



2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 5 Dealing with Debt

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text:

The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. (Proverbs 22:7 NIV84).

What do you think of the idea that the rich rule over the poor? Does this still happen in society today?

There are multiple ways the rich exploit the poor:

- Charge high interest on loans
- Tax laws that give advantage to the rich
- Inflation—which is the increase in prices because more money is printed and flooded into circulation, this reduces the buying power of people's savings
- And one of the primary ways that the elite exploit and control the masses is through getting people into debt.

Do we gain more freedom or less by incurring debt? Have you known people who made decisions in life that they would not have otherwise made because they were servicing their debt? Decisions like, staying in a job or taking a job that was not their calling, perhaps a job that was actually harmful to them, like a third-shift job? Have you known people to go along with practices that they would not have gone along with had they not been in debt?

When we are under financial pressure are we more vulnerable to compromising our principles? And if we compromise our principles because of financial pressure, happens to our minds? The normal response to compromising one's beliefs or principles is to feel guilt, if financial pressures prevent repentance, then the way to alleviate the guilt is to warp the mind, to rationalize and justify and the choice to avoid guilt and shame, which means we lose critical reasoning ability, our discernment is undermined, we actually come to believe things to be a certain way when we would not have had we not gone along?

I saw many people do this during COVID, compromise long standing principles and ethics in how they treat others and then rationalize and justify why it was good to do so.

There are multiple ways to manipulate people, one is through propaganda, misinformation, and deceit. Another is through financial incentives, either through reward, or threat of loss. If persons can become indebted then they can be more easily manipulated through means to service the debt and pressures on them to call the debt or undermine their ability to service the debt.



Consider the current higher educational system in America—structured so that people can go to school, get an education, but enter the workforce with a high debt. Does entering the workforce with high debt increase the freedom of the worker, or make it easier for corporations and governments to manipulate the professional, get them to take jobs they might not otherwise take?

And in the medical profession, not only do many physicians enter the workforce with large student debt, starting a practice often requires substantial investment of money to buy the equipment and set up the practice. In order to stay financially viable, it is important to have hospital privileges, to be in various insurance networks, and accept government reimbursements. If one doesn't do this, their income is threatened, their ability to service their debts—school debt, professional debt, personal debt such as a mortgage—is threatened.

So, pressure can be brought to bear on physicians to accept treatment protocols, algorithms, practice policies that the physician would not have otherwise accepted had they not been in debt. Once having accepted the protocols, many will justify, see the good in it, close their minds to alternatives that would expose the protocol as suboptimal because that would cause guilt, require action, threaten income, incite fear and insecurity. Have we seen individual physician autonomy and independent decision-making has been severely curtailed over the last 30 years?

When I became a physician more doctors owned their own practice than were employed by corporations, today more than 75% of doctors are employed by corporations. The practice of medicine in America is no longer primarily about health, about making people the healthiest they can be, it is about profit for the corporations; it is a medical industry and physicians are the pawns in the corporation of machine that are manipulated by the industry. Nothing exposed this more than COVID when the long-standing ethics of medicine were set aside and physicians colluded with government and industry to violate their oaths and coerce people into participating in medical experimentation, taking an experimental medical treatment with no proven safety, and no proven effectiveness, and which has now proven to be ineffective, to not do what it was proclaimed to do and worse, to cause serious harm. Yet, having compromised, having rationalized, and justified, and lied to themselves millions still believe the lies.

Now more than ever we can see the wisdom for the historic Adventist lifestyle message of living in harmony with God's principles of health, which reduce sickness and diseases, decreasing the need to put oneself in the hands of a for profit medical industry.

And do you see the wisdom in, as far as possible avoiding debt.

Getting people into debt is a way to manipulate and control them.

How easy is it in our society to get into debt, to get a credit card, to get a loan, to borrow on your next paycheck, to get a title loan?



Are people required to have a worthy need, a good purpose, in order to get into debt, or can someone borrow money for essentially anything?

Some might argue that loaning money is to help people, if that were the case, then would it be so easy to get debt for almost any reason? Or would there be actually safeguards in place to protect people from foolish debt? Parents would you allow your children to take on debts for any frivolous reason if it were up to you?

How easy do you think it would be to borrow money if this biblical principle were applied to all loans in America today?

“If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor’s cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate” (Exodus 22:25-27 ESV).

Would it be so easy to get into debt today if the loan institutions couldn’t charge interest?

And recognize the rich loan money to both make money, but also to manipulate and control people. If the profit option was not available, loans would still be made, less loans, but they would still be made as a way to manipulate and control those in debt.

