

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

"PROVISION FOR CHANGE"

PROVERBS 22:7

This Week's Core Competency

Stewardship – I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

In Shakespeare's Hamlet, Polonius gives wise counsel to his hotheaded son before Laertes heads back to school in Paris. While he still has the chance, dad wholesales a stockroom of aphorisms, the most famous of which is "Neither a borrower nor a lender be." The logic behind the old man's advice is irrefutable. Lending money to friends is risky business, because hitching debt to personal relationships can cause resentment and, in the case of default, can cost the lender both his money and his friend. What's more, borrowing invites more domestic dangers; it supplants savings.

Borrowing money may be even more risky than lending money because it obligates the debtor to serve the creditor. According to Proverbs 22:7, it

***Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of
husbandry.***

– Polonius, Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 3

forces the borrower to serve the lender. One translation puts it this way: "Borrow money and you are the lender's slave" (GNT). *The Message* captures wisdom's intention in these words: "so don't borrow and put yourself under their power," i.e., the power of the rich. Today's "payday loans" provide an over-the-top illustration of wisdom's good sense. Research into the growing fraud and rampant abuse connected to online borrowing done by The Pew Charitable Trusts documents the nature and extent of the payday lending problem. The following short summary of their report is eye-opening:

"Pew's *Payday Lending in America Report* series has documented structural problems with payday loans, showing that they fail to work as advertised. They are packaged as two-week, flat-fee products but in reality have unaffordable lump-sum repayment requirements that leave borrowers in debt for an average of five months per year, causing them to spend \$520 on interest for \$375 in credit. This result is inherent in lump-sum repayment loans, whether from a store, website, or bank.

"This latest report focuses on issues that are particularly problematic in the online payday loan market, including consumer harassment, threats, dissemination of personal information, fraud, unauthorized accessing of checking accounts, and automated payments that do not reduce loan principal. Recent news coverage has detailed these problems anecdotally, but this study is the first formal analysis of online lending practices to use surveys and focus groups, consumer complaints, company filings, and information about lenders' spending on advertising and prospective borrower leads" (go to www.pewtrusts.org and search "payday lending in America").

con't pg. 2

Car title loans are another popular form of what some have called "predatory lending." To get a title loan, the borrower gives the lender the title to his vehicle, e.g., a car, truck, or motorcycle, and pays the lender a fee to borrow the money. The amount the borrower can get depends on the vehicle's worth. A lender will typically loan between 30% and 50% of its wholesale value, which leaves a cushion that guarantees a profit in the event the borrower defaults and the lender has to repossess the vehicle. Usually the borrower must repay the loan in 30 days. Car title loans can be very expensive given their high interest rates and hidden fees. Bankrate.com reports:

"In February, the Center for Responsible Lending and the Consumer Federation of America issued a report on car title loans and their impact on consumers. Among the report's findings:

- * About 1.7 million car title loans originate every year.
- * The average car title customer pays \$2,142 in interest on a \$951 loan and renews the loan eight times.
- * About 7,730 car title lenders operate in 21 states, charging borrowers \$3.6 billion in interest on \$1.6 billion in loans each year.
- * A typical borrower receives cash equal to 26 percent of a car's value and pays an annual percentage rate of 300 percent."

(Read more: <http://www.bankrate.com/finance/auto/consumer-perils-car-title-loan.aspx#ixzz3QhFwio56>)

No wonder critics of title loans claim those who make them are responsible for putting poor people into what amounts to "debtor's prison," locking their cell door behind them with ridiculous interest rates and hidden fees. The moral of these lending stories is plain enough: on the one hand, avoid borrowing in general and payday loans of all kinds in particular. On the other, pay off the debts you have as soon as you can.

Dave Ramsey has helpful information available on his website (www.daveramsey.com) for those looking for financial freedom. Here's a simple tip he calls "the Debt Snowball" and offers free of charge: "List your debts, excluding the house, in order. The smallest balance should be your number one priority. Don't worry about interest rates unless two debts have similar payoffs. If that's the case, then list the higher interest rate debt first. The point of the debt snowball is simply this: You need some quick wins in order to stay pumped up about getting out of debt! Paying off debt is not always about math. It's about motivation. Personal finance is 20% head knowledge and 80% behavior. When you start knocking off the easier debts, you will see results and you will stay motivated to dump your debt."

