

The Pastor & His Money

-by Pastor Rob Buhl, MBA

3 Shifts in your Thinking on Debt to Improve your Stewardship

Last month I wrote about your personal budget and now I want to talk to you about debt. When you are managing the financial resources God is providing for you and your family well, through a budget, then

Debt Is Not God's Means of Provision

Take careful note of this, debt is *not* a blessing – and it is not God's means of provision.

Think about it. God created the planet as a latent resource. The earth just waits for the first Adam to work and cultivate the ground for produce and shelter (Genesis 2:15). The curse of sin interrupts fruitfulness, but God's means of provision for us is through the simple process of cultivation and harvest (Genesis 3:17-19).

In the simplest of terms, debt is taking from our future harvest, and with *interest*. Why would we pay 5% or 23% more for future apples?

If you don't have enough to pay for your necessities, then maybe something different is going on...but is it that God isn't providing? God does not provide for us by giving us the opportunity to borrow money from the bank.

Debt Can Be a Symptom

If debt is not God's means of provision, then what is it? Let me ask four quick questions to unearth the symptom that debt can be in our hearts.

First, am I moving ahead of God by going into debt or should I wait for Him to provide in His timing?

Second, am I seeking financial security by going into debt or should I use more conservative, and conventional means of working, saving, and investing to build financial security?

Third, am I trying to portray that I am someone that I'm not by going into debt? With roots in envy, jealousy, and covetousness, we can try to establish an identity by what we spend and own. Don't forget, you like to preach against this.

Fourth, am I undermining God's provision to get out of debt? It is possible that God is providing the funds for you to dig out of debt, but you are spending it on other things.

Earn Interest, Don't Pay Interest

Pastor, make this your new motto regarding debt. I even tell this to cashiers who ask if I want to sign up for a store credit card; I say, "I earn interest, I don't pay interest". Frankly, the math is usually quite simple. Paying interest makes *everything* more expensive and that is *usually* poor stewardship. I know that some debts are a tax write off, but so are your 403(b) retirement account contributions.

Getting out of debt is a way of improving your stewardship.

Pastor Rob's Financial Tip

In the interest of self-disclosure, I have made two interest bearing car payments in the past 26 years and I do have a small home loan. I like to say, if you are struggling in this area of stewardship – reach out to someone. Keeping a struggle a secret is not good for your soul or stewardship. I am always honored to talk with all of those who are open enough to seek out financial counsel.