Personal consumer debt is on the increase in our country. CNBC recently reported (Jessica Dickler, CNBC.com, February 19, 2019) the following alarming statistics regarding the personal debt carried by individual Americans:

- Outstanding consumer debt in the US exceeded 4.01 trillion dollars.
- The last months of 2018 alone saw $41 billion of personal debt added to US consumers.
- School and automotive loans contributed $80 billion in just the last quarter of 2018.
- The average American is carrying approximately $4,300 in credit card debt and is spending approximately 10% of disposable income on non-mortgage consumer debt.
- The average credit card interest rate is at an all-time high of 17.41%, a 14% increase over 2 years ago.
- Individual student loan debt has tripled in the last decade and is now $1.5 trillion.
- A college education is now the second largest lifetime expense for individuals - right after purchasing a home.

While debt is on the rise in our culture, debt is nothing new to the human experience. As long as there have been currency and commodities, there have been the "Haves" and the "Have Nots." The "Have Nots" have been frequently tempted to take possession of what they do not have. The "Haves" equally have been tempted to take advantage of those needing to borrow. The borrower and the lender have always been with us. Doing all we can to avoid being the former and being gracious as the latter will enable us to redeem a common arena of abuse and injustice. The wisdom of Solomon from the Book of Proverbs about wealth, poverty and specifically debt can give us much guidance on how to avoid the pains of poor financial decisions. Proverbs Chapter 22 contains a number of pearls of financial wisdom. Proverbs 22:7 will be a major focus for us in this study as we consider the challenges and pitfalls of debt.

This Week’s Core Competency
Peace – I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Debt is often a solution we pursue when we experience a crisis or stress that robs us of peace. We may start out small, with just a few "light" debts that we know we could pay off at any time. We never know when a large crisis may hit and we may need to borrow more. Before we know what has happened, our tiny debts can become overwhelmingly large. Debt can be a soft cushion with sharp teeth of painful consequences.

Remembering that God is our provider can give us peace when we fear that we do not have enough. Popular Christian financial advisor Dave Ramsey (daveramsey.com) has developed a ministry called Financial Peace University that

Chains of habit are too light to be felt until they are too heavy to be broken.
– Warren Buffett

(Cont. pg. 2)
Proverbs 22:1-9

1 A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.
2 Rich and poor have this in common:
The Lord is the Maker of them all.
3 The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.
4 Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life.
5 In the paths of the wicked are snares and pitfalls, but those who would preserve their life stay far from them.
6 Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.
7 The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.
8 Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity, and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.
9 The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.

Proverbs 22:16

16 One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty.

Proverbs 22:22-23

22 Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court,
23 for the Lord will take up their case and will exact life for life.

Proverbs 22:26-27

26 Do not be one who shakes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts;
27 if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Draw a box around each word speaks of wealth in Proverbs 22.
* Circle each word that speaks of poverty.
* Double underline each mention of God.
* Underline words that illustrate direction.

* Bracket phrases that show danger.
* In v. 7, draw lines between words that are parallel.
* Draw lines from words in v.16 to similar words in vv. 22-23.
* Draw lines from words in v. 7 to similar words in vv. 26-27.
day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. According to Proverbs 22:1-2, describe things identified as greater than riches. Why are they greater?

2. According to Proverbs 22:3-6, what activities produce positive results and what activities lead to negative results?

3. In Proverbs 22:7, identify words that are similar or parallel in their meaning.

4. Like many of the statements found in Proverbs, v. 22:7 provides a warning. Who is being warned, the rich or the poor?

5. How is debt like slavery?

6. If debt is unwise, what alternatives are there to borrowing?

7. What financial activities are encouraged by Proverbs 22:8-9?

8. If a person has means, what must he or she be sure to avoid (Proverbs 22:16, 22-23)?


10. What connections do you see between Proverbs 22:7 and other proverbs found in Proverbs 22?
The book of Proverbs serves as the collected wisdom of Israel. Most notable among the proverbs would be those proverbs coming directly from King Solomon. Many of the proverbs are short and succinct, providing memorable imagery and vivid descriptions for high educational impact. Much of the wisdom shared is to promote character change. Individual proverbs in the book are generalized statements about life and how it works. As generalizations, the truths are generally true, with the understanding that there may be some circumstances where there may be exceptions to such general rules. The Book of Proverbs is more about advice than commandment.