Second paragraph,

Why is debt an almost international scourge at every level — personal, corporate, and government? Every society has always had at least a small percentage who were in debt. But today a much larger portion of the people are in debt, and it’s almost never to their benefit. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 38).

Do you think it is an accident that the US has so much debt?

The US government currently is over \$31 trillion dollars in debt. Is this a good thing? That amount of debt is almost \$100,000 of debt for every person in America.

Is debt and debt management of nations going to play any part in events leading up to the second coming of Christ?

When Revelation warns of the beastly system using economic sanctions, no one buying or selling unless they receive the mark of the beast, what would be required to bring that about?

Would financial systems of the world need to be integrated?

Would physical cash need to go away and money become electronic?

Would tracking of financial transactions need to occur?



What would cause people to participate in such a global restructuring of economies? Would fear play a role? Would the threat of the loss of basic resources, food, clothing, shelter, heat, etc., cause people to cooperate with increasing governmental control? Would a global financial crisis have a role to play in bring this about? And would large national debt have a potential role to play?

Consider these questions:

- How would our nation function differently if we had no national debt?
- Would our ability to invest in national infrastructure be improved?
- Would our ability to invest in communities and community development be improved?
- Would our ability to provide academic scholarships improve?
- What would happen if we created real jobs for people and have real accountability?

What are some of the reasons the US has so much debt?

- Politicians spending money to reward constituents?
- The government itself is too big
- Is there an agenda to cripple the government with debt?

Do you remember the mortgage crisis that occurred back in the early 2000s? Do you know how that came to be?

Some of the factors, I will not claim this is all of the factors, but some of the factors are that during the Clinton Administration they wanted congress to fund more housing for low income and inner-city development. Congress refused, so the Clinton Administration directed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to change the rules on mortgage loans so that low-income people, who under the previous loan guidelines could not qualify to get alone, could now get home loans. Further, they changed rules on how mortgages were handled, allowing them to be broken up into various investment vehicles and sold and traded. All of this worked to cause housing prices to inflate, by infusing billions of dollars into the housing market, causing housing inventories to decrease and prices to increase. Millions of people got approved for loans that they were not qualified for—i.e. more debt than their income could handle, and worse the mortgage greater than the home was worth. Thus, people were upside down in houses, with loans they could not pay, and homes that even if sold would not pay off the loan. While this was going on, the mortgages were being traded and sold, making billions of dollars for investors, until the people who were not qualified defaulted on their loans.

The banks recognized they had billions of dollars loaned out that would not be paid back and many of these major banks would fail if they were infused with money, so congress passed the bailout bill and bailed out the banks—which got the corporations and the wealthy elites out of debt, but kept millions of Americans in debt as they still owed on their mortgages, while passing the debt long to you and me the tax payer as all that bad debt is now part of our national debt that our taxes will have to eventually pay off. And where did all the money go? It went into the hands of the big corporations and wealthy elites.



If they were going to do this, why didn't they approve the same amount of government bailout of the mortgage industry, but instead of paying it directly to the banks they required the banks to use the money to pay down \$250,000 on every primary home mortgage they held? If they would have done this, the banks would have been made solvent, and the people would have been relieved from debt. Those with homes with mortgages less than \$250,000 would have had their debt paid off, and others would have had significant equity established which would allow them to refinance at better terms or sell their homes and get something more affordable.

But the government leaders didn't do this? Why? Because much of what the government (and this true for all human governments throughout all human history) does is not for the benefit of the people, it is for the benefit of the powerful at the expense of the people.

All governments on earth are part of Satan's kingdom, not God's. Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world. Satan's government operates on a few ruling elites exploiting the masses for the benefit of the elites.

The US Constitution was established to protect the people from the government, an abusive church, and the corporate elites. It has been the best human government ever established in this sinful world, however, its protections have been eroding and the Bible tells us that before Jesus comes, every human government, including the USA, will be part of the beastly system—the system with a few ruling elites exploiting the masses.

Recognize what is happening, don't get discouraged, lift up your head and recognize redemption is drawing near.

SUNDAY

The lesson suggests that there are three primary reasons people get into financial difficulty:

- Ignorance—people just don't know about finances and make mistakes
- Greed and selfishness—living beyond their means, seeking pleasures of various kinds, ego wanting to look good to others
- Misfortune or tragedy—health problems, disasters, accidents, wars etc.

These are the big categories as to why people get into financial trouble, but what about taking on debt in the first place? What can motivate that?

