

## Should Christians plan to borrow to meet their financial needs?

*'The borrower is slave to the lender.'* (Prov.22.7b)



Whatever the theological arguments, many will claim that Christians have to borrow in order to survive in 21st century Western economies. It's impossible they claim, for a young couple to live on rent indefinitely, as rental prices surge. It's essential for Christian institutions to borrow in order to finance any major new building project, or else with today's prices the Lord's work must be set back by years.

It is noteworthy how many Christian societies and churches have run up large debts in consequence. Given the tendency of Satan's agents to use all means to bring about corruption and decline in Gospel witness, it's remarkable that Christians have been so sleepy and so careless in assuming that as large a lever as debt, will not also be used to weaken, dilute and corrupt their testimony. Indeed it is to be feared that in some cases, this has already taken place, and that in others much trouble has been stored up for the future. So what does the scripture direct?

**'Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.'** (Romans .13.8)

Here is a command, the words of which in the Greek carry particular emphasis by near repetition, 'μηδενι μηδεν οφειλετε'. As Spurgeon points out, the command is not to pay one's debts, but not to become indebted in the first place. The command is not addressed to an individual but the imperative is plural 'οφειλετε', it applies to the church with as much force as it applies to the individual. If the church is concerned to set an example to its members, it *ought* to take particular care not to plan to enter debt.

For individual believers, debt should be an accident of sickness, calamity or unexpected need, not a planned means of meeting a desired end. Paul writes,

**'And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.'** (1 Thess.4.11-12)

Debt is a sign of cursedness. It is threatened to Israel along with fruitlessness and poverty as a sign of God's punishment.

**'The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.'** Deut 28.43-46

By contrast, loaning to others is not only accompanied by His blessing, but also by dominion over those to whom loans are conferred.

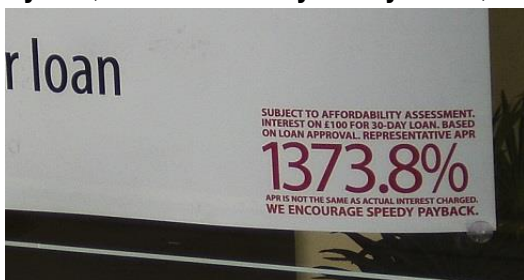
**'For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.'** Deut 15.6

**'The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.'** Deut 28.12

Repeated warning is also given not to enter into suretyship (to act as a guarantor) for another.

**'Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.'** Pr 22:26

**'My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger.'** Pr.6.1



**'He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure.'** Pr.11.15

Thank God that His surety Son was willing to take this terrible smarting for us!

What about the Lord Jesus's own planned debts? it might be claimed that the Saviour borrowed a colt and her foal, the upper room and other facilities, so why may not we?

The Lord possesses all things, the immediate willingness of His creditors indicates they themselves recognised they were only paying returns on a colossal debt of their own. It is also striking how he paid his and Peter's debt - by reaching into his limitless pocket and conferring the exact sum, even when strictly it was not his to pay.

**'Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.'** Matt.17.27

By contrast, even though Philemon's debt to Paul was infinitely smaller, he is determined not to hold any pecuniary debt to Philemon, on Onesimus' behalf, and to ratify this solemnly, he confirms it with his own large handwriting, **'I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it'**.

He does of course gently remind Philemon of what his own debt to Paul, albeit dwarfed by that owed to the Saviour, amounted to, **'Thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.'**

Loaning is no sin, but it must be without interest - indeed it is a Christian obligation to the poor, along with giving.

**'And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.'** Luke 6.34

**'Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.'** Deut. 24.11

**'A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.'** Ps.112.5

So what of believers who have entangled themselves with a large mortgage or debt? It is sadly now a common position, but it is their obligation, without injuring the care and nurture of their family, to leave frugally and strictly within their means, until their debts are paid, looking to the Master for help.

**'This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.'** Ps.34.6

There are circumstances where taking debt out to address heavy interest payments on another (a credit card debt for example) might be legitimate, but only as a direct means of paying one's debts, never to enlarge them. 2 Kings 4.1-7

It raises the question of why housing prices have become as grossly inflated and bloated as they have, and why our economy rests on a balloon full of hot air.

The answer in no small part is due to Christian complicity in the sins of loaning upon [interest](#) and of taking planned loans, when they should never have been contracted at all.

**The virtue of loaning to an infinitely more reputable institution.**

**'He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.'** Pr.19.17

**'Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.'** 1 Tim. 6.19

**'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'** Matt. 6.19-21

[Home](#)



The image shows a man and a woman smiling and holding a large white sign. The sign has the text '95% mortgages now available' in red. To the left of the couple is the 'new home' logo, which consists of a stylized 'm' in blue and red above the words 'new home' in a sans-serif font. Below the couple is a red banner with the text 'Call Us For More Information' in white.