

THE BIBLE, CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, AND LENDING MONEY:

AN ARGUMENT FOR RENEWED CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES

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For Professor Ruth Okediji

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* I am grateful to Mary Noonan for generously giving permission to access and to scan the late Judge John T. Noonan Jr.'s *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*.

Christian perspectives on lending money have changed radically over the centuries. Early interpreters believed the Bible forbade making a profit on any loan. Yet financial innovation brought with it overt and covert manipulations of this doctrine. Most famously, the Medici family transformed Christian perspectives on lending and funded the Renaissance. Four Medici became Popes. Biblical prohibitions on usury were later redefined as prohibitions on lending at excessive interest rates. Today, charging interest on loans is an everyday part of life. Modern Christian leaders condemn excessive interest rates, but not the lending of money itself. This represents a massive shift in the Christian understanding of Biblical law on lending money.

There is no question that the modern financial system has an enormous effect on our lives. The resultant debt both destroys livelihoods and finances human achievement. Christians ought to dig deeper into this system that controls so much of our lives, rather than simply dismissing lending as a necessary evil or as an example of a Christian flip on moral doctrine. This paper will address how Christian understanding of Biblical law on lending has changed and what this means for Christians today. Part I of this paper identifies key biblical passages on lending from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Part II reviews the evolution of Christian interpretation of these Biblical provisions. Part III evaluates how Christians—particularly Catholics—can come to terms with shifts in Christian doctrine on lending. Part IV suggests a place for Christians in the modern lending arena, namely that they ought to renew calls against excessive interest rates and to lend more freely to the poor. Part V briefly concludes. An Appendix contains the Biblical passages cited.

I. The Bible on Lending

Analysis of the Old and New Testaments reveals that debt and the consequences of default are major themes in the Bible. More than proverbs and maxims against greed, Biblical teaching on lending is incredibly nuanced. While it is impossible to cram Biblical teaching into neat categories, and many larger biblical themes color our understanding of lending, I have identified five themes on lending in the Bible: (1) the obligation to pay debt; (2) Jubilee, stewardship, and the forgiveness of debts; (3) prohibitions on usury; (4) limitations on collateral; and (5) generosity and the right to glean vines and fields. Note that early Christian doctrine on lending and usury largely ignored the Bible itself.

(1) Obligation to pay debt

The Bible identifies a prima facie obligation to repay debt. Psalms asserts that the debtor who borrows but does not pay back is wicked.¹ Proverbs warns against taking debts that we cannot pay.² Not to repay debts can be understood as violating at least two of the ten Commandments: the prohibitions against stealing and against bearing false witness.³ Payment of debt can also be understood as part of the wider Biblical commands to make good on promises, eternal and earthly. God commanded that his people fulfill their vows to the Lord⁴ and that people restore to the debtor their pledges.⁵ Earthly payment is commanded in 2 Kings, when Elisha provided oil to an indebted widow and told her to sell the oil and use the proceeds to repay her debts, rather than calling for debt forgiveness.⁶

¹ Psalms 37:21.

² See Proverbs 22:7.

³ See Exodus 20:1-17. See also David Skeel, *Christianity and Bankruptcy* 7–8, Faculty Scholarship at Penn Law (2019) ([link](#)) [Hereinafter Skeel].

⁴ See Deuteronomy 23:21-23.

⁵ See Ezekiel 18:7-8.

⁶ See 2 Kings 4:1-7.

The most famous Biblical instance of an obligation to pay debts comes from the New Testament, when Jesus was asked whether Jews should pay taxes to Roman authorities. Jesus said to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's.⁷ Jesus thus affirmed an obligation to pay earthly debt. The Gospel of Luke contains further instruction on earthly debt payment: Jesus commanded a crowd not to leave until paying "the very last mite"⁸ and stressed the importance of planning and calculating the cost of building before beginning a project.⁹ Jesus even seemed to imply that paying debts and fulfilling obligations is a kind of pre-requisite for trustworthiness from God: "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"¹⁰

(2) Jubilee, stewardship, and the forgiveness of debts

Just as the Bible commands payment of debts, there are also many commands to forgive debts. This is part of larger Biblical teaching about forgiveness.¹¹ Scripture asks Christians to forgive each other as Christ forgave us.¹² As historical background, in Israel a debtor who was unable to repay what he owed might have been forced into some form of slavery.¹³ Biblical law anticipated and responded to the consequences of default on debt with two forms of Jubilee. While scholarship does not seem to have official terms for the different kinds of Jubilee, I have called them (1) "demi Jubilee" and (2) "Jubilee." These Jubilees involved the unconditional forgiveness

⁷ Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26.

⁸ Luke 12:59.

⁹ Luke 14:28.

¹⁰ Luke 16:11.

¹¹ See, e.g., Matthew 18:21-35.

¹² See, e.g., Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 6:12-14; Colossians 3:13.