- A desire to improve one's life and that of their family—so a business loan, a student loan, a home loan, a car loan to have a car to go to work. There are a lot of righteous reasons people will take on debt. Does that mean debt is good? No, debt is not good, the motive for someone to accept debt may be altruistic, it may not be selfish, but the debt is still not good.
- For greed and selfishness
- Ignorance, getting tricked by someone



The point of this review is that no debt is good—if the same outcome and problem can be resolved without debt, it is better to do so. You will retain greater freedom. But debt in and of itself is not evil—it just isn't the best. However, the motive for the debt, and the motive of those loaning can be either good or evil.

What can help us from taking on bad debt, foolish debt, trivial debt? Does this biblical wisdom have any bearing?

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”

So we say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5-6 NIV84).

Does being content with one's life, advancing and developing along the pathways of life that God leads one down protect a person from foolish debt?

Does this world want people to be content with what they have within God's will for their lives? Or do the leaders of this world actively do things to incite jealousy, envy, greed, lust for wealth, and discontent?

Why does God say to be content and the world says “it isn't fair that others have more”?

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 6:24:

“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24 NIV84).

The lesson also points us to 1 John 2:15, but let's read through 2:17:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the **lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17 NKJV).

How is this connected to not serving two masters?

Is the focus really about money, or something else? What is it about?



What are the two antagonistic principles that are warring for every heart and mind? Love versus selfishness!

Remember the cascade of sin in the human heart? God created Adam and Eve in sinless perfection. They had love and trust for God operating in their heart and they lived in open communion with God. What happened? They believed Satan's lies about God and that resulted in what?

- Lies believed break the bonds of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, character, body, relationships—a terminal condition

John elucidates the three primary avenues through which fear and selfishness tempt us through our evil desires:

- lust of the eye = materialism, greed, love of money, and possessions
- lust of the flesh = sensualism, the pleasures of the senses
- price of life = egotism, pride, arrogance, elitism, power over others

All of these motives are selfish, driven by fear and the need to control, hoard, dominate, and promote self at the expense of others. They are the exact opposite of the motives of God, who so loved the world that He gave—gave Himself to uplift us.

So as we follow Jesus, our hearts become circumcised, cut away, from valuing stuff, or physical pleasures, or power over others and instead we value God, Jesus, the truth, and others and we experience joy in living for God, fulfilling His purpose, helping free other hearts and minds from the traps of this fallen world.

Read last paragraph:

We enter into our church membership with praise and thanksgiving to our God, who has created and redeemed us. In point 9 (of 13) in our baptismal vows, we were asked, “Do you believe in church organization? Is it your purpose to worship God and to support the church through your tithes and offerings and by your personal effort and influence?” As Seventh-day Adventists, we all said yes. So this text (Ps. 50:14, 15) is a promise to those who offer thanksgiving to God and are faithfully paying their vows. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 40).

Do you have any concerns about this? Anything about this make you stop and go, “something seems off here”? Or do you think, this is right?

Is the process and practice you read described in this paragraph Scriptural? Is it from the Bible?



What is the process you read described here? It is the process of baptizing people—but what is it that the paragraph describes that people are being baptized into?

In the New Testament, when people were baptized, were they baptized into the Jewish nation? Were they baptized into the Roman church? Were they baptized into the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Adventist, or any other denominational church? What were they baptized into? Into Jesus, baptism was not denominational, it was a public witness of a person entering into an eternal bond of love and trust with Jesus. Baptism was dying to an old life and rising to a new life as an individual who is bonded to Jesus with cords of love and trust, wash clean of the old life of sin and arisen to a new life with Jesus.

Consider this example from the New Testament and see if this sounds like what the lesson described. If these are different, consider what elements are different, what impact those differences have, and why would the procedural differences be employed?

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him...

The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, **they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.** (Acts 8:26-31 & 34-38 NIV84).

Is this the same process you heard described in the paragraph from the lesson?

What is the difference?

The New Testament baptized people into Jesus, whereas today people are baptized into organizations.

Notice how the process is changed, and the impact it has upon the believer, turning powerful love/trust relationships which would cause believers to change the world like the New Testament church did,



into fear-ridden, legalistic, religionists with a form of godliness without any power, just like Paul described would happen.

Here is what has caused this change. Rather than baptizing new converts into Jesus when their hearts are converted, modern Christianity has substituted the sinner's prayer. And then enrolled the convert into baptismal classes that can last weeks and months, in which they are required to both attest to believing certain doctrines and often change lifestyle practices. The smoker must give up smoking, they must quit their Sabbath job, quit eating certain foods, gain the victory over their addictions, and once they have improved their life enough THEN and ONLY THEN are they permitted to be baptized—because they are being baptized into the organization and not to Jesus, all of this indoctrination and personal life change must be done FIRST in order to protect the organization from people becoming members that are not conforming to the standards.

