

Suppose you begin having chronic headaches, sometimes accompanied by dizziness. At first, you just take a couple aspirin to combat the pain. But that doesn't seem to be giving you the relief you need, so you go see your family doctor. He gives you a cursory examination and prescribes a little stronger pain reliever than aspirin. The headaches continue and even worsen. Your doctor now refers you to a specialist and after a series of tests, discovers you have a brain tumor. The tumor is not malignant, but untreated, will continue to cause much pain and discomfort. You have a choice to make - continue to treat the symptoms with medicine or allow a surgeon to remove the tumor giving you permanent relief. You weigh your options, and although the surgery and recovery time will be painful, you realize that the end result is worth it.

Many times we get ourselves into a similar situation with our finances. The tumor in that case is called **debt**. Debt causes lots of pain and suffering in many families. And we find ourselves treating the "symptoms" rather than the cause. This is especially true with credit card debt. **What we really need to do is have some plastic surgery performed.** Actually, we can perform the surgery ourselves and any pair of scissors will do the trick!

As with most things in life, God's view of credit and debt is much different from the world's view. The world's view is that debt is necessary and unavoidable. This is proven by the fact that Americans now have over \$7 trillion in consumer debt, and as a nation, we spend \$70 billion in credit card interest each year!! Can you imagine all the good we could do with that money being wasted on interest? Credit card use is on the rise. This is not surprising since American consumers receive 3 billion credit card offers each year.

God warns us to be careful of getting into a bondage relationship. Proverbs 22:7 says, "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." And the world says, if you can't pay your debt, file bankruptcy. But God tells us in Psalm 37:21, "The wicked borrow and do not repay." Obviously, we are to pay our debts.

The theme of our consumer-driven economy is borrow and spend. **And easy credit makes it easy to spend more than we earn.** Credit cards themselves aren't inherently evil. They are simply pieces of plastic. They can't spend themselves. We have to use them to accumulate debt. Credit cards are designed for

one reason and that reason is to simply make it easier for us to spend money. And that strategy seems to be working well.

Statistics prove that we spend an additional 27% when we use a credit card. I believe that is mainly due to the fact that we don't actually see currency being exchanged or a check being written. Unfortunately, when we pay the card balances off over a period of time, we wind up spending a lot more currency than necessary!

Here's an absolutely **true example**....suppose you buy a \$2000 sofa with a credit card which carries a 19.8% interest rate. Making minimum monthly payments will take 31 years and 2 months to pay off and you will have paid \$8,202 in interest! I hope it's a comfortable sofa!!

Credit cards are like drugs....they offer short term pleasure and long term pain. They give the illusion of having more money than you actually have. Unfortunately, you then must live with less because each month a portion of your income goes to pay off past credit debt. Contrary to what they advertise, credit card companies are not doing you any favors by extending credit. They're not giving you a thing. They don't make a penny from you until you go into debt. Then they make a lot! When was the last time you heard of a credit card company going bankrupt? They want you in debt to them and the deeper the better. That's why they will gladly raise your credit limit.

As previously stated, credit cards themselves aren't evil. In fact, they can be quite convenient, especially when on trips or maybe taking advantage of a great buy you see on the Internet. **The ultimate goal for everyone should be to pay their credit card balance off in full each month, so money is not wasted paying interest charges. If you aren't doing that, it's time for some plastic surgery!** Becoming debt free is attainable, but getting rid of credit card debt isn't always easy. The process however, is actually very simple.....

- ◆ Allow no more debt - yes, that means cutting up those credit cards!!
- ◆ Develop a spending plan that allows you to pay each creditor as much as possible each month.
- ◆ Start reducing your credit card debt now.
- ◆ Stay determined and consistent!