¹³ See Skeel at 4.

of debt. The Biblical law does not distinguish between worthy and unworthy debtors.¹⁴ All are forgiven. Jubilation returns to God that which always belonged to him as Creator.¹⁵

Demi Jubilee relates to the cancellation of all debts between Hebrews after seven years.¹⁶ If anyone knew that the seventh year was nearing, and suddenly became possessed with the spirit of stinginess, that wickedness was a sin.¹⁷ In this seventh year, all Hebrew slaves were to go free.¹⁸ Not only were slaves to be released, but also they were to be released with supplies and given charity as God had blessed the owner.¹⁹ Land transactions, however, were allowed to take the number of years until Jubilee into account.²⁰ Full Jubilee involved wider cancellation of debts. After fifty years, Hebrews were instructed to go home to family property, release all slaves, and forgive all debt.²¹ Full Jubilee was meant to encourage fear of God and to remind the prosperous not to take advantage of the poor.²²

(3) Prohibitions on usury

While the existence of debt is acknowledged in the Bible, such debt is almost always qualified. As Professor David Skeel has commented, “Nearly all of the Old Testament’s debt passages either impose restrictions on its scope or call for adherence to those restrictions.”²³ Professor Skeel further notes, however that frequent references to debt imply that debt must be

¹⁴ See Skeel at 8.

¹⁵ See Genesis 1:1; Haggai 2:8; Job 41:11; Psalms 24:1; I Corinthians 10:26. See also PAUL PETER JESEP, CREDIT CARD USURY AND THE CHRISTIAN FAILURE TO STOP IT 69 (2d ed. 2010); William Stuntz, *When Rights Are Wrong*, FIRSTTHINGS (Apr. 1996) ([link](#)).

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 15:1.

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 15:9.

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 15:12.

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 15:13-15.

²⁰ Leviticus 25: 15-16.

²¹ Leviticus 25:8-16.

²² See Leviticus 25:17.

²³ Skeel at 3.

good (or at least tolerable); otherwise, Mosaic law would simply have banished it.²⁴ The Old Testament—particularly Exodus,²⁵ Leviticus,²⁶ and Deuteronomy²⁷—repeatedly forbids “usury.” What usury means and the extent of that ban on usury have been subject to widely different interpretations by Christians over the centuries. Even the Biblical prohibitions do not perfectly align with each other. Exodus forbids Jews from exacting usury from poor Jews,²⁸ while Deuteronomy forbids taking interest from “your brother” and makes allowances for usury from “a foreigner.”²⁹ Thus there seem to be qualifications that usury be limited among Jews and not used against the poor. Ezekiel, however, seems to forbid all usury in all contexts while simultaneously commanding an obligation to pay debts.³⁰ In Nehemiah, nobles who charged interest on their own people were condemned.³¹ Not lending money at interest, however, did not immediately save Jeremiah, who lamented that he never lent or borrowed, and yet was still cursed.³²

One passage of Deuteronomy actually indicates that Israelites *should* be lenders. After descriptions of blessings on obedience, Deuteronomy notes “You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.”³³ Some scholars think this passage envisions an Israel as an exporter and creditor to nations, but never as dependent on others for basic imports.³⁴ This is an interesting twist on the idea of Biblical law limiting borrowing and lending.³⁵

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Exodus 22:25.

²⁶ Leviticus 25:35-37.

²⁷ Deuteronomy 23:19-20.

²⁸ See Exodus 22:25, *supra* note 25. (“If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest.”).

²⁹ See Deuteronomy 23:20, *supra* note 27 (“To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest.”).

³⁰ Ezekiel 18:7-8 (“If he has not oppressed anyone, But has restored to the debtor his pledge . . . If he has not exacted usury, Nor taken any increase.”).

³¹ Nehemiah 5:3-13.

³² Jeremiah 15:10.

³³ Deuteronomy 28:12.

³⁴ See Carl E. Armerding, *Borrowing and Lending: Is there anything Christian about either?*, 18 TRANSFORMATION 146, 150 (July 2001).

³⁵ *Id.*

The New Testament contains passages that seem to support lending money at interest. Some scholars believe that the Parable of the Ten Minas, also known as the Parable of the Talents, indicates Jesus found charging interest for a loan as legitimate.³⁶ In this parable, a nobleman gave his servants each ten talents and instructed them to put the money to work.³⁷ The two who used the money and made a profit were rewarded, and the one who hid the money was punished.³⁸ The nobleman chastised the servant who hid the money for not putting the money in the bank so that it might gain interest.³⁹ The parable is meant to demonstrate that, like the nobleman, Jesus will one day leave and his followers will be expected to serve Him until He returns. Given that Jesus suggested that gaining interest on the deposit was more useful than letting the money go to waste, this passage might indicate the sanctioning of interest. Interestingly, this passage was largely ignored by early Christian scholars who prohibited gaining profit on loans.

(4) Limitations on collateral

The Bible implicitly approves of collateral but disproves of burdensome collateral. Deuteronomy instructs not to take as collateral a grinding stone, as that is taking a person's livelihood.⁴⁰ Similarly Exodus commands that if you take a neighbor's cloak as pledge you must return it by sunset, because that cloak is the only covering a neighbor has.⁴¹ Deuteronomy offers more color to the question of what to do if someone has two cloaks. A cloak must be returned at sunset if a neighbor is poor so that the neighbor may sleep with it.⁴² This may imply that sometimes collateral might be kept when the debtor is wealthy.

