

I. Introduction

- a. If you tell a lie or spread myth loud enough and long enough, people will begin to think it's the truth. Society and culture will start to adopt the lie as the truth.
 - i. The problem is: "Everyone" thinking it's true doesn't make it true. It's not the truth. It's still a lie!
 - ii. We are the most marketed-to society in history. Businesses are trying to sell us services and products around every corner. They are trying to convince us that we need everything they have to offer—and often we buy into the lie.
- b. God's ways of handling money are countercultural. They run perpendicular to what "everyone else" says or believes.
 - i. But "everyone else" is not winning. Many aren't winning in marriage. Many aren't winning with their children. Many aren't winning with their finances.
 - ii. In contrast, the Bible's principles work! So, even though it's countercultural, following God's plan is the best plan.
- c. Debt is one product in our society that has been marketed so aggressively, so thoroughly, that many folks in our North American culture can't imagine life without it.
 - i. People actually get angry when you suggest that it's possible to live without debt.
 - ii. Debt has dug its claws into our lives. It has warped our thinking to the point where we are willing to fight for the lie!

II. Finding a "True North"

- a. **SPEAKER:** Tell the members of your congregation that you want to play a little game with them. Really play it up with enthusiasm and encourage everyone to participate.
- b. Tell everyone to stand up and to close their eyes. Ask them to point in the direction they think is north. You should get a wide variety of responses pointing in every direction.
- c. Allow them to open their eyes and see how many directions they are pointing. Share that with so many responses, some people are going to be wrong. Note that they may mean well and they may be convinced that they are right, but they are still wrong.
- d. Use a compass to show them which way is north.
 - i. We don't get to make up our own truths. There is only one direction north regardless of what anyone else says.

- ii. If you wanted to go north, you'd have to go in that direction or you would be wrong—and lost.
- e. The Bible is our compass and points us toward a “true north” that we can depend on. It defines truth—regardless of how we feel. To the extent that we disagree with God’s Word, we’re wrong!
 - i. We have a responsibility to act on that truth in every area of our lives—including what it says about debt.

III. The Bible and Debt

- a. To get a proper perspective on debt these days, we need a paradigm shift. We need to change the way we see things and think about things.
- b. SPEAKER: To illustrate the power of a paradigm shift, prepare the following slides to show on an overhead screen (if possible).
 - i. Slide A: “A woman without her man is nothing.”
 - ii. Slide B: “A woman, without her man, is nothing.”
 - iii. Slide C: “A woman: without her, man is nothing.”
 - iv. Show Slide A and encourage the congregation to supply the necessary punctuation in their minds.
 - v. Show Slide B. Ask how many people read the sentence like that. Affirm that adding the commas is a perfectly logical and valid response. It doesn’t violate the rules of grammar, and it’s one way to read the sentence . . . but it’s not the only way!
 - vi. Show Slide C. Joke with the men that if they want to have a comfortable ride home with their wives or girlfriends today, this is how they *should* have read the sentence!
 - vii. Point out that the words didn’t change—only the way we understood the words. That’s a paradigm shift, and it illustrates how we need to see the process of handling money differently today. We need a new perspective!
- c. The old perspective focuses on things like credit ratings and FICO scores. In reality, those are just debt ratings. Instead of focusing on our income and our potential earning power, they boil everything down to the debt we’ve carried and how well we’ve done at making payments.
 - i. We tend to buy stuff we can’t afford with money we don’t have to impress people we don’t really like. There’s got to be a better way.
- d. The Bible emphasizes a new paradigm. Actually, it’s not “new.” It’s thousands of years old, but it still holds true today.
 - i. “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7).

- ii. When you have debt and payments, you are a slave. It's like wrapping yourself in chains. And it's hard to think about winning when you're in bondage.
- iii. The Bible never says anything good about debt. It uses terms like "slave" and "fool" and "curse." It's not a salvation issue. God still loves you, but He also warns you against becoming a slave.

IV. Getting Out of Debt

- a. You can wander into debt, but you can't wander out. Breaking the chains of debt takes work and is not easy.
- b. Debt creates a gravitational pull on our lives. There is only one way to break out of a gravitational pull—you have to expend energy!
- c. It requires intensity . . . Gazelle Intensity.
 - i. **SPEAKER:** If possible, show the clip in which Dave discusses gazelles and cheetahs (including the Discovery Channel footage) from the "Breaking the Chains of Debt" video.
 - ii. Proverbs 6:1–7 compares getting out of debt to a gazelle escaping from a hunter or a predator. Cheetahs try to make a lunch out of gazelles, but the big cats fail most of the time. Even though it's the fastest animal on land, a cheetah will only catch a gazelle about once in 19 attempts.
 - iii. Why? Motivation! The cheetah is just looking for a meal. The gazelle is running for its life!
 - iv. To escape debt, you've got to fight like your life depends on it. You have to work hard at it with incredible intensity.
- d. It requires a tool . . . The Debt Snowball.
 - i. Debt is not a math problem. It's a behavior problem, so you have to attack the behavior that got you in the situation.
 - ii. List your debts from smallest to largest by balance (not interest rate). Pay off your smallest debt and apply what you were paying to the next smallest debt. Keep it up until all the debts have been eliminated.
 - 1. Tackling the smaller debts provide some early victories in the process.
 - 2. As you begin to make progress on paying off your debts, you experience hope!

V. Five Actions to Break the Chains of Debt

- a. Quit Borrowing Money.
 - i. You should perform "plastic surgery" by cutting up your credit cards. Also, remember that destroying the cards is not enough. You also need to call the companies and cancel the cards.

- ii. Once you take this step, get ready to be tested. Some financial need will arise to test your decision. Stick with it!
- b. Save Money.
 - i. Build an emergency fund to create a buffer so you don't need to borrow money.
- c. Sell Stuff.
 - i. It doesn't have to be your big-ticket items (though that might be the best idea in some cases).
 - ii. You can hold a yard sale and get rid of stuff that's just sitting around your home.
 - iii. Sacrifice is a necessary part of getting out of debt.
- d. Get a Part-Time Job.
 - i. Your income is your greatest financial tool. If you can raise your income with a second job—even for a little while—you can break the chains faster.
- e. Pray!
 - i. Prayer really works. Your Heavenly Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10)—and He owns the hills. He cares about you, and He can meet your needs.
 - ii. God isn't mad at you. He loves you. If you haven't come to Him in a while, know that He misses you. ("Phone home, E.T.")

VI. Conclusion

- a. Debt squeezes the life out of us. Slavery steals our hope. God has a better plan for our lives.
- b. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12).
 - i. A lack of hope wears us down and leaves us discouraged. But when hope is realized, we are changed. We feel alive again!
- c. Encourage the congregation to consider this closing question: What could the people of God do for the kingdom of God if we didn't have any payments?