

INTRODUCTION

Last week we started a new series on Financial Freedom. In my introduction I mentioned that God's desire is to bless us. His desire is for us to be the head, not the tail. His desire is for us to be the lender, not the borrower. He wants to bless our crops, our livestock, our going out and our coming in. His desire is to bless us in every area of our lives. There was one catch to His desire to bless us; we had to do according to all that was written in His word.

(Josh 1:8) ""This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

Therefore, we want to see what God has to say about our finances. He speaks a lot to us about our finances. He speaks more about our finances than our faith, prayer, and many areas. The first principle that we looked at was that God is the Owner of all things. We saw that He was Owner because He created everything. He is Owner because He bought and redeemed us. And He is Owner because He adopted us.

Then, we saw in Luke 16 that we are stewards, and that as stewards we are going to give account for our stewardship. A steward is required to be faithful in small things, in borrowed things, and in the use of money. If we are not faithful with money, God says that He will not entrust us with true riches. This church is believing God for souls, which are the true riches. Therefore, it is imperative that we are faithful in the handling of our finances.

Before moving on to what God's word has to say about debt, I wanted to make a final point about stewardship. I am the President of Murchison Drilling Schools. Essentially, I am the Chief Steward that acts on behalf of the Owners. I carry out the desires of the Board of Directors. I have authority as the Chief Steward to write contracts, hire personnel, lease facilities, and make decisions that are in the best interests of the Board.

I could go and buy a new Lexus or other luxury car. I could book a ticket on a luxury cruise liner and take a vacation to Alaska. However, as the Chief Steward of Murchison Drilling Schools, that would not be carrying out the desires of the Board of Directors. That is not carrying out the interests of Murchison Drilling Schools. That would be carrying out my own selfish interests. It would be only right for the Board of Directors to take away my stewardship, much like the Owner did in Luke 16. The point of this is that as Stewards, our responsibility is to carry out the wishes of the Owner, and to wisely manage the assets and resources that are entrusted to us. We will have to give account one day of whether we have carried out the desires of the Owner, or have used these resources selfishly.

The desires and will of the Owner of all the assets is found in the Word of God. It is important for us to spend time in the Word of God and find out what the Lord wants us to do with the resources that He entrusts to us. Last week, we laid a foundation about our finances

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that we will be building on today, and in the next few weeks. This morning we are going to be looking at what the Lord has to say about debt.

In 1994, I was having a very successful year on the NIKE Tour. Magazines, newspapers and the television media were all doing stories on our family every week. Because of the widespread publicity we received, companies were also interested in me. One company, a credit card company, contacted me about representing them. Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and others have represented American Express. This company felt I had the image they were looking for. I was honest, sincere and was a family man. I was also well known across America. They offered me over a hundred thousand dollars a year to represent their card. This would not be a one year contract, but a multi-year contract that would increase in value.

It did not take a lot of consideration for me to answer this. I have convictions about debt. I have done a lot of counseling with people in debt over the years. I have told people to cut their cards in pieces and throw them away. I have kidded them about melting them in their ovens. I have told people that the Scriptures say to make no provision for the flesh and not to carry them with them. I could not represent a product that I felt like was a stumbling block to so many.

When the company received my reply, they called me back and I spoke to them some more about it. I explained my convictions. I told them that I did not believe that having a credit card was a sin. I told them that I had use credit cards and that the proper use of credit cards is not wrong. It was just that so many people abuse it and it would be a contradiction of what I regularly share with people. Several hundred thousand dollars or ANY amount of money is not worth as much to me as seeing God's people walk in truth and freedom.

3 John 1:4 "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth."

A number of years ago, while President Clinton was still in office, the AP News reported that President Clinton was being turned down on a loan for a new \$1.7 million houses. The reason he was declined was two fold. First, he was not making enough to qualify for the loan. Secondly, he was already \$5 million in debt. Some bankers wanted to loan him the money, but it would have been a violation of federal policy to use his position for personal gain. The President's financial position reflects our entire country. We want as much house as we can, and as many toys as we can borrow to obtain. We are a country that is being swallowed up in debt.