³⁶ See Skeel at 8–9.

³⁷ See Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 25:13-30.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ Luke 19:22.

⁴⁰ Deuteronomy 24:6, 19.

⁴¹ Exodus 22:26-27.

⁴² Deuteronomy 24:12-13.

The command for reasonable collateral is paired with a command to respect the dignity of another person when lending. Deuteronomy instructs that, when you make a loan to your neighbor, you should not go into their house to get the collateral, but rather let the neighbor bring the pledge out to you.⁴³ There are also commands not to take collateral in any form from widowers and a warning not to deprive the foreigner of justice.⁴⁴ These rules are said to come from the principle that God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt,⁴⁵ and that lenders should remember that they are mere stewards.

(5) Generosity and the right to glean vines and fields

The Bible commands generosity and condemns greed. The most famous Biblical prohibition on greed is: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”⁴⁶ The perils of greed are further summarized by 1 Timothy: “For the love of money is the root of all evil.”⁴⁷ The prophet Amos warned that greedy persons “sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes.”⁴⁸ Amos was likely referring to children who were sold into slavery to pay debts⁴⁹ and forms of excessive collateral.⁵⁰ Proverbs further advised Christians not to labor to be rich, but rather to labor for their own wisdom.⁵¹ Those who seek wealth are considered not innocent.⁵² In the New Testament, Jesus chased the money-changers out of the

⁴³ Deuteronomy 24:10-11.

⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 24:17.

⁴⁵ See Deuteronomy 24:18.

⁴⁶ Matthew 6:24; see also Luke 16:13.

⁴⁷ 1 Timothy 6:10.

⁴⁸ Amos 2:6.

⁴⁹ II Kings 4:1-7.

⁵⁰ Exodus 22:25; Deuteronomy 24:12-13; see also PAUL PETER JESEP, CREDIT CARD USURY, at 70.

⁵¹ Proverbs 23:4.

⁵² See Proverbs 28:20.

temple for being greedy.⁵³ Jesus also instructed that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.⁵⁴ Perhaps the most infamous example of greed in the Bible is Judas's betraying Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.⁵⁵

Biblical teaching on generosity is also revealed in passages about gleaning. Deuteronomy instructs those who harvest fields to leave behind substance for the foreigner, fatherless and widow.⁵⁶ Similarly in Leviticus, farmers are instructed not to reap the edges of fields, leaving sustenance for those who need it.⁵⁷ This gleaning doctrine was essential for the survival of Ruth, who was a widow and dependent on gleaning the fields to keep from starving.⁵⁸ Boaz, the owner of the fields, instructed his workers not just to allow her to glean, but also for the workers to leave stalks for her.⁵⁹ Biblical law thus stakes out a complex stance on lending.

II. Evolution of Christian Perspectives on Lending

There is surprisingly little scholarship on the history of Christian attitudes towards lending. Then-professor John T. Noonan, Jr.'s doctoral dissertation is regarded as the most comprehensive overview of the early Catholic and Christian position on usury.⁶⁰ There are few other substantial sources concerning the history of Biblical law on lending.⁶¹

⁵³ See Mark 11:15-19, 27-33; Matthew 21:12-17, 23-27; Luke 19:45-48, 20:1-8; John 2:13-16.

⁵⁴ Luke 18:25; see also Mark 10:25.

⁵⁵ See Matthew 26:15.

⁵⁶ Deuteronomy 24:19.

⁵⁷ Leviticus 19:9.

⁵⁸ Ruth 2:2-23.

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ See generally John T. Noonan, Jr., *Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, Mass. 1957) [hereinafter Noonan, *Usury*].

⁶¹ See, e.g., Joseph Burke, *Usury Redux: Notes on The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, Working Paper at Ave Maria Law (July 2009) ([link](#)).

In sum, early Christian doctrine prohibited usury, which was originally understood as a ban on charging any interest on any kind of loan.⁶² Charging interest was understood as a violation of commutative justice because it robbed the borrower of the fruits of his own capital.⁶³ Any profit on a loan was forbidden as contrary to the natural law, contrary to the law of the Church, and contrary to the law of the gospel.⁶⁴ As the below research shows, Christian doctrine changed dramatically over the centuries, with effective change occurring in the 16th century. “Usury bans” today are defined as charging excessive interest rates, rather than a prohibition on lending money with any interest rate.

