# Borrowing and Debt

# Q: Does Romans 13:8 Teach It Is a Sin to Borrow Money?

*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law* ([**Romans 13:8**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%2013.8), NKJ).

Reading the above verse naturally raises the question, Does God’s Word prohibit financial debt? That is a very important question, especially in light of the following sentence from financial counselor and author, [**Ron Blue**](http://www.amazon.com/New-Master-Your-Money/dp/0802481612/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1326211534&sr=1-1),

“The financial area of debt is clouded with more emotion, misunderstanding, and poor teaching than any other area, with the possible exceptions of life insurance and tithing.”

To clarify the confusion surrounding a Christian’s relationship to financial debt we must let the sunlight of God’s Word burn away the fog by asking and answering two important questions.

**DOES THE BIBLE TEACH BORROWING MONEY IS A SIN?** – Discuss

The simple answer is No. But first let me introduce the subject of debt by means of four biblical principles:

**The Bible teaches borrowing money automatically creates a servant/master relationship.** This is a simple fact of life. Financial debt is a form of slavery (**[Prov 22:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2022.7)**; [**Deut 28:43-44**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut%2028.43-44)).

**Proverbs 22:7 (KJV)**   
7  The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower *is* servant to the lender.

**Deuteronomy 28:43-44 (KJV)**   
43  The stranger that *is* within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low.   
44  He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

As a result of debt the borrower becomes the lender’s servant. The everyday reality of this is nakedly obvious. When we bring our paycheck home, after giving the first-fruits to our Lord, the bills piled up on the kitchen counter scream, “Pay me, or else!” Certainly we enslave ourselves through debt. Therefore, I think it is safe to assume most of us who are growing in stewardship also long for the day we are free from this servitude. We can all agree with Ron Blue that “…debt becomes a trap—getting in takes no effort, but getting out can be next to impossible….Getting into debt is as easy as getting down an ice-covered mountain. Getting out of debt is just as difficult as climbing that same mountain.” May God give us the perseverance to lace up the spikes and keep climbing! The servant/master relationship created by debt may also build a wall between people. I remember, in times past, when I owed money to a family member and I could not go to a holiday gathering without thinking of my debt. I’m sure the other person did not think about it at all, but I, the borrower, certainly did and that perceived strain caused me to make every effort to pay off the debt as soon as possible. On one occasion I even took out a cash advance on a credit card so I could pay off a family member just so I could feel “free” in their presence. Talk about borrowing from Peter to pay Paul! Or was it borrowing from Citibank to pay Grandma?

1. **The Bible does not denigrate financial institutions.** Jesus often made reference to financial matters. However, He never painted the lender in a bad light. Instead He treated banking as a normal part of life and assumed the personal right to borrow money ([**Matt 25:27**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2025.27); [**Matt 5:42**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%205.42); [**Luke 6:35**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%206.35)).

**Matthew 25:27 (KJV)**   
27  Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.   
  
**Matthew 5:42 (KJV)**   
42  Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.   
  
**Luke 6:35 (KJV)**   
35  But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to* the evil.

1. **The Bible warns against presuming on the future.** One of the greatest spiritual dangers of debt is that it so easily allows us to presume upon God and the future. Ron Blue testifies, “I believe that in many cases, when we borrow money to fund one item, be it for the purpose of a new car, a television, a new home, a vacation, or whatever, we are putting the lender in the place of God. Who needs God to provide for us if someone will lend to us?” The Bible warns us to guard against making plans that presume on God’s will for our future ([**James 4:13-16**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James%204.13-16)).