As of Friday, May 11, the U.S. Government was \$15,713,650,000,000 in debt, that is over fifteen trillion dollars. The estimated population of the United States is 312,800,000 so each citizen's share is \$50,119. Unfortunately, we have less than half of America that pays taxes, so the average taxpayer's portion is \$138,363.00. This problem was also a problem in the Roman Empire before it went drowned. Listen to what a man named Cicero who lived from 106-43 B.C. said:

"The budget should be balanced; the treasury should be refilled; public debt should be reduced; and the arrogance of public officials should be controlled."

The average American is in debt \$78,000. The average American spends 1/4 of his salary on debt. Americans spend 10 times more on interest from their debt load than they give toward charity. Churches spend more on interest from their debt than they give towards missions.

Ministers are strapped in debt and no longer free to serve God. One minister who has been in the ministry for 25 years was \$24,000.00 in consumer debt, not counting mortgage debt. His son-in-law's car broke down and he borrowed another \$1,000.00 to lend them for car repairs. This minister borrowed at an 18-21% Visa rate and was loaning it to his son-in-law for free. That may be generous, but it is not wise stewardship, according to the Owner's Manual. He has placed himself in more bondage, helped the son-in-law to be in bondage and not dealt with some root issues in both of their lives. When I discussed it with the minister, he was not the least bit concerned about it.

As we look at debt this morning, I want to answer the following questions:

1. What is debt?
2. What does God's word say about debt?
3. What can we do to get free from the bondage of debt?

I. WHAT IS DEBT?

Debt has become such a problem that the leaders in the church today have changed their definitions from a Biblical perspective to a more worldly perspective. For instance, one group of churches define debt the following way:

PDI (Brent Detweiler): Debt is defined as money borrowed to acquire something that depreciates in value, e.g., a car, clothing, furniture, vacations, etc. Investments which appreciate are not debt; these include land and houses.

Debt has nothing to do with whether something is depreciating in value or appreciating in value. If you are going to borrow money, it is wiser to borrow on something you think will appreciate in value, but debt is debt whether it is appreciating or not.

Forty years ago, a man named Clint Murchison was the 7th wealthiest man in the world. He also owned the Dallas Cowboys. He got highly leveraged on appreciating assets, i.e. commercial real estate. Highly leveraged means that he borrowed much of the money and had very little equity in the investments. He was carrying a lot of debt on these "appreciating assets." Then, an oil recession hit and the property values plummeted. The interest rates soared, and Clint had to sell the Cowboys and many other assets. He suffered dire consequences.

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Larry Burkett is a man greatly respected for his financial prowess. Listen to his definition of debt:

Burkett: 1) Debt is when someone has delinquent financial obligations. Therefore, money borrowed and repaid according to agreement is not a debt, but an obligation. The total of unsecured liabilities exceeds total assets (in other word, if a calamity took place, there would be a negative balance.) 3) Financial responsibilities produce anxiety. God will give a sense of peace when finances are managed according to His will.

Listen to what Random House Dictionary defines as debt:

Random House Dictionary on Debt: 1) Something that is owed; something that one person is bound to pay to or perform for another. 2) A liability or obligation to pay or render something. 3) The condition of being under such an obligation. 4) An offense requiring reparation; a sin; a trespass.

It is obvious that Larry Burkett's definition and the legal definition of debt are different. If you borrow \$80,000.00 on a house that costs \$100,000.00, you are \$80,000.00 in debt. Even though the net worth, the difference between the equity and the borrowed amount is \$20,000, if you default on your notes, you will lose the house. The bank will take possession of the house and you will lose the \$100,000.00 value. Your monthly payments on the house may be \$800.00 but your debt is \$80,000.00, not the \$800.00 monthly payment.

