

MONEY TALKS

"UNSTRAPPED: BREAKING FREE FROM DEBT" PROVERBS 22:7

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

*Chains of habit are too light to be felt
until they are too heavy to be broken.*

– Warren Buffett

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

(cont. pg. 2)

offers courses and a multitude of resources for people who are struggling with income and debt issues. Participants in Financial Peace University learn to get out of debt, live on a budget and save for the future. Financial peace may be what is most needed as financial difficulty may be bringing the most stress in your life now. Dave Ramsey says "Financial peace isn't the acquisition of stuff. It's learning to live on less than you make, so you can give money back and have money to invest. You can't win until you do this."

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

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)?
9. What modern day problems would Proverbs 22:26-27 help prevent?
10. What connections do you see between Proverbs 22:7 and other proverbs found in Proverbs 22?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

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

debt in some situations, but it is going too far to say that the Bible condemns going into debt" (Thomas Constable, *Notes on Proverbs*, *SonicLight.org*, 196). Proverbs strongly discourages the practice of "pledges" (Prov. 6:1-5; 22:26-27) or offering to pay for the debts of others as a sign of solidarity or protection. Such pledges might commonly take place in venues where boastful youth might pick fights and support each other in juvenile combat.

While borrowing may not be harshly condemned in Proverbs 22, it is clear that borrowing does have negative consequences. The "rich ruling" over the poor is parallel to the status of slavery as detailed in the balance of 22:7. Borrow and lend come from the same word. Borrow has a sense of weakness whereas lender has the sense of the one who makes it possible for the borrower to borrow. The borrower is like a slave and will be ruled over by the lender. While not overtly condemned, debt does make one disadvantaged and vulnerable to the whims of the lender. Biblical wisdom would advise against frivolous debt.

While Proverbs 22:7 would encourage us to avoid debt, other key passages encourage us even more clearly to steer clear of debt as much as possible. Psalm 37:21 and Romans 13:7 encourage us to pay all our debts and not shirk the responsibility of debt. Unpaid debts reflect poorly upon our witness as children of God.

Romans 13:8 discourages us from taking on debts. God's provision for us (Matthew 6:25-34) encourages us to put God first and look for his righteous ways as we experience his provision rather than worrying about how we are going have our needs met.

Living debt-free (22:7) enables us to live according to much of the wisdom detailed in the balance of Proverbs 22. Staying out of debt will help us keep a good name and good friends (22:1-2). Avoiding the slavery of debt can keep us from the dangers of the simple (22:3-5). Teaching our children to avoid debt will help them stay "on the way" even into old age (22:6). A person unfettered from debt will be able to be generous with the poor (22:9). A debt-free person should not be tempted to oppress the poor or bribe the rich (22:16), as his needs are met by God. Avoiding foolish debts will also prevent the loss of even the bare essentials of living (22:27).

Debt, while not completely condemned, is strongly discouraged by those who live wisely. Doing whatever you can to free yourself from debt on consumer goods with outrageous interest rates and penalties will bring great peace and release much anxiety. Resolving to avoid future debts may mean delaying gratification or even denying yourself of things everyone else has. You may suffer some now, but it is highly unlikely that you will be disappointed with the freedom that comes from living debt-free.

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 lende (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.

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.

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."

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

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

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 a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

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 *Psalms 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.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 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 PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 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.

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 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 *Philippians 4:5*

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.

About the Authors

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