



A BIBLICAL STUDY RESOURCE

NOT ADDING UP: SPOTLIGHTING ADD-ON INSURANCE IN AOTEAROA JULY 2022

What does the Bible say?

The Bible is full of references related to financial matters and business dealings. The charging of interest is something the Bible refers to frequently. The Bible references are always looking to the interests of the poor and to call business leaders to ethical practice, even to the point of calling for no-interest loans. As a consequence, many Christian societies historically viewed charging interest very negatively and discouraged or forbade it.

Here are some biblical references about finance to consider. In Proverbs 28:8 and Matthew 25:27, a fair interest rate is expected to be charged on loans. Then in Leviticus 25:35–38:

'If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you. You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.'

Ancient Jewish law prohibited charging interest on one category of loans—those made to the poor. In Matthew 18:23–35, Jesus himself in a parable uses the approaches of two creditors or lenders to illustrate what was central when understanding and practising forgiveness. Christ's sacrificial death on the cross embodied this concept.

What might this mean?

Put simply, the Bible speaks strongly about people being ripped off, people deserving a fair go, better treatment by businesses and highlighting the problems in these structures. Scripture speaks directly into any discussion around financial hardship and problem debt, relevant to the cost-of-living crisis many people are experiencing in Aotearoa New Zealand right now.

Are these systems of buying, lending, or taking-out insurance inherently wrong or evil? The author of the report (Ronji Tanielu) would say not, instead taking the position advanced by UK Bishop Nick Baines: *'Economic systems draw us into relationship and responsibility, compelling negotiation over values, priorities and behaviour. But a biblical approach cannot stop there. How that system works, and how it is abused, is something that Christians cannot step back from without asking for whom such a system exists. Systems that essentially dehumanise those who participate in them can never meet the tests of justice or generosity that lie at the heart of the Christian gospel.'*

Listen to the podcast and have a look at the report—see the links below:

[Podcast](#) | [Report](#)

Key questions for discussion and practical application:

- Are these systems of buying, lending, taking out insurance inherently wrong or evil?
- How do you feel about people's stories on page 9 of the report?
- How do I stay informed of these unjust parts of different systems and sectors?
- How can I be involved in raising awareness, having intentional conversations and connecting to good help for people involved in these rip-off insurance products?
- Do you know about The Salvation Army financial mentoring and Good Loans services? Is there one operating in your local corps or Community Ministries? How can you connect people from the community to these awesome services? How can you pray for their complex work?

Prayers about debt and financial matters:

Father God, we pray for those who fall into debt. We pray that you will provide a way out of debt for those who are struggling to provide a warm home and food for their whānau. For those who have too little income to cover their basic costs, we pray. Also, for those whose debt has got out of control because of gambling addiction or other behaviours and find themselves in financial trouble. We pray for our Salvation Army financial mentors and Good Loans Services that they will help people to find their way out of debt.

We pray that our communities and nation will provide support and protection so that families can thrive.

Finally, we pray that the government will provide legislative protection for those on the margins who struggle with debt, so that people offering loans or add-on insurance policies operate in a way that does not trap people into unsustainable debt.

For all these things we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.



Te Ope Whakaora

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Working for the eradication of poverty in New Zealand

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of facts and information in this report. Inaccuracies or errors in interpretation remain ours and we are happy to discuss any brought to our attention. The views are the authors', expressed in the name of The Salvation Army, Te Ope Whakaora.

We welcome your comments.

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