

DEBTS

1. WHAT general rule is laid down in the Bible respecting the meeting of obligations?

“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom. . . . Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” **Romans 13:7, 8.**

2. In what condition is one who borrows?

“The borrower is *servant to the lender.*” **Proverbs 22:7.**

3. To what extent is one responsible for that borrowed?

“And if a man borrow ought of his neighbor, and it be hurt, or die. . . . *he shall surely make it good.*” **Exodus 22:14.**

4. Why did the young man in Elisha’s time feel so bad about the loss of an ax head?

“But as one was felling a beam, the ax head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for *it was borrowed.*” **2Kings 6:5.**

5. What miracle was wrought by Elisha for its restoration.’

“And be cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; *and the iron did swim.*” **Verse 6.**

NOTE — From this we may learn God’s willingness to help those who honestly seek to meet their obligations.

6. How does the good man guide his affairs?

“A good man showeth favor, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs *with discretion.*” **Psalms 112:5.**

7. To what should those listen who lack business discretion?

“Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth *instruction:* but he that regardeth *reproof* shall be honored.” **Proverbs 13:18.**

NOTE — It is wise for those who, from lack of natural business ability, find themselves constantly running into debt, to seek advice and counsel from those endowed with more wisdom in such matters.

8. Which of Christ’s parables teaches business discretion?

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and *counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?* Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” **Luke 14:28–30.**

9. How were means provided for building the tabernacle?

“And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you *an offering* unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass,” etc. **Exodus 35:4–9.**

10. What provision did David make for building the temple?

“I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God.” **1Chronicles 29:2.**

11. How did the people respond to his call for contributions?

“Then the chief of the fathers and princes . . . *offered willingly*. . . . Then the people rejoiced, for that *they offered willingly*, because with perfect heart *they offered willingly* to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.” **Verses 6–9.**

12. When King Jehoash wished to repair the temple, what provision did he make for raising the necessary means?

“And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the Lord, . . . and all the money that cometh into any man’s heart to bring into the house of the Lord, let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found.” **2Kings 12:4, 5.**

13. When, after sixteen years, it was found that these repairs had not yet been made, what was done?

“Jehoiada the priest *took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord:* and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord.” **Verse 9.**

14. What was done with the money thus raised?

“They gave the money . . . into the hands of them that did the work. . . . and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the Lord.” **Verse 11.**

NOTES — These examples furnish good lessons on financing gospel enterprises. In each instance, it will be noticed, the means were provided before the work of building was begun. No debt, therefore, was created. In all business transactions this plan is an excellent one to follow.

“Debt! There is no worse demoralizer of character. The sad records of defaulting, embezzling, and dishonest failure which we meet with so constantly in the daily press are often, indeed most frequently, the result of the demoralization of debt, and the consequent desperate efforts of extraction. The financial props have given way. . . . Debt ruins as many households and destroys as many fine characters as rum; it is the devil’s mortgage on the soul, and he is always ready to foreclose. Pay all your bills. Look every man in the face, conscious that you owe the world no more than it owes you. Be indebted for nothing but love, and even that be sure you pay in kind, and that payments are frequent.” *Talmage.*

“This running into debt is a great cause of dishonesty. . . . Young men are growing quite shameless about being in debt; and the immorality extends throughout society. Tastes are becoming more extravagant and luxurious, without the corresponding increase of means to enable them to be gratified. But they are gratified nevertheless; and debts are incurred, which afterwards weigh like a millstone round the neck. . . . The safest plan is to run up no bills, and never get into debt; and the next is if one does get into debt, to get out of it again as quickly as possible. A man in debt is not his own master: he is at the mercy of the tradesman he employs. . . . No man can be free who is in debt. The inevitable effect of debt is not only to injure personal independence, but, in the long run, to inflict moral degradation. The debtor is exposed to constant humiliations.” “*Thrift,*” by Samuel Smiles, pages 243–247.

The following testimony on this subject is borne by a Chicago lady, who had been happily wedded for fifty years. "I know why John and I have been happy during these fifty years. In the first place, we have made it a rule never to go in debt. I have lived in Chicago sixty-eight years, and never during that time have I owed a person a cent. . . .I believe a good deal of unhappiness is caused by spending more than you make. It has been our policy to buy what we could well afford to have, and then stop." *Chicago Tribune, Aug. 24, 1902.*