At a Pastor's Conference that I attended a number in 1997, I was appalled at what I heard the conference leaders tell to the pastors who were there. They counseled them to refinance their houses and take the equity out of their houses and invest it with their Denomination's Finance Group. Their counsel made good worldly sense. You take money that you are paying 8% interest on and put it to work in the stock market making a 12-24% return. That makes sense. In addition, you get to deduct the interest you pay on your house from your taxes. On your \$100,000.00 house, your interest would be over \$8,000.00. In a 25% tax bracket, that would give you a \$2,000.00 break on your taxes, making your return even greater.

Well then, what is wrong with the counsel? God's word regarding debt is what troubles me with this counsel. Even though the Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not borrow," it does not encourage people to go into debt. Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about debt. Let's let the Bible define debt for us.

1. Debt is form of bondage. Proverbs 22:7 says that the borrower becomes the lender's slave. Until this century, debt was always looked at as a form of bondage. In fact, slavery was very common in Scripture and the leading cause of people becoming slaves was their inability to pay their debts. Nowadays, there is a lot of mental and emotional bondage but not any physical bondage.

Pro 22:7 "The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower becomes the lender's slave."

Let's take a look at some examples of this principle in Scripture. First, we will look at 2 Kings 4:1. One of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha for help. She was in debt and the creditors wanted to take her children as their slaves.

2 Ki 4:1-7 "Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves." {2} And Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil." {3} Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few. {4} "And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels; and you shall set aside what is full." {5} So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing the vessels to her and she poured. {6} And it came about when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped. {7} Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest.""

Did you know that you and all that belonged to you became possession of your new master. Your children suffer the consequences of your mismanagement. Today, children suffer from the debt loads. Mothers have to work and their children don't get the full attention at home of their mother. Proverbs says that, "house and wealth are an inheritance from your fathers..." When we are not good stewards, we don't have house and wealth to pass on to our children and our children's children. There is a bumper sticker that I occasionally see, particularly on motor homes, that says, "I am spending my children's inheritance." It is a pretty selfish perspective

(Pro 19:14) "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD."

(Pro 13:22) "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous."

I have mentioned in the past that we had some foster children. One such child was Darius. His mother was in a State Penitentiary for drugs. When we picked up Darius from Georgia Baptist Hospital, I saw a vivid illustration of this principle. When it was time to take the baby, they took the baby out on a cart. Then I heard the two Georgia State Department of Corrections Officers put the chains on Darius' mom. There is an unmistakable sound that prison chains have. There are two handcuff attached to two small chains that attach to the chain around the waist. I heard the handcuffs click. Then, I saw the mother wheeled out in a wheel chair, crying profusely and weeping. They had taken her baby away from her and now she was going back to prison. She was in bondage and it was separating her from her child. Bondage separates families. It has repercussions for generations to come.

Let's take a look at a New Testament example. In Matthew 18, we find a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. When the one slave was unable to repay what was owed, he ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and for repayment to be made. The point is that financial debt brought the entire family into bondage.

(Matt 18:23-25) ""For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. {24} "And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. {25} "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made."

2. Debt is a sign of the curse. The Bible does not call debt sin, but the Bible does include debt as one of the curses of disobedience in Deuteronomy 28:44. One of the blessings was that we would be the head and not the tail, and that we would lend but not borrow. The curses begin in Deuteronomy 28:15, and when we get to verse 44, we find that we shall be the tail and not the head, and we shall borrow, but not lend. Debt is the fruit of disobedience and it listed as a curse.

(Deut 28:12) ""The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow."

(Deut 28:15-19) ""But it shall come about, if you will not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. {16} "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. {17} "Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. {18} "Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. {19} "Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out."

(Deut 28:44) ""He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail."

I do not want to be operating under a curse, but want to be abiding in the blessings of Christ Jesus. Galatians tells us that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. Debt is one of the curses of disobedience. It goes on to say that in Christ Jesus we can receive the blessings of Abraham. I want the blessings, not the curses.

(Gal 3:13-14) "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"-- {14} in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

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Furthermore, it says in Galatians 5:1 that it was for freedom that Christ has set us free. He wants us to keep standing firm and not to subject ourselves to a yoke of slavery. We need to be careful about taking on debt, and subjecting ourselves to any form of slavery.