Ancient and Early Medieval Attitudes Towards Lending

The influence of Greco-Roman thought on Christian perspectives on lending is mixed. Some scholars speculate that antipathy toward lending predates the Bible and is Aristotelean.⁶⁵ Aristotle, in *Ethics* V:5, defined money as a measure of other things, meaning that money has no inherent utility.⁶⁶ John Noonan argued, however, that the Aristotelean influence on Christian perspectives on money is largely inflated, as the medieval position against lending was established before Aristotle was known to Western Europe.⁶⁷ In the Roman Empire, insolvent debtors were harshly punished. The Law of the Twelve Tables commanded that insolvent debtors be put to death by dismemberment or sold into foreign slavery.⁶⁸ Scholars are, however, skeptical whether this

⁶² See John H. Munro, *The Origins of the Modern Financial Revolution: Responses to Impediments from Church and State in Western Europe, 1200–1600*, University of Toronto Working Paper (2001) ([link](#)) [hereinafter Munro]

⁶³ See Munro at 4; see also Noonan, *Usury*, at 39.

⁶⁴ John T. Noonan, Jr., *Development in Moral Doctrine*, 54 *Theological Studies* 662 (1993) [hereinafter Noonan, *Development*] ([link](#)).

⁶⁵ See Noonan, *Usury*, at 394–96.

⁶⁶ ARISTOTLE, *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*, Book V:5 (W.D. Ross trans., Batoche Books 1999) ([link](#)).

⁶⁷ Noonan, *Usury*, at 12.

⁶⁸ See EDWARD GIBBON, *THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE*, Chapter 44, 4 of Crimes and Punishments ([link](#)).

punishment was ever seriously enforced.⁶⁹ The Twelve Tables did allow for some interest to be added to compensate for the risk of lending, approximately one-twelfth of capital (8.33%).⁷⁰

Early patristic sources found it contrary to mercy and humanity to demand interest from a poor and needy man.⁷¹ A number of later religious authorities interpreted the patristic tradition as universal application of a prohibition on usury.⁷² Catholic doctrine thus evolved to forbid usury, which was conceived to mean charging any interest on a loan. John Noonan found that early teaching on usury did not often quote the Bible and that it was a combination of the Bible, patristic writings, and Councils that led to the Christian condemnation of usury.⁷³

The First Council of Nicaea (325) forbade clergy from engaging in usury.⁷⁴ This is the earliest official Christian position on usury, and the ban applied only to the clergy. The Second Lateran Council (1139) condemned all usurers.⁷⁵ This Council referenced the ferocious greed of usurers as justification for the condemnation. The Third Lateran Council (1179) excommunicated those who engaged in usury.⁷⁶ This Council interpreted the Old and New Testaments as condemning all usurers. Pope Urban III was the first Pope to invoke the New Testament in a usury ban, citing Luke 6:35: “Lend freely, hoping nothing thereby.”⁷⁷ Arguing that usury was not a sin was practically condemned as heresy by the Council of Vienna (1311-1312).⁷⁸ Even those who gave a Christian burial to usurers were called to be excommunicated.⁷⁹ Medieval doctrine on usury can be summarized in the following theses: (1) usury is whatever is demanded in return in a loan

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Alan N. Resnick and Henry J. Sommer, eds., *Collier on Bankruptcy* (2009), quoted in Skeel at 2 n.6.

⁷⁰ DUODECIM TABULARUM (Law of the Twelve Tables), 18a (449 B.C.) ([link](#)).

⁷¹ Arthur Vermeersch, *Catholic Encyclopedia on Usury*, NEW ADVENT (1912) ([link](#)).

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ Noonan, *Usury*, at 11.

⁷⁴ First Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.), Canon 17 ([link](#)).

⁷⁵ Second Lateran Council (1139), Canon 13 ([link](#)).

⁷⁶ Third Lateran Council (1179), Canon 25 ([link](#)).

⁷⁷ Decretales, V:19:10, Consuluit.

⁷⁸ Council of Vienna (1311-1312), Canon 29 ([link](#)).

⁷⁹ Council of Vienna (1311-1312), Canon 7.

beyond the loaned good itself; (2) the taking of usury is a sin prohibited by the Old and New Testaments; (3) the very hope of a return beyond the good itself is sinful; (4) usuries must be restored in full to their true owner; and (5) higher prices for credit sales are implicit usury.⁸⁰

Commentary on usury during the medieval period reflected the idea that a profit motive is evil. In Dante's *Divine Comedy* (completed in 1320), the seventh circle of hell was reserved for usurers, below even murders.⁸¹ Similarly St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* (1265–1274) found that to take usury for money lent is unjust in itself, because it is to sell what does not exist, and inevitably leads to inequality which is contrary to justice.⁸² In a detailed set of premises and replies to objections, St. Thomas Aquinas forbade taking money in return for lending and receiving any profit other than a feeling of benevolence. Aquinas, commenting on Aristotle, felt that to make money by usury was unnatural.

Jewish Shift Towards Lending

Lending was at first possible because of Jewish lenders. After being expelled from Spain in 1492,⁸³ many Jews settled in Italy, particularly Venice. Venetian authorities realized that they could both tax and borrow from the Jews.⁸⁴ There were few other career opportunities available to Jews beyond banking. Most Jews interpreted Deuteronomy 15:3 such that a Jew might legitimately lend to a Christian (as a foreigner) but not to other Jews.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Noonan, *Usury*, at 20.