**James 4:13-16 (KJV)**   
13  Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:   
14  Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.   
15  For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.   
16  But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

1. **The Bible teaches that when money is borrowed there should also be a secure repayment plan.** [**Psalm 37:21**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2037.21) says, “The wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives.” This text is clear. It does *not* say the person who borrows is wicked, but rather the one who borrows *and does not pay back*. In other words, what is condemned is not the borrowing itself, but the failure to repay. Therefore, the believer should desire to maintain a testimony for Christ by borrowing wisely, that is, by being sure he has the means to repay his debts. He should pay careful attention to the ratio between his debt and his income and assets. Commenting on [**Romans 13:8**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%2013.8), James Montgomery Boice wrote, **“There is no sin in borrowing the money as long as you are able to pay the interest and premiums according to that schedule.”**

Therefore, borrowing money is *always* a matter of stewardship and good stewardship sometimes makes borrowing a viable option. As much as all of us would like to buy a house with cash, the reality is that most of us cannot, and wisely managing a mortgage is better stewardship than spending the same amount of money monthly renting a home. At the end of the first scenario you have a house that you actually own; at the end of the other you have nothing. Therefore, the issue is not always “to borrow or not to borrow,” but whether or not we can borrow wisely, thus ensuring wise stewardship is practiced and the testimony of the Lord is not harmed by foolishness or financial irresponsibility.

So, here is our first conclusion. The Bible does *not* teach that borrowing money is a sin. However, it discourages debt and clearly warns against its practical and spiritual dangers, thus compelling us to be wise stewards in the way we manage our finances. The basic conclusion is this. If you can avoid debt, avoid it. If you must borrow, borrow wisely with a secure repayment plan, paying it off as aggressively as you are able to, within reason, in your present situation.

**WHAT THEN DOES ROMANS 13:8 TEACH? [HANDOUT]** We’ve already seen that the interpretation of the phrase, “owe no one anything,” as a complete prohibition of borrowing does not square with the whole counsel of Scripture. What then does it teach? That is the second question we must answer.

We need to recognize that when Paul instructs us to “owe no one anything except to love,” he is drawing attention to the supremacy and permanence of love, “for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.” In other words, the one debt we will never be free from is the debt of love. Jesus said that the two supreme commandments–to love God and others–wrap up all God-pleasing decisions ([**Matt 22:40**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2022.40))

**Matthew 22:40 (KJV)**   
40  On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

In other words, if we *always* love God with all our heart, soul, and mind; and if we *always* love our neighbor as ourselves, we would never sin. “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law” ([**Rom 13:10**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%2013.10)

**Romans 13:10 (KJV)**   
10  Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.).

Biblical love, therefore, is the consideration of others as more important than ourselves. This others-focusedness is a fruit of the humility of mind we are called to imitate in Jesus: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself” ([**Phil 2:3**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.3)). It means that love is permanently supreme because selflessness brings glory to our Savior who humbled Himself to the point of death ([**Phil 2:8**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.8)). The debt to love others sacrificially is the debt we will never fully repay.

Is it possible then to be debt-free financially and still not obey the command to love? Yes, unfortunately, it is. For example, the Christian man who, coming home from a seminar where he was taught that borrowing money is sin, and got the impression that being debt-free is the most important goal in life, decides to sell his house and cars and move his wife and twelve children into a camper certainly has a strong desire to “owe no one anything,” but is he acting in love toward his family?

Is he, according to [**1 Peter 3:7**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%203.7), living with his wife “in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel”?

**1 Peter 3:7 (KJV)**   
7  Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Is he paying the debt of love? Or if I seek to pay off our debts so aggressively that I leave my wife with not enough money to run the household, or to put decent meals on the dinner table, I may become debt-free, but am I acting in love toward her? As much as we all want to reach the goal of being debt-free we must guard against Pharisaical, false measurements of spirituality that feed our pride and minimize or sacrifice God’s call to “the greatest of these,” which is love ([**1 Cor 13:13**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2013.13)).

But that interpretation still does not leave us completely off the hook since the context of “owe no one anything” demands a *monetary* application. “Owe” is the same word that is used in the previous verse of the *dues* that citizens owe government in the form of taxes and is part of the call to believers to model obedience to God via good citizenship (unfortunately, some of the worst tax evaders in our country are Christians, which simply should not be!). “The connection [between verses 7 and 8]”, said William R. Newell, “is direct: when you pay up all your dues, whether private debts or public, and have only this constant obligation before you,–to love one another, ‘Love must still remain the root and spring of all your actions; no other law is needed besides.