(Gal 5:1) "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

Things can be difficult at times. In 1994, we moved from Orlando to Atlanta. We had saved up enough money for a new van. Our 1986 van was causing all kinds of problems. We had literally spent thousands of dollars on it and it had not been repaired properly. When we moved here, houses cost more than we had anticipated. We had heard that they were 25% less here than in Orlando. Wrong! They were 25% higher than in Orlando. We bought the most house that we could for the money. We used up our van money in order to avoid getting a mortgage on our house.

In March of 1994, Karen and the children took me to the airport. I was flying to Mexico for the Monterrey Classic. Because it was a very expensive week, I usually flew to Mexico by myself and roomed with other players. When I got there, I had a message to call Karen. That was not a good sign. When Karen called me long distance to a foreign country, it was not a good sign. I returned her call.

On the way home from the airport, the engine of our van blew up. She has eight children on I-75 downtown Atlanta waiting alongside the road and it is 42 degrees and misty outside. A balloon party van stopped and gave Karen and the children a ride to an exit sign. Then, she called a tow truck for the van and had it hauled to a dealership. Then, she called our pastor who came and picked up the family.

We did not have the money to buy a new van. With all the problems we were having, it did not make sense to pour money into the old van. The van was worth about \$3,000.00 and a rebuilt engine was going to cost us \$3,000.00. It would be worth exactly what we put into it. The carburetor on that year's model was defective and it was just better to buy a new van. We would have to get into debt to buy a new van. What is a man to do?

Because we were committed to being debt free, we used what money we had and fixed up our old van. It still did not run great afterwards, but it got us around. Two months later I got hot and finished 2nd two weeks in a row, winning enough money to buy a van and have money to travel on. Not only that, but I met a Regional Manager in Customer Service for Ford at a tournament in South Carolina a week before my two good finishes. He contacted Ford and they re-imbursed me for about \$500.00 of the repairs because we had so many problems. He also let us get an A-Plan for buying a new van. This entitled us to buy a new van for 10% below dealer cost. We bought a new \$28,000.00 van for \$22,000.00. God is an awesome God. He will work things out for our good when we trust Him and follow His principles rather than the principles of the world.

The principle of living debt free can help give us direction in our lives. We do not want to become enslaved through debt and we should not desire to enslave anyone else through debt. God's timing can sometimes be determined by whether the provision is there or not. God promises in Matthew 6:33 that when we seek first the kingdom of God, all these things will be added unto us. If we do not have those things, we can safely assume one of two conclusions. Either we are not seeking first God's kingdom or those things we desire are not really God's desire for us at that time. They may be a luxury rather than a need at the time. Or it may not be the right timing for the thing.

II. WHAT ARE SOME PRINCIPLES ABOUT DEBT AND INTEREST

1. **Debt was to be short term.** The longest legal debt in Scripture was 7 years. Every 7th year was called a year of remission. All debts had to be canceled in the year of remission. If it was the 5th year and you borrowed something, you had 2 years to repay it. If at the end of two years, you couldn't repay it, then your debt was forgiven. The Lord commanded His people to not close their hand to others as it got closer to the year of remission.

(Deut 15:7-11) ""If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; {8} but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. {9} "Beware, lest there is a base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you. {10} "You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. {11} "For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'"

In this country, mortgages were all short term until after World War II. The American government wanted to help all the soldiers coming back from the war get into houses. They offered longer mortgages to these soldiers, which made the monthly payments more affordable. They became very popular. With the longer mortgages, prices for new houses went up quickly. The average house at the time costs \$7,500.00. People owned their houses and debt was a short term solution. Since long term mortgages have become popular, the price of houses and cars have sky rocketed. Moving away from a cash market has inflated the prices.

2. **Debts were to be forgiven at the end of seven years.** At the end of seven years, we are commanded to grant a remission of debts. The Lord did not want any poor among the people of God. Therefore, all debts were cancelled every seven years. Notice how this passage ends, God wants to bless us in the land but we must listen obediently to the voice

of the Lord and obey His commands. There are other debts besides financial debts that we should forgive one another.

