# Theology  

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## God and Money <br> Part Two--Debt and Savings

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We all struggle at times with decisions about money and possessions. Should we buy or not buy? How can I improve my standard of living? Should I leave the comforts of my job for one with a larger salary though I may not be as happy? Should I go into debt to buy a new motorbike or a house? How can I better manage my money and possessions?

These questions and others often weigh on our hearts and minds. Some people are aware of them more than others, yet our response to these thoughts impacts our daily lives. So how should we manage our money and possessions for the glory of God? After all, God has entrusted them-whether little or much-to us as stewards. ${ }^{1}$

This article attempts to provide some guidance in the practical day-to-day matters of correctly managing money. "God and Money, Part One" ${ }^{2}$ addressed our attitudes about money, specifically greed and contentment, as well as teaching on the blessedness of giving. With this as a foundation, Part Two will focus on the contrasting issues of debt and savings.

## Debt-Financial Slavery

Proverbs $22: 7$ states, the borrower is servant to the lender. Debt usually demands the borrower to pay back to the lender within a period of time both the principal (the amount borrowed) and an additional payment for interest (a fee for the use of the money borrowed). If the loan conditions are not met, the borrower is

[^0]placed in an increasingly difficult financial situation that can lead to loss of possessions, family, reputation, and well-being.


Realizing the entangling consequences of borrowing, Paul encouraged the Roman church to keep out of debt and owe no man anything except to love one another. ${ }^{3}$ With this in mind, what should the Christian's attitude be toward debt? In many cultures, borrowing money is an acceptable practice for funding education, purchasing land, a house, a motorbike, or a car. Businesses routinely borrow capital to fund the expansion of operations. So why was Paul so fixed in teaching the church to stay away from debt? Because of the dangers associated in becoming enticed by the attractiveness of "easy money." Remember, it is easy to receive money but often quite difficult to pay it back.

Before entering into debt one should consider the following questions:

- Am I borrowing funds for something I need or something that I want? Placing oneself into debt for nonessential purchases is often a dangerous trap that can lead to dire consequences. Borrowing for investment in an income-producing activity may be appropriate, provided a feasible business plan and strong commitment exists to pay off the loan.

- Am I committed to paying off the debt as soon as possible? Good money management principles strongly encourage obtaining financial freedom from debt entanglements as soon as possible. Do not allow yourself to remain in bondage for a long period of time.
- Are the terms reasonable? Carefully review the interest rate and payment terms before signing a loan contract. Is the interest rate competitive within the marketplace? Are the terms

[^1]generally easy to comply with? Can your monthly income support the payment schedule?

- Can the purchase be postponed until sufficient funds are saved? Our normal feelings often lead us to act quickly, but waiting has sure rewards. Patience and discipline-especially concerning material possessions-are godly attributes that each of us needs to build within our lives.
- Am I prepared to deal with the effects of debt on myself and my family?. The stress of financial obligations can have numerous effects such as marriage discord, loss of sleep, worry, and health problems. In addition, the pressure to pay financial burdens can lead one into ruinous temptations such as stealing, cheating, bribery, etc.
- Do I have the peace of God? If God's leading is not present do not proceed, rather wait on Him for guidance. The almighty Jehovah God who created the heavens and earth may have other methods to meet your needs. He wants us to trust in Him not in earthly financial resources that will eventually pass away. ${ }^{4}$

In summary, the sound advice is to keep our financial obligations to a minimum. . If borrowing is a necessity, understand the consequences and commit to releasing yourself from the weight of debt as quickly as possible. Above all else our desire should be to keep ourselves as free as possible to follow, serve, and obey God according to His will for us. ${ }^{5}$. With this as our goal, an anchor of debt is the last thing we need.


## Savings--Preparing for the Future

Savings is an often overlooked financial principle. But its importance should not be disregarded. As demonstrated in the

[^2]following illustrations, savings can be the difference between life and death.


The Bible notes several examples of saving present resources for future use in time of need. One such example is from God's insect world. The common ant
is well spoken of in Proverbs $30: 24-25$ as exceedingly wise because it gathers and stores food during the warm season for use during the cool season when resources are not as plentiful: ${ }^{6}$ We can learn much from nature if only we will stop and reflect on God's wondrous creation.

Another demonstration of savings wisdom comes from the life of Joseph in Genesis 41. God revealed to Joseph the details of Pharaoh's dream and its interpretation that foretold seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. In response to this prediction of abundance and need, Joseph wisely recommended to Pharaoh a savings plan to adequately prepare for the future. Twenty percent of the crops during the years of plenty were to be saved for use during the years of famine. This storehouse proved to be invaluable as it provided both for Egypt's needs as well as those of the surrounding region-including Joseph's family living in Canaan.

These two examples clearly show the wisdom of savings. As a resource, savings can serve as a bridge to meet insufficiencies during difficult times or for sudden needs that occur without waming. Yet in everything there needs to be a balance. Prosperity can turn our affections away from God and onto our storehouse of riches.

In the parable of the rich fool Jesus warned about the dangers of trusting in wealth. ${ }^{7}$ The rich fool relied on his earthly riches stored in corruptible barns rather than trusting in God and his

[^3]eternal riches. His life was suddenly snatched away without the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of his labor. By keeping riches solely for himself and not sharing it with others in need, the rich fool lost all he had. Saving is a wise practice as long as we continue to maintain our affections on God. Remember Jesus' insight into the lives of human creation-where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ${ }^{8}$

One of the main challenges of practicing saving in Cambodia is the lack of reliable savings vehicles. Several commercial banks in Cambodia offer savings services but require large amounts beyond the ability of most individualsUS $\$ 100$ or more--to open or maintain an account. Yet this should not be a reason to discourage savings, but rather serve as a goal to
 save towards. It is never too late to start a habit of regular savings. No matter how small the amount-even one, two, or five hundred riel every day or week-regular savings will amount to much over several years.

Saving at work is another potential option. In an effort to encourage savings, some employers will deduct a portion of wages to set aside in a savings plan for employees. If such a plan is not available at your workplace, perhaps one can be established. Other creative ideas are possible, including group savings with trusted friends or co-workers.

One key to good financial health is a personal savings program. Whether at home, the workplace, or through a reliable commercial bank, a disciplined savings program yields results. Most important, it is a valuable lifeline during times of emergencies or distress. We do not know for certain what the future holds, but at least we can do our best to prepare for it.
${ }^{8}$ Luke 12:34.































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    ${ }^{2}$ Robert Choy, Honeycomb vol. 1, no. 2 (October 2000): 47-67.

[^1]:    ${ }^{3}$ Rom 13:8.

[^2]:    ${ }^{4} 1$ John 2:15-17.
    ${ }^{5} 2 \operatorname{Tim}$ 2:4.

[^3]:    ${ }^{6}$ Prov 6:6-8.
    ${ }^{7}$ Luke 12:13-21.

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    ${ }^{(6)}$ Robert Choy，Honeycomb vol．1，no． 2 （October 2000）：47－67．

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