

The Smell of New Leather

Ah, the rich look of leather car seats. The expensive feel of fine hides. The pleasing aroma of fine furniture. Nothing makes the new car shopping experience more emotionally enticing than the smell of new leather.

But once you've been anesthetized by the smell of new leather, the car dealership and their highly trained sales-surgeons will quickly begin to operate on your bank account. And for those who find themselves under the numbing effect of the anesthesia but a few dollars short in their bank accounts provisions have been made. The finance department specialist are skilled at making debt implants into your personal financial life at interest rates that are customized for your current credit worthy condition.

It might be interesting to note that the smell of new leather is commercially produced according to an article written by James R. Healey and published in USA Today titled, "Carmakers resort to eau de leather." The article explains that for years the leather used in expensive cars was tanned, processed and colored in order to neutralize its natural smell. It was then injected with industrial aromas. Today a process used by leather suppliers called "re-tanning" puts fragrant oils back into leather.

"We have a specific aroma at Ford, which we've used about two years. Senior management came in and smelled swatches. It's very subjective," says Bonnie Cunningham, Ford Motor design Manager in charge of leather.

Nick Showish, sales and marketing boss at the leather supplier Seton said, "We have a whole library of different aromas." Seton supplies all Chrysler's leather, and some to General Motors, Porsche, Nissan, Mercedes-Benz and Isuzu.

According to Healey, "Chrysler, like Ford, uses a single fragrance. But some makers use differing scents to give the impression that higher priced models have more leather, or richer leather."

The love affair that Americans have had with their automobiles unofficially began on October 1, 1908, when Henry Ford used assembly-line production to put the first of his Model T's (nicknamed the Tin Lizzie because of its lightweight sheet metal body) on the road. The 4-cylinder, 20-horsepower Model T was available in two styles. The runabout sold for \$825, the touring model for \$850. The combination of reputation, quality, and low-price helped the Model T become the first true car for all classes of Americans.

But has this inanimate love affair with the automobile turned into a financial prison sentence? The sad truth is that the number one consumer debt item that cripples most American households today is the automobile. How much car can you *really* afford? Should you buy a used car, a new car, new luxury car or sports car? Should you pay cash, finance it with a minimum down payment or just lease it? These and other questions are often only briefly addressed as the emotions are stirred to trade-in that once loved beast in the garage for a newer, prettier, more up to date model.

For the Christian, there is Biblical guidance concerning the issues surrounding the purchase of automobiles. First, I must inject that there is absolutely nothing wrong with the purchase of a brand new luxury automobile. The question that every Christian should ask before the purchase of any item is, “Am I being a good steward (manager) of God’s money by making this purchase?”

The Biblical principle of surety should be the first concern for the Christian who is debating whether to purchase an item with debt that depreciates or is consumed. **"Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts."** Proverb 22:26. Surety is a condition that exists when you have no “sure” way to repay someone for an item that you have obtained. According to statistics provided by Consumer Reports and others, a new automobile will depreciate at a rate that is much faster than most typical auto loans can be repaid. The widening gap in the value of the financed auto and the amount owed to the lender results in the borrower being in violation of the principle of surety. This is commonly referred to as being “upside down” in the loan.

The second concern for the Christian should be the issue of slavery. **"The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant (slave) to the lender."** Proverb 22:7. The willingness of one to voluntarily surrender their freedom in exchange for the short-lived emotional effects associated with the purchase of a new or different automobile only goes to show the powerful effects of **"The Smell of New Leather"**.

Biblical and practical wisdom points us to the road that leads to *True* Financial Freedom. Beginning your journey is a choice that only you can make for yourself. The focus of our ministry is to provide you with the education and tools that are necessary for the trip. As I once heard someone say, “Success is found in the journey not at the destination.”

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