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

Proverbs 22:7

*7 The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is servant to the lender.*

Cf., a corollary passage

Nehemiah 5:1-12

1 Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers. 2 Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain."

3 Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine."

4 Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. 5 Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."

6 When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was

very angry. 7 I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!" So I called together a large meeting to deal with them 8 and said: "As far as possible, we have bought back our Jewish brothers who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

9 So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? 10 I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let the exacting of usury stop! 11 Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the usury you are charging them--the hundredth part of the money, grain, new wine and oil." 12 "We will give it back," they said. "And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say." Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised.

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

In Proverbs 22:7

- * Underline "rich" and "lender."
- * Double underline "poor" and "borrower."
- * Circle "rule" and "servant."
- * Box "and" indicating *synonymous parallelism*.

In Nehemiah 5:1-12

- * Bracket "and their wives" in v. 1.
- * Underline "some" in v. 2; "others" in v. 3; "still others" in v. 4.

- * Circle "mortgaging" in v. 3; "borrow money" in v. 4; "enslaved" in v. 5.
- * Box "yet" and "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 5.
- * Circle "exacting usury" in v. 7.
- * Bracket "sold to the Gentiles" in v. 8.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 10.
- * Circle "hundredth part" in v. 11.

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.

Proverbs 22:7

1. Identify the words in line 2 that match "the rich" and "the poor" in line 1.
2. Explain the sense in which "the rich rule over the poor." Rich people in general don't rule over poor people, do they?
3. Put the point of the proverb in your own words.

Nehemiah 5:1-12

4. Three different groups leveled charges against their Jewish brothers in Judah. Compare the charges leveled by the second group (v. 3) to those leveled by the first group (v. 1).
5. Compare those leveled by the third group (v. 4) to those leveled by the second group (v. 3).
6. Explain the two *contrasts* in verse 5.
7. Nehemiah 5:1-6 and Proverbs 22:7 are *correlative* passages. How so?
8. Was the borrowing of the second and third groups not justified? Explain.
9. Describe Nehemiah's two-fold solution to the economic crisis.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about what you "take away" from these two passages.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

The meaning of Proverbs 22:7 is obvious to those who recognize that "the rich" and "the poor" in verset A correspond to "the lender" and "the borrower" in verset B. The rich don't "rule over" the poor absolutely; they do so only to the extent that the poor borrow from the rich. As one translation puts it, "Borrow money and you are the lender's slave" (GNT).

Charging interest on loans was allowed everywhere in the ancient Near East except Israel. Law codes from the Old Babylonian period limited interest rates to 20% for money and 33.3% for grain; later Assyrian laws permitted rates of 25% for money and 50% for grain. But that was not the case in Israel. Leviticus 25:36-37 prohibited Israelites from charging interest on loans to countrymen: "Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit."

On the meaning of 22:7 one commentator writes: "The proverb is a metaphor picturing the one rich person, who has more than sufficient means for his own subsistence, charging interest from the poor borrower, who otherwise cannot maintain his life, and so in effect making him his slave. Charging interest from the poor was forbidden in the law (Exod. 22:25 [24]; Lev. 25:36-37; Deut. 23:19 [20]), preached against by the prophets (Ezek. 18:8, 13, 17; 22:12), and censured in Prov. 28:8" (Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, NICOT, 207). In a nutshell, wisdom advises, don't make yourself the slave of any lender by borrowing money from him. As one writer observes: "Debt is itself a form of slavery, and by a remorseless logic it deprives the poor man of all that is independent and distinctive in the pattern of his life, until he becomes a mere pawn in the rich man's game" (William McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL, 566).