⁸¹ DANTE ALIGHIERI, *DIVINE COMEDY*, Canto XVIII.

⁸² ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *SUMMA THEOLOGICA*, By Sins Committed in Loans (Q[78]) ([link](#)).

⁸³ SEE ISABELLA I OF CASTILE AND FERDINAND II OF ARAGON, ALHAMBRA DECREE (1492) ([link](#)).

⁸⁴ See Maristella Botticini, *A Tale of "Benevolent" Governments: Private Credit Markets, Public Finance, and the Role of Jewish Lenders in Renaissance Italy*, *JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC HISTORY*, 60 (Mar. 2000), pp. 164–89 *quoted in* NIALL FERGUSON, *THE ASCENT OF MONEY* 34 n.24 (Penguin Books, 2018) [Hereinafter Ferguson].

⁸⁵ "You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you." While earlier Jewish traditions understood charity to neighbors as being limited to fellow citizens of Israel, this conception later changed and was consistent with the oldest texts of the Torah. See FRATELLI TUTTI, *ENCYCLICAL OF POPE FRANCIS ON FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP* ¶ 59–61 ([link](#)).

Literature best colors the role of Jews in early Venice as official lenders of money. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*,⁸⁶ the Jewish moneylender Shylock asked for a pound of flesh as security for financing a merchant. In the play, the Italian court found that, while Shylock had a claim to flesh, because he was an alien the law required Shylock lose his estate for plotting the death of a Christian. Shylock escaped by submitting to baptism. Everyone in the play then lived happily ever after (everyone except, of course, Shylock).⁸⁷ Author Niall Ferguson describes three lessons on early modern lending at interest that can be gleaned from *The Merchant of Venice*: (1) the power of lenders to charge extortionate interest rates in early credit markets; (2) the importance of law courts in resolving financial disputes without recourse to violence; and (3) the vulnerability of minority creditors to a backlash of hostile debtors who belong to an ethnic majority.⁸⁸

Christian Shift Towards Lending

Christians, in addition to gaining financing from Jews, developed two kinds of financing to get around medieval anti-usury doctrines: government finance (borrowing) and international finance (bills of exchange).⁸⁹ Government financing originated in the Netherlands and international finance originated in Italy.

In the Netherlands and across other Nordic countries, urban governments obtained financing through the sale of rentes.⁹⁰ Essentially, one party bought a stream of annual payments from another. The buyer of the rentes had no expectation of repayment and so the transaction was

⁸⁶ WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* ([link](#)).

⁸⁷ See Ferguson at 36.

⁸⁸ Ferguson at 34.

⁸⁹ Munro at 9.

⁹⁰ Munro at 15.

determined not to be usurious. Those renters who wanted to regain part of their invested capital had to seek out buyers, thus creating a secondary market.

In Italy, the Medici family transformed money lending and largely started the Renaissance. The power of the Medici family cannot be overstated. Four Medici became popes (Leo X, Clement VII, Pius IV and Leo XI); two became queens of France (Catherine and Marie); and three became dukes (of Florence, Nemours and Tuscany).⁹¹ The Medici were foreign exchange dealers also known as bankers (*banchieri*) because, like the Jews, they did business seated at benches behind tables in the street.⁹² The Medici got around Christian usury laws by using bills of exchange. Merchants who owed money, but had none because of outstanding merchant vessels or payments, could have creditors draw bills of exchange on the debtor and use the bill itself as payment or obtain cash for it at a discount from a banker willing to act as a broker.⁹³ There were no checks or interest; instead, depositors were given a portion of annual profits of the Medici firm in exchange for risking money.⁹⁴ Using this method, the Medici created modern Western finance. They also, it is widely believed, were earning interest on loans.⁹⁵ There was thus a sharp divergence between theologian's understanding of the usury rule as banning any profit and what practicing Christians found acceptable.⁹⁶

Government financing of debt was also common in medieval Italy. When the city states went to war with each other, authorities got around usury bans. Wealthy citizens were forced to give loans to the city government. This was decided not to be usury because the loans were forced,

⁹¹ Ferguson at 39.

⁹² Ferguson at 39.

⁹³ Ferguson at 40.

⁹⁴ *Id.*

⁹⁵ See Richard Goldthwaite, *Local Banking in Renaissance Florence*, JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN ECONOMIC HISTORY 5-55 (Spring 1985), *quoted in* Munro at 6.