This process destroys the love and trust in Jesus the new converts have and places the organization into the place of devotion where Jesus should be. This is intentional, the organizations want loyal and devoted followers to their brand, their system, their club, and thus BEFORE baptism the baptismal candidates have to give a public vow to adhere not to loyal love to Jesus, but to the creed or fundamental beliefs of that system—including their promise to financially support that system.

I personally find no objection to supporting denominational churches with our money—they do many good things, schools, hospitals, missions, community service, feeding the hungry etc. I object to inserting the denominational system into the conversion process and supplanting Jesus as the one to whom our vows of loyalty are made.

How should this function? We should baptize people into Jesus whenever they are truly converted, like the Ethiopian. And AFTER they are baptized into Jesus we should invite them to join our organization and educate them about what our organization stands for, what our mission is, what it means to be a member in good standing and instruct them to pray and ask God if God's wants them to serve in our organization or if God has another field for them to serve Him in.

TUESDAY

The lesson gives a three-step plan on how to get out of debt:

Step 1: Stop accumulating new debt, cease all credit spending.

Step 2: Make an agreement with God that as He blesses you, you will faithfully apply your resources to paying off your debts and quickly as possible. You will not buy new stuff with your new income, but pay off debt.

Step 3: Make a list of all debts, largest to smallest, bring all debts into compliance and then begin with the smallest and pay extra on it until it is paid off and then add that amount to the next smallest debt, and keep doing that until all debt is paid.



This is a guide, it is not a set of rules, but a general guide to be applied individually to a plan that works best in your circumstance to get your debt paid.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph:

The Bible is very clear that God does not want His children to become responsible for the debt obligations of others. In the book of Proverbs, the Lord has warned us against surety — that is, cosigning or being guarantor for another person. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 42).

Did you know this was a Bible principle?
Consider these Proverbs:

“Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you” (Proverbs 22:26–27 NIV84).

“He who puts up security for another will surely suffer, but whoever refuses to strike hands in pledge is safe” (Proverbs 11:15 NIV84).

“If you promise to pay a stranger’s debt, you will regret it. You are better off if you don’t get involved” (Proverbs 11:15 GNT).

Why are we not to give security or guarantee another person’s debt?

Read second and third paragraph:

Surety usually occurs when a person with poor credit seeks a loan from a lending institution and does not qualify for the loan. The loan officer will tell the unqualified person that if he or she will get a friend with good credit to cosign with him or her, then the bank will grant the loan and hold the cosigner responsible in the event of a default.

Sometimes a fellow church member will come to you and ask you to cosign. Your response should be: “The Bible says I should never do that.” Please understand that the Bible encourages us to be helpful to those in need, but we should not become responsible for their debts.

Could this be one reason?

“The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously” (Psalm 37:21 NIV84).



Could we be advised not to secure another person's loan to prevent them from defaulting, from defrauding even? And what happens to that other person if they do this?

If a person is a responsible person and wants to pay off their debt, but they have debt that they cannot pay off for reasons beyond their control, what happens within them? Do they have more peace, less worry, less anxiety, less guilt, or do responsible people who have such debt get injured by not being able to pay it back? The conscience of the honest responsible person is not seared by such circumstances, but their mental and emotional health might be undermined with worry, less sleep, overwork to try and pay the debt, feelings of fear and inadequacy, guilt, shame etc.

And what happens to irresponsible people who take on debt and don't pay it back? What happens to their characters, their consciences?

So what about giving money away—will giving money away to people who are capable, but not mature, or capable and not responsible, make the lives of the recipients better?

Is it a Biblical principle to give money away to people who are less well off financially, but who are capable and yet not actively working to improve their station?

What do you think of this Biblical counsel?

Our brothers and sisters, **we command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to keep away from all believers who are living a lazy life** and who do not follow the instructions that we gave them. You yourselves know very well that you should do just what we did. We were not lazy when we were with you. We did not accept anyone's support without paying for it. Instead, we worked and toiled; we kept working day and night so as not to be an expense to any of you. We did this, not because we have no right to demand our support; we did it to be an example for you to follow. While we were with you, we used to say to you, "**Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat.**"

We say this because we hear that there are some people among you who live lazy lives and who do nothing except meddle in other people's business. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command these people and warn them to lead orderly lives and **work to earn their own living.** (2 Thessalonians 3:6–12 GNT).