Correlation is the final step in Bible study after observation, interpretation, and application. Correlation asks the question: "Where does it fit?" In other words, where does this passage fit what other passages say about the same thing? Nehemiah 5:1-12 is a correlative passage that illustrates how debt enslaves. It can be divided into two parts: 1)

the outcry of the poor (vv. 1-5); 2) the outcry of Nehemiah (vv. 6-12).

In the midst of his all-out effort to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah faced an economic and social crisis that threatened the successful completion of the project (vv. 1-5). Three groups of men *and their wives* protested the abuse they were suffering at the hands of their Jewish brothers—no less. The first group of laborers simply did not have enough money to buy grain for their families (v. 2). With all the work they had to do on the walls, they were not able to produce enough grain to stay alive. The second group of landowners was better positioned. They solved their scarcity problem by mortgaging their fields, vineyards, and homes. However, that put them at risk of losing their property should they be unable to repay their debts. In such circumstances they might "subject their sons and daughters to slavery" (v. 5), which may sound harsh and may have already happened to some daughters, but at least they would still own their means of livelihood and so be able to redeem their children at a later time. If their land was foreclosed, irreversible debt-slavery would inevitably follow. The third group, in order to pay their property taxes, had to borrow money from Judah's nobles and officials, who exacted high rates of interest from them (vv. 7, 11). All of this flew in the face of the law that prohibited such practices.

Nehemiah attacked the problem head-on (vv. 6-12). He accused the nobles and officials of their injustice and pointed out the absurdity of what they were doing. He said to them, "As far as possible, we have bought back our Jewish brothers who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers, only for them to be sold back to us!" (v. 8). Having nothing to say in their own defense, Nehemiah told them to stop "the exacting of usury," to give back the "fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses" they had taken, as well as the 12% interest they had collected. They agreed to do what he demanded.

The Message of the Passage

Protect your freedom to be a responsible steward by paying off your old debt and avoiding taking on any new debt.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

Proverbs 22:7 **rich** "The synonymous parallels of v. 7 match 'the rich person' with 'the lender' in the outer frame, 'the poor' (pl.) with 'the borrower' (sing.), and the verb 'rule' with the noun 'slave' (cf. the matching of the noun 'youth' with the verb 'to grow old' in v. 6)" (Waltke, 207).

v. 7 **rule** The rich rule over the poor "by enslaving them with loans" (207). The statement in verset A "has more bite if it is directed to the poor, or to the ordinary person, since it warns them that they must strive to be independent, or they will lose their freedom to their creditors" (Roland E. Murphy, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 22, *Proverbs*, 165)

v. 7 **servant** Cf., "the borrower becomes the lender's slave" (NASB). "We know that a man might have to sell himself or his children into slavery, I he could not otherwise pay his debts, and that a creditor might enslave a debtor (Ex. 21:2-7; II Kings 4.1; Amos 2.6; Neh. 5.5). This bondage in which the rich hold the poor is capable of wider expression, as appears from the prophetic protest. The poor man inevitably borrows from the rich, and in doing so he tightens the noose around his own neck" (McKane, 566).

Nehemiah 5:1 **wives** "The somewhat unusual reference to the wives may not so much reflect the intensity of the suffering, *as is generally thought*, as it does the fact that they were more conscious of the approaching calamity because they were having to manage at home while their husbands were engrossed in the wall-building" (H.G.M. Williamson, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 16, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 236-37, italics added).

v. 2 **some** "Three groups are distinguished in vv. 2-4 by the introductory formula 'and there were some who said,' which is repeated at the start of each verse . . . The first group we take to refer to families who owned no land. They were dependent on wages from laboring of whatever sort" (237).

v. 3 **others** "The second group are clearly differentiated from the first in that they owned land that they could use as security against a loan to tide them over the period of difficulty . . . However, the danger was now looming, we must suppose, that they would not be able to repay these loans because of the added burden imposed by the wall-building" (237).

v. 3 **mortgaging** "Their problem of lack of grain was solved by mortgaging their property. The term mortgage (from the Hebrew root 'rb) is used only here in Nehemiah in this sense" (F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, NICOT, 191).