⁹⁶ John T. Noonan, Jr., *Authority, Usury and Contraception*, 16 CROSS CURRENTS 55, 68-69 at n.73 (1966).

and subsequent interest payments were compensation for the mandatory investment.⁹⁷ What happened to the governmental authorities who set these usurious laws? St. Antoninus, the Archbishop of Florence, decided it was best to avoid discussion altogether.⁹⁸

Catholic (and other) Doctrinal Changes on Usury

Christian doctrine continually evolved to accommodate lending at interest. The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) gave explicit permission for interest-taking in some situations.⁹⁹ This Council noted that the real meaning of usury was “when, from its use, a thing which produces nothing is applied to the acquiring of gain and profit without any work, any expense or any risk.”¹⁰⁰ The Council acknowledged there is some grey area with usury and that the church can receive a modest sum for expenses provided it is to defray the expenses of those employed and for those things pertaining to the upkeep of organizations, provided no profit is made.¹⁰¹

This pronouncement did not go unnoticed. Martin Luther criticized clerics of the Catholic Church for violating the spirit if not the letter of usury laws. Luther wrote a treatise on usury¹⁰² as well as a sermon, *Trade and Usury*.¹⁰³ Luther called on Christians not to “become rich through his neighbor’s loss.”¹⁰⁴ Luther himself also criticized the Catholic Church for its wealth in the face of global poverty. Note, however, that Luther himself did not bar all lending at interest. Luther rather condemned the excessive charging of interest on the poor. Luther wrote that wealthy families were allowed to charge each other interest. Separately, John Calvin, liberated by canon law, abandoned

⁹⁷ Munro at 9.

⁹⁸ St. Antoninus, Summa 2.1.6, 2.1.7, *quoted in* John T. Noonan, Jr., *Authority, Usury and Contraception*, 16 CROSS CURRENTS 55, 68 at n.73 (1966).

⁹⁹ Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) ([link](#)).

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* at Session 10.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² MARTIN LUTHER, TREATISE ON USURY (1520) ([link](#)).

¹⁰³ MARTIN LUTHER, ON TRADE AND USURY (1524) ([link](#)).

¹⁰⁴ *Id.* at 27.

scholastic interpretations of usury and urged one general principle: Follow the Golden Rule.¹⁰⁵ Calvin maintained, however, that it would be better if usury was abolished.¹⁰⁶

In a similar pattern of non-Catholic liberalization of usury laws, some European churches supported themselves entirely from profit made from lending. The principal source of revenue for the Anglican church was income from land holdings.¹⁰⁷ Edmund Burke went so far as to argue that freedom from government funding and voluntary contributions leads to a more independent church.¹⁰⁸ Lending money for profit, at least in the United Kingdom, was religiously sanctioned and even considered beneficial for religious health.

In the 19th century, the Catholic Church began to change its universal ban on gaining profit from lending money at interest. After the Napoleonic code allowed interest throughout Europe, Pope Pius VIII quietly allowed for some interest in a letter to a bishop.¹⁰⁹ While there remains no doctrinal decree on the modern lawfulness of interest on loans,¹¹⁰ the Canon Law actually commands the Church to invest.¹¹¹ The modern Catechism of the Catholic Church does not, however, discuss usury. Nor is lending addressed directly as a topic. Instead, the Catechism mentions the historical fact that the Old Testament juridical measures show concern for the poor.¹¹² The Catechism also notes that those whose usurious and avaricious dealings lead to hunger and death indirectly commit homicide.¹¹³ Further encyclicals have lamented those who take modern lending to excessive ends. Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* (1891), for example, lamented that

¹⁰⁵ See John Calvin, *In librum Psalmorum commentarius*, Psalm 15:5, col. 148, in *Opera quae supersunt omnia* (ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss) (Brunswick, 1863-1906), Vol. XXXI., quoted in Noonan, *Usury* at 364.

¹⁰⁶ See Noonan, *Usury*, at 366.

¹⁰⁷ Michael W. McConnell, *Establishment at the Founding*, publication forthcoming.

¹⁰⁸ Michael W. McConnell, *Establishment and Toleration in Edmund Burke's 'Constitution of Freedom,'* SUPREME COURT REVIEW 1005: 393, 432 (1996) ([link](#)).

¹⁰⁹ Noonan, *Usury*, at 379.

¹¹⁰ ARTHUR VERMEERSCH, USURY, CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA (1912) ([link](#)).

¹¹¹ See Canon Law, Can. 1294 § 2 ([link](#)).

¹¹² See CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH at ¶ 2449 ([link](#)).

¹¹³ See CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH at ¶ 2269 ([link](#)).

rapacious usury—lending at excessive interest rates—is “still practiced by covetous and grasping men.”¹¹⁴ Modern Catholic doctrine thus allows for lending at interest but condemns exploitation of the poor.

There is no question that the Catholic Church changed its attitude on lending money at interest. Does this represent error, a change, or a development?¹¹⁵ John Noonan rejected the idea that the change of Church doctrine was likely influenced by the fact that the whole evolution of European civilization hinged on the extension of credit. Rather, he noted that the Judaic economy in which Mosaic law on usury was first applied was almost completely agrarian, meaning that borrowing was nearly always for consumption, and that early doctrine reflected medieval farmers struggling to resist absorption by landholders.¹¹⁶ Noonan does admit, however, that usury limits helped the papacy keep costs low to fund the Crusades.¹¹⁷ However, that the papacy had large idle sums of money for hundreds of years throughout the Middle Ages, and resisted the temptation to change the usury prohibition for a rule more favorable to investors, bankers and creditors, gives credence to the moral legitimacy of the early church.¹¹⁸ Church restraint is further evidenced by the fact that the first usury laws were applied most heavily toward the clergy itself.¹¹⁹ Noonan suggests that modifications of medieval usury theory were a result of changed economic circumstances, different analyses of the facts, and a different attitude towards finance.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ RERUM NOVARUM, ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON CAPITAL AND LABOR (1891) ([link](#)).