The Book of Proverbs is widely regarded as being divided into four distinct sections. Chapters 1-9 appear to be the wisdom of a father to a son, often written in long sections of warnings or appeals about things a young person should avoid or pursue. Chapters 10-22:16 contain a collection of short, pithy sayings that seem to be randomly arranged, often in the form of couplets (two lines that are similar or contrasting). This section is thought to be a collection of the sayings of King Solomon (Proverbs 10:1). Chapters 22:17-24:22 are often referred to as the Thirty Sayings (see NIV headings). These sayings are longer than couplets, often arranged as quatrains (generally four lines of poetical thought). Some suggest that these Thirty Sayings may have been popular sayings repurposed for God's people. Chapters 25-29 are labeled as more sayings of Solomon (Proverbs 25:1). Finally, Chapters 30 and 31 return to a longer form similar and include the wisdom of Agur (Proverbs 30:1) and others.

Our focus for this study will be on Proverbs 22:7. This verse is found in a chapter that has many references regarding wealth and poverty. As we look at Proverbs 22:7, we will consider how this verse compares to the other verses of Proverbs 22 regarding the use of wealth.

Wealth, though important, should not be our chief pursuit. A good name and reputation are described as superior to gold and silver (22:1). God sees both the rich and the poor as his valued creation (22:2). We would do well to see all people, rich or poor, without preference or favoritism. Proverbs 22:3-4 encourage caution and humility that protect and provide. Proverbs 22:5-6 speak of paths and ways that can lead to life or death for both old and young. Those who avoid the "snares and pitfalls" of the wicked will preserve life. Children will be blessed who follow such good ways. Other financial activities (both positive and negative) include generosity (22:8), warnings against oppression of the poor (22:16), warnings against exploitation of the poor (22:22-23), and warnings against surety or hasty loans (22:26-27).

Proverbs 22:7 begins with a general statement about the relationship between the rich and the poor. The "rich" is singular and could be translated "the rich owner" or "the wealthy one." The "poor" here are plural. This contrast heightens the disparity between these two types of individuals. One rich person can rule over many poor people. As in many of Solomon's proverbs, the statement of Proverbs 22:7 is stated as a proverbial observation that is neutrally charged. The "rich" are not condemned here as they are in other verses in this chapter (22:3, 4, 5, 8, 16, 22, 26). Much like Proverbs 22:3, verse 7 labels the rich and poor without criticizing the status of either. The poor are at a disadvantage in 22:7, but not because they are evil or unwise. The rich have the advantage, but are not warned against this posture.

While Proverbs 22:7 does encourage caution when it comes to participating in debt, the verse does not categorically and explicitly condemn all forms of lending and borrowing. This verse does not forbid borrowing. In Israel, the Jews borrowed from one another. The Mosaic Law permitted this, but condemned charging other Jews interest (Exod. 22:25; Deut. 23:19, 28:12, 44), though the Israelites could charge foreigners interest (Deut. 23:20). The New Testament does not forbid borrowing either, though it condemns not paying debts (Rom. 13:6-8). It may be unwise to go into
day 4  
**EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

**The Message of the Passage**

*Debt is generally a poor move; avoid entering into obligations that force you into unproductive bondage.*

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Describe a debt that you have incurred that you would advise someone else to never enter.

What are reasons people give to justify debt? How does Proverbs 22 speak to these reasons?

What alternatives to debt would you recommend to someone seeking your advice?
v. 7 rich  Singular here in 22:7. "[In Proverbs], there is a hard-nosed realism about the advantages of wealth. It is probable that the sayings originated among the family circle, and not among an elite class. The vantage point of the proverbs, while they display a commendable caution, is that riches are indeed a good, a blessing from God, Prov 3:1-10; Ps 37. This is apparent in the realistic observations that in this world riches make a great difference. As it reads in 18:23, the poor man implores, but the rich get away with rough and harsh words. The rich rule over the poor, 22:7, they wield influence among the community. They acquire many 'friends' in contrast to the poor" (Richard Murphy, *Word Bible Commentary: Proverbs*, 59).