Why is this a godly thing to do and giving handouts to people who are capable is destructive—including government handouts?

What is happening in society today? Do we help people our communities by giving away resources to the capable? Or do we destroy?

If you are an employer, have you noticed in the last few years with the rich government aid programs that it is more difficult to find quality willing workers?



In my 2018 blog, [The Benefits of Work](#), I described how work benefits people in multiple ways.

In Eden, before sin — a perfect world — God gave Adam and Eve work to do. Human beings are created in God’s image, and God is a creator. In the likeness of God, we have a built-in desire to be industrious, to engage in meaningful activity, and to use our energy, creativity, and ingenuity to build, construct, devise, make, or otherwise produce something of value, consequence, or purpose.

Such creativity is built into our being, and when we do engage in meaningful activity, whether it be work for the sake of making money to provide for one’s family, or gardening, because one loves flower, or drawing, painting, writing, playing music, caring for animals, being a homemaker, or any of a myriad of other industrious activities, we experience growth and a greater sense of wellbeing, meaning, and purpose as human beings. Our sense of wellbeing, of usefulness, of confidence, and even joy all increase.

When we are active, industrious, and engaged in meaningful employment (not necessarily for pay), we are healthier, happier, and experience greater peace.

Conversely, idleness, a failure to engage one’s abilities in development or meaningful application, is damaging to one’s wellbeing. It undermines a person’s dignity, while increasing feelings of inadequacy, guilt, shame, and worthlessness, which leads to pleasure-seeking and other acting-out behaviors in an attempt to alleviate the sense of inadequacy. As the old saying goes, *idle hands are the devil’s workshop*.

Doing nothing, refusing to engage in constructive activity, and not investing one’s energies and abilities into meaningful employment (when one is capable), degrades the human being. Understanding this, what action could people take if they wanted to demoralize others — to destroy other people’s dignity and undermine their God-given individuality? They could take away their usefulness, take away their meaningful employment, and create programs or systems that free the capable from useful labor. They could promote public policies designed to give money, food, clothing, housing, cell phones, cars, and a variety of other resources to otherwise capable people who choose not to work.

I want to be clear: I am not concerned about politics; I am concerned about people — about their health, wellbeing, and integrity.

Throughout time, many others have recognized what I’m saying here:

- “If we take the route of the permanent handout, the American character will itself be impoverished.” — Richard Nixon, Republican, 37th President of the USA
- “Working moms, and increasingly working dads, don’t want a government handout, but they do need a hand up.” — Madeleine Kunin, Democrat, Governor of Vermont and U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland
- “The desperately poor may accept handouts, because they feel they have to. For those who consider themselves at least middle class, however, anything that smacks of a handout is not



desired. Instead, they want their economic power back.” — Robert Shiller, Nobel Laureate in Economics and Sterling Professor of Economics at Yale

- “At Year Up, our students — low income 18- to 24-year-olds — come to us having already faced substantial obstacles in life. They are not in search of a handout; what they want most of all is the ability to take ownership of their own futures.” Gerald Chertavian, founder and CEO of Year Up; has worked with urban youth for more than 25 years.

I have seen the destruction of wellbeing, the demoralization that occurs when people are given things that they could otherwise earn — whether it be from well-meaning parents, family, friends, church members, or society. When we receive handouts that we don’t believe we merit, we experience guilt, loss of esteem, a falling sense of worth, and often feel guilt and inadequacy. This leads to an unconscious need to alleviate the guilt with justification for the handout, contributing to either a sense of entitlement and identifying oneself as being downtrodden, mistreated, or wronged in the past and, thus, the handout is simply compensation and is deserved, or by experiencing physical or mental symptoms of illness that justifies the handout.

Let me be clear here as well: I am not saying that there are no people suffering from real physical and mental illness; there are, and they need our compassion and help. What I am saying is that when handouts are received by those who could otherwise provide for themselves, it causes in them a need to justify the handout, and this can take a variety of forms — either by seeing oneself as deserving, because of some perceived social injustice, or by experiencing some physical or mental problem.

THURSDAY

The lesson contrasts the Bible method of setting limits on debts, and every so often all debts were canceled and the debtor was set free of their debt, versus the practice today of essentially lifelong indebtedness.

Are there any types of debts that are reasonable to take in our society? And why?

- Debts for which you already have the funds to cover and the debts are taken for other financial purposes—perhaps as a tax deduction, because the debt will be forgiven as part of an incentive program etc.
- Using credit cards for convenience that is paid off every month with no interest.
- What about student loans?
- Mortgages versus renting?