Dealing With Debt: Our Family Budgets and the Travesty of Our Nation's Out-of-Control Spending

Throughout our married lives, both of our families have fought off and on with debt. It has been a constant battle, and especially in our younger years, debt had a significant control over us.

Whether it was unavoidable circumstances like an unforeseen medical bill, a house flood or a broken vehicle, or whether it was from a bad business decision, a vacation we "had to take," or a large purchase that we didn't really have the funds to buy, debt became a vicious cycle. And to be blunt, debt is not the will of God for our lives.

Scripture says clearly—"The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower *is* servant to the lender" (Prov. 22:7, NKJV).

Being in debt is not only unhealthy, but it also subjugates the borrower to the lender. When you or I are in debt, we are subject to those we are borrowing from, whether it's related to credit cards, mortgages or health care. We become the servants to the lending company, and they have power over us. As debt blossoms, it takes over our monthly budgets, making it impossible to afford even the basic necessities of life.

God Doesn't Want His People to Suffer With Debt

"Only if you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today. For the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you” (Deut. 15:5-6).

God hates it when His people suffer with debt. That’s why He instructed His people to obey His commands, to be financially wise, to work hard and to live within their means (Prov. 12:11, 20:4, 24:27, 31:10-31). We may be afraid to say it, but let’s call debt what it is really is—bondage.

This is also why God commanded a “release of debts” every seven years in Deuteronomy 15, saying, “And this *is* the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent *anything* to his neighbor shall release *it*” (Deut. 15:2a).

This command spoken from Almighty God for the sake of His people was revolutionary and unique in the history of the world. During these Sabbath years, God commanded His people to cancel every debt taken from their brothers and sisters in Israel. If we heard that same command spoken by God over our debts in modern America, can you imagine what kind of impact it would have on our personal lives and those of our families?

But God didn’t stop there! He also implemented the Year of Jubilee—a debt release every 50 years that guaranteed the land itself would be returned to each family (Lev. 25:8-22). God intended that families would keep their property inheritance, passing it down from generation to generation, and that this gift would never be destroyed by debt.

Removing debt from our lives is not just an Old Testament principle. Romans 13:8 says, “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

Debt destroys relationships. Have you ever lent someone money, never to have it returned? Do you still talk to that person?

Unchecked debt leads to great suffering—for an individual or a family. It can lead to bankruptcy, loss of a home and extreme poverty. For a nation, debt leads to inflation, credit downgrades, national depressions and massive suffering for the people.

In stark contrast, love builds up (Rom. 13:8, 1 Cor. 8:1). Love is doing the best for someone else, providing for and protecting them according to God's Word (Eph. 5:29). Financial love and restraint provide stability and fortitude and long-term fiscal success and growth. Financially stable families provide safety for children and a place for their gifts and talents to flourish and excel.

America's National Debt

How are we doing in America as a country today in regard to our national debt?

Not well.

Our national debt is just over $34 trillion, and it is rising at over $2 trillion per year. Both political parties are to blame, as Republicans and Democrats have both continued an out-of-control spending spree that is mortgaging our children and grandchildren's national stability.

Let's see if we can get a grasp on the scope of the numbers: A trillion is a 1 with 12 zeros after it—a thousand billions, or a million millions. Someone said, "if you started spending a million dollars every single day since Jesus was born, you still wouldn't have spent a trillion dollars."

At a yearly salary of $50,000 (with no expenses or spending whatsoever), saving a trillion dollars would take 20 million years.

Thirty-four trillion dollars in national debt means that our federal government owes its lenders over $100,000 per U.S.

citizen (that doesn’t include the debts owed by our states, counties, cities and school districts!).

As C.S. Lewis put it, “We all want progress, but if you’re on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive.”

The United States is going full speed ahead the wrong direction down the wrong road. It is a road that leads to ever more debt, subjection and all manner of economic pain for us and for our children.

Holding Our Leaders Accountable

As believers, we should want to set this right. We should hold our leaders accountable to be fiscally responsible. This is a spiritual matter and one that the body of Christ has long ignored.

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan” (Prov. 29:2) Our charge as believers is to love our neighbors by ensuring that righteous leaders are in authority in our land: leaders who will address these issues of debt in a biblically appropriate way.

Printing more money leads to inflation, where the money in hand is worth less than before, which hurts the common people, especially the poorest in society. Raising taxes to pay for government debt also hurts the common people. The tax burden on American families is already extreme, and raising taxes on businesses will only result in higher prices for families, because the increased costs are always passed on to the consumers.

The solution to our national debt must be a reduction in spending. And the only way for this to happen is for Americans to vote for leaders who are not promising to give them more and more benefits and "free stuff" each year, such as "free" college tuition, "free" health care and "economic stimulus packages." Instead, we must vote for leaders who will guide the government to live within its means—functioning well below its income and thereby enabling it to pay off its current debt.

We must vote for representatives who will reduce government programs, cut government spending, reform programs even though it is painful, end the deficits and reduce the debt. It is not an easy choice for our national leaders to make, but it is the right choice.

It is the wise choice. It is the God-honoring choice. It is the loving choice. And we should cheer on and support those leaders who promote this choice.

Our families must wake up and balance our budgets, or our economic life will end in disaster. If we do not, our children will be servants of our lenders (Prov. 22:7). Our federal government must do the same before it is too late. It is time that the body of Christ pay attention and hold our national politicians accountable for their out-of-control spending sprees.

Do we love our nation? As we pray and believe for God's best for our families, do we also pray and believe for strength and fortitude for this country? Do we desire to follow God's instructions for our families and our country as it concerns debt so that we can be free? Are we willing to repent and pursue progress by "doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road"?

Are we willing to take steps to right the ship, or are we going to simply pass the looming bondage on to the next generation?

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!

Bunni Pounds *is president and founder of Christians Engaged—a minist* *ry activating the body of Christ to pray, vote and engage regularly. Formerly a cong* *ressional candidate and 16-year political consultant, she is a motivational* *speaker, author and Bible teacher. Her book* _“Jesus and Politics: One Woman’s

Walk with God in a Mudslinging Profession"—*came out nationally on Feb. 6 and is av*

ai
la
bl
e
no
w.

Ben Quine *is vice president for Christians Engaged—working on curriculum development and strategic ministry partnerships for the ministry. His Bible studies in the "Answers for Difficult Days" series equip churches and individual believers to address the hot-topic issues our culture is wrestling with today from the foundation of Scripture.*