v. 4 **still others** "The situation of the third group was yet again slightly different: they too were evidently landowners who were falling into debt, but this time because they needed to borrow in order to pay their taxes" (Williamson, 238).

v. 4 **king's tax** "Taxation on real estate or 'ground tax' was probably taken over by the Persian kings from the Babylonians, who called it *ilku*. It is of interest that in this connection only the fields and vineyards are mentioned. Darius instituted a tax on the past yield of the fields combined with the amount of crops they yielded. This became a heavy burden on the farmer. Tax was thus levied only on fields with produce" (Fensham, 191-92; cf., Williamson, 238).

v. 5 **slavery** "We may presume that their lands were mortgaged to wealthy Jews and that they borrowed money for their taxes also from them. This is substantiated by the summary of their position in v. 5. The result of their disposition was that their children were taken into slavery, debt slavery (cf. Exod. 21:1-11). The children of the debtor were taken into the service of the creditor and had to work for him until the debts were paid" (192).

v. 5 **daughters** "The case of the daughters was in certain circumstances different. They could be taken into the service of the creditor as a second wife of the household" (192). The word translated "enslaved" has sexual overtones in Est 7:8. "It is thus probable that they were having to gratify the creditors' lusts as payment for delaying foreclosure on the loans" (Williamson, 238).

v. 7 **exacting usury** Cf., "the hundredth part" (v.11). "It is true that Exod 22:24 (25) and Lev 25:35-37 prohibit the exacting of interest on loans to poor Israelites and that Deut 23:20-21 (19-20) raises this into an absolute prohibition of interest on any loan to any Israelite, but it is clear that these laws were by no means universally observed. The expression used here by Nehemiah is not found elsewhere with the same significance. If, as the majority of commentators believe, it means literally 'one hundredth,' and if this is then to be understood as the interest due each month, it would indicate an annual rate of interest of 12 percent, though much higher rates are attested too" (240).

v. 8 **sold to the Gentiles** Cf., "sold to the nations" (NASB). "The Jewish community had been rescuing by payment of a redemption price as many of their fellows who had had to sell themselves to the Gentiles as their limited resources allowed. It was considered quite unacceptable that Jews should be sold to foreigners if it could possibly be avoided" (239). "It is not clear whether foreign nations refers to the Persians or to the neighboring nations. The latter is quite probably the case" (Fensham, 194)

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

One of my sons is naturally a spender and the other one is naturally a saver. The one who saves always has a stack of cash available. Any money he earns from mowing his grandparents' lawn or for extra chores, he hides away. He rarely spends his birthday money. He usually knows what he is saving for and patiently waits until he has enough money to make the purchase. My spender cannot keep a dime in his pocket. If he has two dollars, he will go to Sonic at Happy Hour and get a Route 44 Vanilla Coke. On occasion, spender son has found himself in a situation where he needed/wanted money for some reason. If my husband or I have denied his request, his next option is his brother. Saver son usually denies the request for cash but in the rare event he loans his brother the money, he knows he immediately has some power over him. If he wants something from him, he reminds him of the money he loaned and how it hasn't been paid back. The borrower is indeed servant to the lender. How grateful I am that Christ paid a debt I owed! Instead of frequently reminding me of His generous gift, He urges me to give in generosity towards others! Praying that together we will learn to live in the freedom of amazing grace!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Proverbs 22:7 and Nehemiah 5:1-12

1. According to the proverb, what is the borrower?
2. In Nehemiah 5, the wealthy were taking advantage of the poor. How did Nehemiah feel about that? (v. 6)
3. Did the people change the way they treated their neighbors? (v. 12)

What Do You Think

Our Core Competency tells us that everything we have, including ourselves, belongs to God. How does that make you feel? Would you treat your things differently if you believed they were God's?

What R U Going To Do

Pull out some of your favorite toys and get some sticky notes. On each note write "Belongs to God!" and stick them on. Put one on your bathroom mirror too so you will remember that you belong to Him! Look for opportunities to be generous this week!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Stewardship - I believe I and all my stuff belong to God.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 22:7 - *The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

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

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. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-six years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.