



HARVEST
CHURCH

DEBT

What do we believe about debt?

As a church our goal is to “owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” Romans 13:8 There is greater freedom that comes with being debt free. As a church we do not want to be slaves to the lender (“The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave to the lender” Prov 22:7) but rather want to position our church to be a lender not only locally but to the nations expecting nothing in return and freely being able to give as our Lord Jesus freely gave of himself. Jesus taught, “If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” Luke 6: 34-36

Is it permissible for a church to take on debt?

It is always preferred not to become indebted to anyone as mentioned above; however, there are times when there may be a pressing need or when the elders and deacons of the church see an opportunity to invest in the kingdom of God and require a short term loan due to time sensitivity or other reasons. This would never be done without praying and fasting first, seeking the Lord and bringing the need before the congregation to see if the need can be met first. As church leaders we want to be extremely sensitive to the Lord’s timing and not move ahead of what the Lord is doing in our midst.

Through a biblical perspective, John MacArthur (2011) summed up borrowing well:

“... Jesus approved of financial borrowing for the purpose of investing. In the parable of the talents, (Matt: 25:14-30), the master highly commended the two servants who had wisely invested his money, but he strongly rebuked the unfaithful servant who merely buried the money entrusted to him: “You ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.” (v.27)

Many businesses could not operate without borrowing money to invest in such things as buildings, equipment and raw materials. Many farmers could not plant new crops without borrowing money for seed and fertilizer. Most families could never afford to buy a home without taking out a mortgage."

What does Scripture teach when there is debt of any kind?

Romans 13:7 clearly says, "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed..."

John MacArthur, in his biblical perspective of borrowing continues,

"When borrowing is truly necessary, the money should be repaid as agreed upon with the lender, promptly and fully."

It is extremely important to us at Harvest Church to honour and do what we say. In terms of whatever agreement we enter into, we want to be a church of integrity paying back any debt according to the terms of the agreement entered into, as promptly and diligently as possible.

Is there any type of debt not justified by Scripture?

We are not to borrow to spend on our desires or pleasures. We can't incur debt for things we don't need, are unnecessary or are luxuries we simply can't afford. Paul directly speaks to this selfishness in James 4:2-3 where he writes: "You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." We are to be different from the world and are not to spend more than what we make for the purpose of serving ourselves and our desires.

If we owe anything do we continue to pay benevolence and other costs such as missions etc.?

Every year the finance team along with the deacons and elders agree on the next year's budget. There are times when operating costs and other costs require adjustment but as much as possible, we want to bless others remembering the Lord Jesus said, "It is greater to give than receive." The two areas of a church we protect the most are ministry and missions knowing without these it is difficult for the church to grow.

Benevolence is separate from the operating budget and growth fund (building campaign and other) which people give to and that is how the money is spent, meaning money given to benevolence must be used in that way and can't be used for operating or building costs.

Who decides at Harvest Church when we will take on a debt?

Ultimately, it is the elders with the counsel of the treasurer and finance team who will decide at any point whether it is necessary to borrow money for any reason. The decision to do so will at no point be taken lightly and will be bathed in prayer. Our practice as leaders will be to wait on the Lord remembering what Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it" AND "Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

In summary, at Harvest Church we do not believe it is wrong to borrow; however, doing so should never be taken lightly and should always be decided within a multitude of counselors. Every situation is unique requiring wisdom and prayer. Debt should never be incurred because of selfish or greedy desires.