

“Breaking Free from Debt ~ Steps to Breaking Free!” [2.18.07]

We live in a community that is based on instant gratification
'Buy now - pay later;' which causes enormous pressure within the family unit.

Non-mortgage consumer debt in America now stands @ 2.4 trillion dollars;
that's not what the government owes – that's what you & I owe

Bible says...

“The one who borrows is the servant to the lender.” [Proverbs 22:7]

Anytime you take a loan (go into debt) you are becoming a servant to that
person or organization until the debt is paid back in full!

Did you know in the last (3) years...

- Total American household, consumer debt averaged \$11, 840
 - This same credit card debt has increased 167% since 1990
 - The avg. American has over 7 payment cards in their wallet including credit card – retail store cards - & bank debit cards.
 - Avg. interest rates paid on credit cards is approximately 14.54%
- The rate of personal savings in the U.S. dipped below 0% for the 1st time since the 'Great Depression', hitting a negative .5%.
 - Approximately 96% of Americans will have to retire financially dependent on the government – family – or charity
 - 7 out of 10 low to middle income households reported using their credit cards as a financial safety net; i.e. to pay for car repairs, rent or housing repairs & medical expenses rather than relying on savings.

There's an interesting deletion(s) from credit application or credit advertisement;
It's the word 'debt.'

You will never find the word in their application – but that's what they are selling!
They're selling debt – it's an unpleasant word!

Say it with me church – D. E. B. T. [icky just to say]

Roget's Thesaurus lists a number of synonyms for debt;

To owe – to be obligated – liable – in deficit – in default – encumbered – in over one's head – out of pocket – in arrears – paupered – needy – distressed – in difficulty – having a wolf @ your door – living hand to mouth – beggarly – having seen better days – racked & ruined – bad off – beaten down – reduced to ruin – fleeced – stripped – reduced – unable to make ends meet – embarrassed - broke

There's no great mystery why they don't use the word debt on the credit application;
they are literally saying – “We want you to be in debt [enslaved] to us.”

Bible says,

'God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world.' [I Cor 7: 23]

Are you enslaved by debt?

Here are 5 danger signs that you may be in over your head with consumer debt.

I. (5) Danger Signs

A. 1st Danger Sign = Living on credit instead of paying cash!

1. If you use your credit cards to maintain your lifestyle; spending too much!
2. Proverbs 3: 27 – 28 says,
“Don’t withhold repayment of your debts. Don’t say some other time, if you can pay it now.”
3. 2 problems w/living on credit;
 - a. # 1 it shows a lack of contentment in your life. Impulsive spending because you can’t wait; you have to have instant gratification!
 - b. # 2 it is a presumption on the future. You might say, ‘I can pay it off tomorrow.’ How do you know, you might be in a major accident next week & be disabled. None of us are promised tomorrow.

Proverbs 27: 1 says,
“Boast not of tomorrow for you do not know what tomorrow will bring.”

B. 2nd Danger Sign = Delaying payments or paying the minimum due

1. If you are missing payments; making late payments; paying the minimum due on that credit card instead of paying it off every month; you are probably over your head!
2. If you find yourself constantly under tension over money – possibly bouncing checks because of insufficient funds;
3. Surely something inside of you has to be saying,
“Something has to change right now – I’m spending too much money!”
4. Romans 13: 8 says, “Let no debt remain outstanding!”

C. 3rd Danger Sign = Unable to Tithe or Save

1. If you are not saving money or giving back to God; you are spending too much money.
2. Bible is very plain about this...Malachi 3: 8 says,
“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob You?’ In tithes & offerings.”
3. [Bottom Line]
If I’m not tithing = I’m robbing God. I’m using God’s money to pay my bills. How do you expect God to bless your finances if you are robbing Him?

D. 4th Danger Sign = Unable to pay taxes

1. If you get to April 15th & you don’t have the money to pay your taxes; you are spending too much money!

2. Matthew 22: 21 says,
"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's & to God what is God's."

E. 5th Danger Sign = Looking for 'Get Rich Quick Ideas'

When you are in debt – you are ripe for a rip off.