(Deut 15:1-5) ""At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts. {2} "And this is the manner of remission: every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because the LORD'S remission has been proclaimed. {3} "From a foreigner you may exact it, but your hand shall release whatever of yours is with your brother. {4} "However, there shall be no poor among you, since the LORD will surely bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, {5} if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today."

If someone was sold into slavery because of their indebtedness, they only had to serve until the year of remission. Then, they were set free. God did not want His people to be in bondage of any kind. He recognized that people were not all going to be wise in their finances. There are hardships that we all go through from time to time. God made a provision for these difficult times.

3. Debt was not to be used oppressively. When someone loaned money to another countryman, he was not allowed to charge him interest. The context of these loans was for their basic needs. However, we find examples in Scripture where people had borrowed large amounts of money. I don't personally believe the examples were just people buying groceries. Some of these were for investments. God's people were allowed to charge interest to foreigners. I believe the application is that we should not charge interest to our brothers in the Lord, but we can charge interest to the world.

(Ex 22:25-27) ""If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. {26} "If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, {27} for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious."

Notice also that the person lending was to give back a man's cloak before the sun set. We are to exercise care and compassion in dealing with the poor and those who required assistance. In Leviticus 25:36-37, we are told not to charge interest on silver or for food. God wants us to help people with the necessities without charging interest.

(Lev 25:36-37) ""Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you. {37} "You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain."

In Deuteronomy, we find that we can charge interest to a foreigner. Even though it was forbidden to charge our countrymen interest, we could charge foreigners.

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(Deut 23:19-20) ""You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest. {20} "You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countryman you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess."

In Psalms 15, David talks about being people of integrity. Those who were going to abide in God's tent or tabernacle, those who were going to dwell on God's holy hill had to walk in integrity. David shares some examples of what it means to walk in integrity. He does not slander with his tongue, do evil to his neighbor, take a reproach against a friend, swears to his own hurt, and does not change, AND does not put out his money at interest. We are not to charge our family, and other believers interest on the money that we loan them.

Psalms 15 "(A Psalm of David.) O LORD, who may abide in Thy tent? Who may dwell on Thy holy hill? {2} He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. {3} He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend; {4} In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the LORD; He swears to his own hurt, and does not change; {5} He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken."

Ezekiel gives a similar statement about those who are righteous and will live. He says that the righteous person gives bread to the hungry, covers the naked with clothing, and does not lend money on interest. We want to have to be a church that reaches out to the poor. We support Danielle's ministry, Promised Land, because it is involved in giving food to the poor and clothing to the naked. At the same time, we want to also follow God's principles about debt. We do not want to lend money on interest to other believers.

Ezekiel 18:7-9 "if a man does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry, and covers the naked with clothing, {8} if he does not lend money on interest or take increase, if he keeps his hand from iniquity, and executes true justice between man and man, {9} if he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully-- he is righteous and will surely live," declares the Lord GOD."

When Nehemiah investigates the land in Jerusalem and finds out that the people were charging interest to one another, he gets upset. He tells them they are exacting usury from one another. The word usury means an exorbitant amount or rate of interest. Do you know what interest rate that was? It was 1%. Nehemiah gets upset because they were charging an exorbitant amount of interest, 1%. I know that money was not losing its value like it is today, but still 1% was not a lot. It was however a violation of God's principle of not charging interest to our countrymen.

Usury: An exorbitant amount or rate of interest, especially in excess of the legal rate. 2) The lending or practice of lending money at an exorbitant interest rate. 3) *obsolete* Interest paid for the use of money.