¹¹⁵ See generally Father Gary Coulter, *The Church and Usury: Error, Change or Development?* (1999) ([link](#)) (note that a large portion of the research in this paper is not accurate and thus not used in this paper).

¹¹⁶ Noonan, *Usury*, at 13.

¹¹⁷ Noonan, *Usury*, at 13–14.

¹¹⁸ Noonan, *Usury*, at 14.

¹¹⁹ See First Council of Nicaea, *supra* note 74.

¹²⁰ Noonan, *Usury*, at 200.

Modern Christian Lending Doctrine

Formally a narrow construction of the original usury rule—that no profit on a loan can be taken without just title to the profit—still stands.¹²¹ However, in terms of emphasis, of perspective and of practice, the original doctrinal understanding of usury has changed because just title to profit is assumed to exist.¹²² Few today would consider it against the law of nature for money to beget money or that we should not put our money in banks that give us interest back.

In the modern world, without a loan from a bank or credit union, the only way to start a company would be to come from a rich family or to save for a very long time. The invention of reserve banking—also known as maturity transformation—revolutionized modern life. This process is summarized by the phrase “borrow short, lend long.” Maturity transformation happens when people deposit money in banks. The banks do not bury the money underground, like the Parable of the Talents warned against.¹²³ Rather, the bank lends that money out to those who need money in the form of loans. Depositors are assured that their money is safe (thanks also to federal deposit insurance) and earn interest on their money. That interest comes from the profit banks make from lending out the money of depositors—with interest—in the form of loans. Depositors thus get more money, loan recipients get money, and, of course, the banks profit too.

The modern financial system, however, is not so simple as to consist of just borrowers and lenders. The complexity of the modern financial system can be summarized by the parable of the ox:¹²⁴ Every year, there was a competition to guess the weight of an ox at a county fair. Statistician Francis Galton observed that the average guess of the weight of an ox was extremely close to the

¹²¹ Noonan, *Development in Moral Doctrine*, at 669.

¹²² *Id.*

¹²³ See Luke 19:11-27, *supra* note 37.

¹²⁴ See generally John Kay, *The Parable of the Ox*, FIN. TIMES (July 24, 2012) ([link](#)).

actual weight.¹²⁵ Because maintaining scales that can hold an ox is expensive, Galton decided that it made more sense to use the wisdom of crowds to know the weight of the ox. Strict regulatory rules were introduced to prevent cheating in the competition. Farmers could not share information about the food the ox ate. Analysts scrutinized the regulatory announcements and advised their clients on the implications. Smart analysts realized that there was money to be made about not only the weight of the ox, but also in predicting the differentials between crowd predictions. Some people argued for going back to the scales, but they were ridiculed: Why use scales when we can use the aggregated wisdom of so many people? And then the ox died. Amidst all of this activity, no one had remembered to feed it.

This parable serves as a warning about the modern financial system. The more complex a system gets, the greater importance there is for checks on that system. These checks should come in the form not only of financial regulation, but also calls from citizens to ask what the system is all about. Christians should speak up and engage with this system. This requires a renewed study of Biblical law. There is no need to kill all the oxen. There is no need to get rid of banks or to stop lending at interest, or even some instances of high interest rates. Nor is there a need to criticize innovation. There is a need, however, for principled discussion about our financial system.

Some might argue that the Bible has been replaced with a modern capitalistic prosperity gospel.¹²⁶ Success in a Judeo-Christian country is often measured by material and professional gain instead of efforts to live a Christian life.¹²⁷ In the modern world, there perhaps is too much emphasis on the goal of excessive profits. There is not enough focus on the idea that persons and financial institutions have an obligation not to exploit the working poor and middle class with fees

¹²⁵ *Id.*

¹²⁶ PAUL PETER JESEP, CREDIT CARD USURY, at 24.

¹²⁷ *Id.* at 45.

and interest rates that will make the vulnerable a permanent revenue source.¹²⁸ The last encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, for example, warned against focusing exclusively on profit: “Once profit becomes the exclusive goal, if it is produced by improper means and without the common good as its ultimate end, it risks destroying wealth and creating poverty.”¹²⁹ Most recently, in the 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis lamented that “our worst response [to the COVID pandemic] would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation.”¹³⁰

While beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that extremists might interpret Biblical law on lending as an attack on capitalism. Works such as Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*¹³¹ and the Catholic equivalent¹³² more fulsomely addresses these issues. Christians have staked out a complex stance on capitalistic tendencies. Pope Pius XI, for example, published an encyclical condemning atheistic communism.¹³³ Communism failed to inspire love or creativity, as a philosophy of basic needs is not enough.¹³⁴ However, only a capitalistic society that is moral, spiritual, and religious, can hope to achieve the height of human development.¹³⁵ John Noonan explained that a strict opposition to any usury—particularly that adopted by the Viennese school—takes the old medieval theory of usury, strips it of its later

¹²⁸ *Id.* at 56.

