

BEING STEWARDS OF GOD'S MONEY

Principles & Practices: Practice Two

I will love God, not money

CONTENTMENT

What brings peace to my heart?



I will love God, not money

DEBT-AVERSE

I will spend within my God-given means.

PRACTICE TWO flows out of PRINCIPLE TWO. We learned that CONTENTMENT is tied to faith statements of . . .

1. I believe God when He says we cannot take it with us,
2. I trust God when He says He will be faithful,
3. I reverently fear God when He says He is the King,
4. I ask God for my daily provisions, including contentment.

Colossians 3:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

This passage in Colossians provides the linkage between the PRINCIPLE and the PRACTICE. What must we put to death?

Another translation for “covetousness” is “greed” (NIV). How does greed (coveting), which the 10th commandment forbids, reflect an idolatrous heart? Consider the four faith statements above. How does a greedy person not do these?

Romans 13:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. ⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

The first component of being “debt-averse” is to AVOID DEBT WHENEVER POSSIBLE. What would this text suggest about Christians being in debt?

Elsewhere the Scriptures give guidelines about lending and even encourages lending in certain situations (Deut. 28:12; Psalm 37:21,26 and 112:5). If debt is always sin, then lending would be aiding and abetting sin. The Lord would not encourage this. Therefore we should not be “absolute” in being against all debt.

Proverbs 22:26-27 (ESV)

²⁶ Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts. ²⁷ If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you?

While we may not want to label all debt as “sin,” that does not mean we should be too open to it. The question is not “Why not go into debt?” but rather, “Why go into debt?”

Proverbs 6:1-5 (ESV)

¹ My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger, ² if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth, ³ then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor: go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor. ⁴ Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber; ⁵ save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

A second component to being debt-adverse is found in this text. If you are in debt, how soon should you seek to get out of it?

James 4:13-17 (ESV)

¹³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"- ¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

The third component of being debt-averse pushes us back to consider our relationship with God. We are to trust Him, but we must not presume upon Him. How does the text from James deal with this idea of presuming upon God?

When one takes on personal debt that is not backed by the collateral of an appreciating asset (such as a home), what assumptions are usually made? That is, what does the debtor usually think will continue as it is now?

Proverbs 22:7 (ESV)

⁷ The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.

The fourth component of debt-aversity is the recognition that being in debt limits your freedom. How does this proverb teach that?

A great question to ask when considering taking on the responsibility of a debt is whether the value of what you will receive right now is greater than the value of the total money you will repay plus the bondage created by the debt. What are some examples of debt holding you back from doing what the Lord wants you to do?

If the second PRACTICE is to be Debt-Averse, that doesn't mean that there aren't some frequently asked questions about the details of living this out day-to-day. The first FAQ is a bit of a review of what we've studied thus far, "Is all debt wrong?" What is the conclusion you came to from what you've read and thought about?

A second FAQ won't be discussed in the Bible specifically. "What about using credit cards?" Considering that studies indicate that people will spend about 34% more when using a credit card than when using cash, what should be the guidelines for using them?

"When is debt especially dangerous?" is the third FAQ. Consider the following four answers. Which one have you most recently violated (or have been tempted to do so)?

1. When a possession's resale value is less than what is owed.
2. When it tempts us to violate our convictions (remember, if you cannot take on debt in faith believing that God approves, then it is sin for you - see Romans 14:23).
3. When it tempts us to rob God in order to pay our creditors.
4. When it restricts our freedom to follow the Spirit's leading in ministry or in generosity.

1 Corinthians 6:12 (ESV)

¹² "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything.

A final FAQ is the humble request, "Where can I get help for my debt-dependency?" Even if we have the freedom to take on less-dangerous debt, we must be cautious. How can debt enslave us? Physically? Emotionally?

The key to finding help is to ASK. Humble yourself and admit you have a need.