v. 7 rule  To judge, have dominion, to have power over, to order, to give direction as a superior. Parallel to the empowered "lender" in the second half of the verse who is judging and in charge of the borrower as a master is to a slave.

v. 7 poor  Plural in number here in 22:7. Many poor are ruled by a singular rich individual. "Of the twenty-one occurrences of ras [poor] in the Old Testament, sixteen are found in the wisdom literature: fourteen in the chapters of Proverbs under discussion here, and two in Ecclesiastes. Of the five remaining instances, three occur in Nathan's parable (2 Sam. 12.1-4), one in I Sam. 18.23 (see p. 17) and one in Pg. 82.3. In this last passage (Ps. 82.3) all the main words for 'poor' occur together in a way which suggests synonymity or at least close association... [rich and poor] are contrasted in several proverbs in a way which leaves no room for doubt that the author sees these two types as representing the extremes of economic status... A further characteristic of the poor man is his vulnerability to the depredations of the rich and powerful. In the case of 18:23 and 22:7 the ras [poor] is treated with contempt by the rich man who regards him as a dependent" (R. Norman Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, 16,18, 20).

v. 7 borrower/lender  Same root word. Borrower is the more passive participant in the transaction and the lender is that one that is more active or has more power in the transaction. The lender enables the lendee (borrower). Borrowing enables the lender to take advantage of the borrower with more ease.

v. 7 slave  "The couplet states a natural social law; the reference appears to be not to legal control but to the state of dependence consequent on poverty and borrowing; this is expressed by the strong term slave, which is probably not to be taken literally. According to the old Heb. law a man might sell himself or his children into slavery (Ex. 21:2-7, Neh. 5:8), or the creditor might sell the debtor (Amos 2:6; 2 Kings 4:3). How long this law continued in force is uncertain, but the parallelism in our couplet suggests the more general sense of the term slave" (Crawford Toy, *International Critical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, 416).
Family Talk
Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

I'm just going to get it out there: debt is a four-letter word. It causes stress, strife, division, and countless sleepless nights. Early in our marriage, my husband and I decided debt was not what our family was about. Of all the character traits we hoped to instill in our children, financial responsibility was at the top. We attacked our debt and have managed to remain debt-free most of our marriage. We've had lean years with no birthday parties, sports, or vacations, but to counter that, we've also had huge celebrations like paying off our house. Throughout the process we have involved our kids. While they have not had specific details of our income and expenses, we have shared this experience with them. They have had to learn how to make choices, save for what they want, and spend wisely. Have we been perfect at handling our money? Absolutely not. But we've learned from our mistakes and pressed on. Through it all one principle has stayed at the forefront of our minds: we will honor God with our finances. God has always provided abundantly more than we could ever hope or imagine. When we weren't sure how we were going to make it, God blessed us in unimaginable ways. I don't know where you are in your financial situation, but I want to encourage you in this: you can do it. I'm praying your family is strengthened and unified as you honor God with your finances this week.

Core Comp
Peace - I live without worry because things are good between God, myself, and others.

Memory Verse
Romans 13:8 "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another."

What Does The Bible Say
Weekly Verse: Proverbs 22:7
1. According to this proverb, who do the rich rule over?
2. Who is the borrower a servant to?
3. Look up the words borrower and lender in the dictionary and write their definitions in your own words.

What Do You Think
Based on this passage, is it better to wait and save for something you want or get it now but owe money to someone?

What R U Going To Do
Practice an attitude of gratitude. Look around and take an inventory of all the toys, clothes, and food in the house. Each morning this week praise God for what He has blessed you with.

KIDPIX COUPON
I memorized my verse _____, completed Scrolls _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _________________________ Grade ____ Parent's signature _________________________
Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org
10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14
I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9
I believe salvation comes through faith by grace.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humility John 3:16
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4
I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19
I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4
I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness 1 Thess. 5:15
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20
I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17
I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money 2 Corinthians 8:7
I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians 6:19-20
I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1
I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12
I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A. University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James, and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella, and Simon. She and James are Shepherds of the Bailey Community Group. She has attended Pantego Bible Church for more than twenty years and has been on staff for more than five years.

Eric Wright (Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary) guest author.