Pay all other debts; be indebted in the matter of love alone.’” Therefore, we as believers should be very careful to always pay our debts, whether to the government or private business or individuals. This is an occasion in which I find the NIV rendering helpful, “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.” This places the emphasis on the faithfulness of repayment. In other words, “owe no one anything” means, “Pay your debts, Buddy!”

**Conclusion: What have we learned?**God’s Word does not forbid financial debt, but discourages it and warns of its bondage and its tendency to encourage us to presume upon the future. Jesus affirmed the personal right to borrow money and called His disciples to responsible stewardship. Faithful stewardship requires paying our debts and only borrowing what we can responsibly repay.

The only debt we will never be able to fully repay is the debt of love we owe to one another because of the supreme love of Christ.

The practice of biblical love toward one another is of greater importance than becoming, or remaining, financially debt-free. As we strive to reduce debt and be financially responsible, let us be careful not to sacrifice the greater for the lesser.

**Aaron’s Problem**

**Marketing Background- Instagram**

**Consider This *Before* Going into Debt –1) *What Are* *My Motives?*** Why are we borrowing money? All too often, we buy things we don’t need, with money we don’t have, to impress people we don’t like! Folks, this is dumb behavior! A lot of borrowing happens for all the wrong reasons.

Often there is an element of greed involved. Over and over again, the Lord warns us to avoid covetousness and greed. In Luke 12:14, 15, Jesus gets right to the point here, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (NIV).

A first cousin to greed is vanity. Frequently, people go into debt trying to keep up with other people in the neighborhood (or, sadly, even at church) who have a more lavish lifestyle. When I teach the ***No Debt No Sweat! Christian Money Management Seminar,*** I like to ask the audience what they think is the most expensive thing they will ever own. Of course, I get all the usual answers:

“Our home?”

“Nope,” I say.

“College for the kids?”

“No,” I tell them.

“Retirement?”

“Not even close.”

By now I usually have their attention. That’s when I write three letters on the overhead: E G O. You see there is nothing in the world more costly than an out-of-control ego. It makes us do stupid things that we end up paying for for years to come. How many people do you suppose are making payments on boats, expensive cars, prestigious private schools, second homes, and extravagant clothing because their “social position” or “circle of friends” expected it?

* BE Excellent at all you do? JoAnna Gains cp
* What if your faith says save and another says give. What if your faith says stop and another says go? Who is right and who is wrong?
* Make sure for both we are being Led by Faith and Not Fear
  + Journal Example--
  + **Numbers 13:17 (KJV)**   
    17  And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this *way* southward, and go up into the mountain:

**2) *What Is My Ability to Repay?*** The problem with borrowed money is that it has to be repaid. Today’s instant gratification becomes tomorrow’s bondage. Recently, a friend of mine shared a fact that startled me. He told me that if an individual charges a $40.00 meal on his credit card and only pays the minimum amount each month—that meal will end up costing more than $200.00!

It is so dangerous to presume on the future. Murphy’s Law always kicks in at the least expected (and most inopportune) moment. Just when you think you’ll be ready to make that first payment—BOOM! The bottom falls out. Either the baby needs some new, exotic medicine, or the central heat goes out, or the transmission gives up the ghost, or...well, you get the point.

As Christians we must pre-act so we aren’t forced to react. We need to “count the costs” before we launch into any venture that will commit our future earning power.

**Alter: Final Words of Love for us at FWC**

**God Wants You to Experience Freedom**

Know this above all else: God is on your side—He’s pulling for you. God’s ways work. Remember, “Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5, NIV).

God does want His people set free from every form of bondage, including financial bondage. Only then will we be at our best for others, ourselves, and the Kingdom work we’re here to do!

**Malachi 3:6-12 (KJV)**   
6  For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.   
7  Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?   
8  Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.   
9  Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation.   
10  Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall* not *be room* enough *to receive it*.   
11  And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.   
12  And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.