Cable TV, club memberships, all the new technologies that have come about in recent years and have so quickly become regarded as necessities). Be smarter than that!

Get familiar with the concept of "**delayed gratification.**" Don't think you have to take your "trip of a lifetime" before you turn thirty! There's a lot to be said for having things to look forward to—when you can better afford it!

4) Learn to budget. Have a plan for giving, saving, and spending. Yes, giving--if you are able to give generously and consistently, you'll be a better manager of your money.

A good way to get started is the 10/10/80 plan: give 10% of all you earn to the Lord—not out of a sense of legalism, but as a way of honoring God.

Give another 10% to 20% to yourself in the form of savings and investments, and then spend as much of what remains as you need to, but only after you've put that first 20-30% where it needs to go. You'll find it so much easier to handle money matters if you follow this simple discipline!

**C.** So, admit the problem, develop a plan, and finally, **PERSEVERE!** That's a good Biblical word! Financial counselors report that most people who try to get out of debt and better manage their money will stick to a plan for about two years.

They get out of debt just enough to ease the pressure a bit, then they fall back into old patterns of overspending. Soon, they're right back in the same hole they were in before!

**Galatians 6:9 says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."** Keep going. To prevail, we must persevere.

Ask Him, and God will give you the courage and wisdom to manage your money well, and to set your family free from the pressures of debt, free to live a more abundant and fulfilling life!...

...Which is what our Heavenly Father wants for us. When managed according to His plan, money is yet another source of God's blessing in our lives.

So make it your aim to honor God in the way you manage the money He gives you—be good stewards of what you have--and you will be amazed at how very blessed you are!