1. Bible warns us against such schemes.
"Steady plodding brings prosperity; hasty speculation brings poverty."
Prov. 21: 5
2. People often get in debt because they live in a fantasy world. They are always fanaticizing & dreaming of some big strike tomorrow that going to take all their financial woes away!
3. Ecclesiastes 5: 7 says,
"Dreaming instead of doing is foolishness."

Bible says there is no substitute for getting a real job – working hard & plodding toward financial independence [little by little].

If these 'danger signs' represent your present financial position – please know there is hope & a way out or I would not waste your time!

Here are...

II. (5) Steps to Breaking Free from Debt

A. 1st Step = Commit to becoming debt free now!

1. 1st step is always the most painful – any commitment worth keeping begins w/ a worthwhile resolution.
 2. Psalm 37: 21 says, "...the wicked borrow & do not repay."
- Friends when you make a financial vow – a financial promise; God expects us to keep our word. God takes it very seriously if we don't pay our bills; psalmist says, "...the wicked borrow & do not repay."
 - Even if you've gotten yourself into a financial mess; you are obligated to clean it up!
 - [E-z to reason]
 - I'm in so much debt, why don't I just file for bankruptcy & start over [it's legal]!
 - Bankruptcy is legal in America but it is not moral = it's wrong!
 - It's wrong to stiff other people for bad decisions you make; God expects more from His children!
 - 1st step is to commit to living 'Debt Free.' It's going to take discipline, endurance, persistence & integrity [most of all it takes character]

B. 2nd Step = Start paying God & myself first

1. Get my paycheck & the 1st 10% goes back to God
 2. 2nd 10% goes to me in my saving account!
- Where did your ability to make money come from?

- God & yourself!
- Yet these are the last (2) entities we often pay ☹
- If you want God's blessing on your finances – you have to do it God's way!
- Deuteronomy 14: 23 states,

“The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God 1st in your lives.”

- 10 -10 – 80 Principle = Tithe 10%; Save 10%; Enjoy 80%
- ← ← Examples of this principle being lived out!

C. 3rd Steps = Set up a Repayment Plan

1. You will never get out of debt accidentally; it must be intentional and you must have a plan.
 2. Proverbs 21: 5 says, “Good planning & hard work lead to prosperity.”
 3. If you want to live ‘Debt Free,’ you have to have a good plan.
- Bible says, “Get advice if you want your plans to work.” [Proverbs 28: 18]
 - [Personal experience]
 - Presently, Becky & I have sought the counsel of a godly individual to help us become debt free in the next few years!
 - We had a plan – needed an expert to see if our plans were realistic
 - [WRCC assistance]
 - ABC's of Financial Success beginning this Wednesday night (21st) taught by a C.P.A. Doug German & financial adviser Brad Graber; awesome opportunity to get a solid plan installed in your life!
 - [Going deeper] we are offering (3) Crown Ministry courses on alternate dates to go somewhat deeper into financial freedom. Each of these classes are taught by godly individuals that will assist you in breaking free of debt!
 - Sign up today @ the Ministry counters

D. 4th Step = Add no new debt!

1. Learn to be content w/what God has blessed you with!
2. If you got into debt by using your credit card – here's last week's practical idea, take those credit cards to the Connection Point and use the shredder!
3. Hebrews 13: 5 encourages, “Be content w/what you have.”
4. If you are not content – you are always going to feel financial pressure! Contentment is the single greatest key to staying out of debt!
5. ← ← Howard Dayton's illustration on pp. 46 - 47

E. 5th Step = Stick w/it!

- Prayerfully consider the plan God would have you follow & then stick with the plan!
- Bible says, “Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t get discouraged & give up.”
[Galatians 6: 9]
- Honoring God’s biblical principles takes [disciplines – sacrifice - & time]!
 - Being enslaved by debt is not God’s plan for you & your family!
 - (R) Romans 13: 8 – 10 or p. 867 in pew Bible

There’s a debt you will never be able to repay = Debt of sin

- We have blown it & the Bible says there is a penalty for sin = death.
- Nothing we could ever do to repay this debt = absolutely impossible!
 - God assumed your debt & sent His Son Jesus to earth to stretch out His strong arms & pay your debt with His very blood!
 - You only have to accept this free gift of eternal salvation!