



ask a debt be transferred to his account? So, we are forced to conclude that debt is not inherently sinful. We should, however, acknowledge the admonitions of our

Lord to be good stewards of our possessions (cf. Matt. 25:14-30). We need to recognize that ultimately everything we own belongs to God. David understood this when he wrote, **“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”** (Ps. 24:1). Let us always remember to use our means wisely to glorify God and avoid creating unnecessary, burdensome monetary obligations because we’re trying to “keep up with the Joneses.”



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4700 Andrews Ave.
Amarillo TX 79106
806-352-2809
www.olsenpark.com

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THE OLSEN
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Faithful Sayings

July 17
2011

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia



Is Having Debt Sinful?

By Jason Garcia

Chances are you or someone you know is in debt. At some point in time each of us has had to borrow something from someone and our lenders expected some form of repayment perhaps with interest. We may owe hundreds of thousands dollars to a bank or a few bucks to an individual. The question often arises in religious discussions that if we put ourselves in these situations—where we owe someone compensation—are we putting ourselves in sin? The Word of God has several teachings to offer us regarding this topic.

Debt is as old as mankind itself and, in the time of the Old Covenant, God gave specific instructions regarding lending and borrowing. We tend to think of debt as strictly a monetary obligation, but it can come in many forms. For instance, if we borrow a neigh-

bor's tools then we have incurred a debt and are obligated to return to the neighbor what is rightfully his or her own (in good condition). What did the Law of Moses have to say about the matter? First, we should see that the Israelites were not forbidden from lending altogether, but they

were not allowed to charge interest to a fellow Israelite if and when they lent money (cf. Ex. 22:25). Furthermore, a lender was restricted from taking a person's cloak or any means of the borrower's livelihood as security against a loan (cf. Ex. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:6).

Solomon had much to say regarding the topic as well, and seemed particularly adamant in advising against cosigning on a loan. He instructs his hearers not to cosign along with a stranger by saying, **"He who is surety for a stranger will suffer, But one who hates being surety is secure"** (Pro. 11:15 NKJV). Cosigning is one of the worst forms of debt since you are obligated to repayment but have no control over the debt—perhaps this is why Solomon even warned against cosigning with a friend (cf. Pro. 17:18). He will go so far as to say that if one has already cosigned a loan, then that one should do all he can to get out of it (cf. Pro. 6:1-5). Solomon also offered some general, underlying principles about borrowing money. He says, **"The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender"** (Pro. 22:7 ESV). In comparing the borrower-lender relationship to that of a slave and his master, there is a clear warning to us—debt can enslave! As extreme and weighty as

Solomon's instructions are in teaching us to avoid debt, consider that none of the passages we have seen so far speak of either the lender or the borrower as sinful.

For the debtor, Scripture indicates that so long as one is able to repay his or her borrowed amount then that one has fulfilled his or her obligation to the lender. Consider what the Psalmist had to say: **"The wicked borrows and does not pay back..."** (Ps. 37:21). Notice he does not define the wicked as one who merely borrows, but one who does not pay back what is owed! Furthermore, if incurring debt was inherently sinful, then the lender would be causing others to sin, but God Himself encourages us to give and not turn away from the one who wishes to borrow (Matt. 5:42).

With all of this we cannot escape the warnings throughout Scripture that caution us against incurring debt! Paul was inspired to say, **"Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law"** (Rom. 13:8). His point is not that we sin by incurring debt, but rather

we should avoid if we can that we might give to all men what is due—our love. This passage has been misapplied by many in the religious world who would teach that debt is inherently sinful, but such doctrines miss the crux of Paul's argument as well as the combined teaching of God's Word on the matter. Another counter-example can be found in Paul's words to Philemon when he says, **"If [Onesimus] has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account"** (Phil. 1:1:18). If debt is inherently sinful, why would Paul (inspired by the Spirit of God) write and