Nehemiah 5:1-12 "Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. {2} For there were those who said, "We, our sons and our daughters, are many; therefore let us get grain that we may eat and live." {3} And there were others who said, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses that we might get grain because of the famine." {4} Also there were those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. {5} "And now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our children like their children. Yet behold, we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are forced into bondage already, and we are helpless because our fields and vineyards belong to others." {6} Then I was very angry when I had heard their outcry and these words. {7} And I consulted with myself, and contended with the nobles and the rulers and said to them, "You are exacting usury, each from his brother!" Therefore, I held a great assembly against them. {8} And I said to them, "We according to our ability have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations; now would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us?" Then they were silent and could not find a word to say. {9} Again I said, "The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? {10} "And likewise I, my brothers and my servants, are lending them money and grain. Please, let us leave off this usury. {11} Please, give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money and of the grain, the new wine, and the oil that you are exacting from them." {12} Then they said, "We will give it back and will require nothing from them; we will do exactly as you say." So I called the priests and took an oath from them that they would do according to this promise."

III. Getting Free From Bondage

We understand the definition of debt, and that it is a form of bondage. We also see that debt is something that is intended for short term basis. We also understand that we are not to charge interest to one another. Since we are a nation with lots of debt, and a people with lots of debt, what can we do to get free from the bondage of debt? What are some things that we can do?

Jesus tells us in John 8:31-32 that God's disciples will abide in His word and know the truth. He finishes by declaring that the truth shall make us free. God does not just want us to know about His truths regarding debt, He wants us to be free. God wants to set us free from the bondage of debt.

John 8:31-32 "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; {32} and you shall know the

truth, and the truth shall make you free."

1. **We must cry out for help.** Until we decide that we do not want to be in bondage anymore, we will not get free. We will live in bondage. James tells us that we have not because we ask not.

(James 4:2b) "You do not have because you do not ask."

The children of Israel lived in Egypt for many, many years until they finally cried out to the Lord for deliverance. The Lord sent them a servant named Moses. The name Moses means to rescue. It comes from the word mashah which means to draw out. If you remember, Pharaoh's daughter named him Moses when she drew him out of the Nile river. God had other purposes in mind when He orchestrated the naming of His servant. He was going to use Moses to draw His people out of bondage or rescue them from bondage.

(Exodus 2:23-25) "Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. {24} So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. {25} And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them."

This crying out for deliverance can be from any type of bondage. Today, we are dealing with the financial bondage of debt, but God may want to set you free from some other bondage today. You have to decide if you have had enough. Bondage in Egypt grew more and more severe until the people finally cried out in their distress. Have you come to the place in your life where you are crying out to the Lord for deliverance.

2. **We must receive the word of God.** Receiving from the word of God requires humility. James it says that in humility we are to receive the word of God which is able to save our souls. We must receive the word of God if we want to be saved from our financial bondage.

(James 1:21) "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

We find in Deuteronomy 8:3 that God humbled them and let them go hungry in order that they might know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The nation of Israel were led out into the wilderness to learn that they had to live on the word of God. The word is part of the freedom that we get.

(Deut 8:3) ""And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD."

We must turn to the word of God. We must receive the word of God. We must be committed to the word of God. We must hearken and obey.

Romans 6:17 says that we become obedient from the heart to that form of teaching which we are committed to, we are freed from sin and become slaves of righteousness. We must receive the word of God and become committed to the word. Whatever the word says to do, we need to do it. No questions, no reservations. We need to hearken to the word of the Lord and obey the Word. God promises us blessings and not curses when we listen and obey.

(Rom 6:16-18) "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? {17} But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, {18} and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

3. We must trust God. We find an account of someone being set free from debt in 2 Kings 6:1-7. Some of the prophets wanted to expand their living quarters. They borrowed an axe and went to the Jordan to cut some trees. The ax head fell off into the water. They were distressed because it belonged to someone else. They cried out for help. Then, they saw the miraculous hand of God as Elisha cut off a stick and threw it in the water and made the iron float. He told the prophet to take it up for yourself. The prophet put out his hand and took it.

