



# How to Pray for... **THE BONDAGE OF DEBT**



Borrowing money has become common practice throughout the world. Even in Western Europe and the United States, many people have debts—mortgages, medical bills, credit cards, auto-loans, and student loans—greater than their annual income. The result is the appearance of wealth, but a constant burden of financial stress. About half of families say that missing just one paycheck would mean financial disaster, and financial problems are one of the most common reasons for divorce in western countries.

Families in the Majority World often face even greater difficulty because of debt. Many times people end up in a cycle of debt that is nearly impossible for them to break out of. Farmers take out loans during planting season that come due at harvest. A street vendor may use a loan to restock inventory. But if a crop fails, a family member falls ill and can't work, or the small business struggles, how will those loans be repaid? Often the family will take out more loans just to survive. For the poorest, the smallest unplanned expense or loss of income can lead to crushing debt. Money lenders often offer short-term loans with extremely high interest rates—100 percent over just a few months is not uncommon. With such extreme interest rates, families end up trapped in a vicious cycle of debt. Much of what they earn goes to pay the interest on loans, cutting into an income that was barely sufficient to begin with. Then they need more loans to survive. As the family sinks deeper into poverty, marriages fall apart, children are forced to work or beg, and some become suicidal. In the worst cases, people are sold by the money lender to a factory, where they work to pay off the debt under conditions that make it impossible to ever actually pay off the debt.



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## Please pray with us...

- For those who are living hand-to-mouth and trapped in debt, that God will provide in miraculous ways to free them. Pray that they will be convicted to seek God's help to pay off all that they owe and to stay debt-free.
- Pray for opportunities for materially poor people to learn money management and biblical stewardship, so that they can make good decisions that enable their businesses and families to flourish. Pray for a mindset change, especially within the Church—that God's people would understand how saving is better than borrowing.
- Pray for savings groups to grow in and through local churches among the poorest so that they have the opportunity to save. Pray for local churches and self-help groups to demonstrate the love of God by helping people be free of debt.
- Pray for money lenders to understand God's love and grace for them. Pray that they would come to see the materially poor as their brothers and sisters, fellow image-bearers of God, and co-heirs to His grace. Pray that they would lend fairly and honestly to those in need.
- Pray that those who are materially poor will have access to low-interest loans to start businesses or to meet unplanned expenses. Pray for Microfinance organizations to stand against the pressures of corruption and to serve these families well.
- Pray for Christians in wealthy countries to discern the lies of their culture that would lead them into too much debt. Pray that the Church would show their society an example of godly stewardship and generosity. For those who are trapped in debt, pray that God would show them how to get free.

*Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God.  
He is the Maker of heaven and earth,  
the sea, and everything in them—  
He remains faithful forever.  
He upholds the cause of the oppressed  
and gives food to the hungry.  
The Lord sets prisoners free,  
the Lord gives sight to the blind,  
the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,  
the Lord loves the righteous.  
The Lord watches over the foreigner  
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,  
but He frustrates the ways of the wicked.*