2 Ki 6:1-7 "Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "Behold now, the place before you where we are living is too limited for us. {2} "Please let us go to the Jordan, and each of us take from there a beam, and let us make a place there for ourselves where we may live." So he said, "Go." {3} Then one said, "Please be willing to go with your servants." And he answered, "I shall go." {4} So he went with them; and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. {5} But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed." {6} Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float. {7} And he said, "Take it up for yourself." So he put out his hand and took it."

We saw in 2 Kings 4:1-7 that the Lord did a miracle to get the woman out of debt and to keep her sons from being sold as slaves. The woman called for the man of God and cried out to Elisha. She was putting her trust in God to deliver her. She reminded him that her husband had been a god-fearing man. And now, she was believing God to do a miracle to deliver her from her financial bondage.

In 1982, Karen and I were completely debt free. We had our trailer and truck paid off and were living debt free. We paid cash for everything. In 1984, with three children, we decided to buy a house. We took on \$70,000.00 of debt. In 1986, Karen and I began to cry out to God

to get completely out of debt. I was making good money as the Head Golf Professional. We could easily have afforded a bigger house for our growing family. But, our commitment was to be debt free. We lived in a small house. We cut back on lots of areas of our life. We lived on a strict budget. We didn't spend anything without praying about it. We trusted God to provide all kinds of things that people don't think about. We had to learn to do without.

Finally, God spoke to my heart and told us to pray specifically that in three years time we would be completely debt free. We prayed and prayed specifically. God led us to a number of Scriptures that we clung to in regard to being debt free. One of the Scriptures we prayed over was Proverbs 19:14. It says that house and wealth are an inheritance from fathers. It didn't matter which fathers gave, we were trusting God to move on their hearts and help us with this matter. At the end of three years, we received a phone call from Karen's grandfather in Fort Worth. At that time he was overly fond of me. I took away his pride and joy when I married Karen. He abandoned her for Kathryn, Karen's sister. God moved on his heart and at the end of three years, almost to the day, we got a call from Papaw. He asked Karen how much we owed on the house. She told him \$59,000.00, for we had paid off about \$11,000. Papaw wrote out the check and put it in the mail. What a celebration we had when we paid off the house.

Proverbs 19:14 "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD."

CONCLUSION

The Lord is telling some of you today that he is going to make provision for you to get out of debt. He is letting you know this day that He wants His people free. He is willing to help. He is waiting to see how many want freedom. Some are content being in Egypt. They don't want to go through the wilderness in order to get free. They want freedom, but they are willing to make sacrifices in order to get there. God wants to know who is serious about their financial freedom.

God is willing to pour out His Spirit on those who turn to and receive His reproof. He is willing to part the waters for those who will be obedient in their heart to the form of teaching they are receiving. He is willing to float axe heads. He is willing to give you a plan like he did the widow. He is willing to fill up the pots with oil that so that you can pay off your debts. He is willing to do the miraculous.

If you are wanting freedom, God is asking you to step out today. He is asking you to make a commitment to leave Egypt today. He is asking you to make a commitment to go through the wilderness. Some of you have been in the wilderness and it is time for you to go on in the promised land. If this is the cry of your heart today, I want to pray for you.

Introduction (Josh 1:8, 3 John 1:4, Acts 18:5, Acts 6:2-4)

I. What Is Debt?

1. Debt is a form of _____. (Pro 22:7, 19:14, 13:22, 2 Ki 4:1-7, Matt 18:23-25)
2. Debt was a sign of the _____. (Deut 28:12, 44, Gal 3:13-14, 5:1)

II. What Are Some Principles About Debt and Interest?

1. Debt was to be ______. (Deut 15:7-18)
2. Debt was to be _____ at the end of seven years. (Deut 15:1-5)
3. Debt was not to be used _____. (Ex 22:25-27, Lev 25:36-37, Deu 23:19-20, Psa 15, Eze 18:7-9, Neh 5:1-12)

III. Getting Free From Bondage

1. We must _____ for help. (James 4:2, Ex 2:23-25)
2. We must receive the ______. (James 1:21, Deut 8:3, Rom 6:16-18)
3. We must _____ God. (2 Kings 6:1-7, Pro 19:14)

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