¹²⁹ CARITAS IN VERITATE, ENCYCLICAL OF POPE BENEDICT XVI ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN CHARITY AND TRUTH (June 2009) ([link](#)).

¹³⁰ FRATELLI TUTTI, ENCYCLICAL OF POPE FRANCIS ON FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP ([link](#)); *see also* Pope Francis, *A Crisis Reveals What Is In Our Hearts*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 26, 2020) ([link](#)).

¹³¹ *See* MAX WEBER, *THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM* (Peter Baehr & Gordon C. Wells, trans. Penguin Books 2002).

¹³² *See* MICHAEL NOVAK, *THE CATHOLIC ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM* (1993).

¹³³ DIVINI REDEMPTORIS, ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PIUS XI ON ATHEISTIC COMMUNISM ([link](#)).

¹³⁴ NOVAK, *CATHOLIC ETHIC*, at xiv.

¹³⁵ *Id.*

modifications and allowances for some forms of credit, and applies the denuded theory to a vastly changed economy.¹³⁶ This ignores the history of the past. It is also unwise.

While there is little published material on specific modern Christian lending guidelines, one possible avenue for increased engagement is offered in a recent document from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. This document clarifies that Calvin and Luther established two core Christian tenants on lending: (1) appropriate upper limits on the amount of interest charged and (2) the continuation of the prohibition of charging interest to the poor.¹³⁷ The Presbyterian Church also calls for increased education in financial literacy,¹³⁸ although it does not explicitly reference Biblical obligations to pay debts.

Biblical text on lending, as well as shifts in Christian doctrine, lead to two natural questions. First, how should we deal with the reality that Christian doctrine changes (Part III)? Second, how should Christians engage with the issue of lending today (Part IV)?

III. Modern Christians and Doctrinal Change on Lending

Many Christian doctrines have changed over time. John Noonan best summarized doctrinal shifts across subjects: “What was forbidden became lawful (the cases of usury and divorce); what was permissible became unlawful (the case of slavery); and what was required became forbidden (the persecution of heretics).”¹³⁹ There is surprisingly little scholarship on the political implications of Christian doctrinal shifts. This is a particularly Catholic epistemological problem.

¹³⁶ See Noonan, *Usury*, at 402.

¹³⁷ 217TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, A REFORMED UNDERSTANDING OF USURY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 7 (2006) ([link](#)).

¹³⁸ *Id.* at 2–3.

¹³⁹ Noonan, *Development in Moral Doctrine*, at 669.

Some Christians deny the existence of doctrinal change. Others, such as John Henry Newman, acknowledge change but find it rooted in original revelation, much like how childish beliefs mature as children grow into adults or poetry verses contain more than was explicit in the mind of the original poet.¹⁴⁰ There thus is and should be genuine growth from unchanged foundations. This is exemplified by the very existence of Vatican II. At Vatican I, Pope Pius IX declared the papacy infallible.¹⁴¹ Many believed this meant that councils were no longer needed.¹⁴² The pronouncement certainly had a chilling effect on pronouncements *ex cathedra*; only one has been made since that declaration (on Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven).¹⁴³ Despite the declaration of papal infallibility, Pope John XXIII announced the creation of Vatican II in 1959, including thousands of people in considerations on how to modernize church practices after World War II.¹⁴⁴ The Vatican II approach to reconciliation, including communal reflection on Church doctrine and a continuous and humble search for Biblical truth, frees Catholics to engage in the public square.

There is, however, one danger to the proposition that Christian doctrine can and should change. How can we know whether we are turning to our own subjective beliefs instead of the will of God?¹⁴⁵ Christians should ask what fundamental questions drove original doctrine and face the reality that modern Christianity does not occur in a vacuum. Early Christian teachings did not contemplate a society of entirely free human beings or a society without religion.¹⁴⁶ Further, there are concrete examples of doctrinal changes to bring Christian life closer to God's intent. The lived

¹⁴⁰ *See id.* at 669–70.

¹⁴¹ PASTOR AETERNUS, DECREE OF THE FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL CHAPTER 4 (July 18, 1870) ([link](#)).

¹⁴² *See* Jordan G. Teicher, *Why Is Vatican II So Important?*, NPR (Oct. 10, 2012) ([link](#)).

¹⁴³ MUNIFICENTISSIMUS DEUS, APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION OF POPE PIUS XII DEFINING THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY (Nov. 1, 1950) ([link](#)).

¹⁴⁴ *See generally* documents of the Second Vatican Council ([link](#)).

¹⁴⁵ There are critics of the accommodating Noonan approach to doctrinal changes. *See, e.g.*, Richard S. Myers, *A Critique of John Noonan's Approach to Development of Doctrine*, 1 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 285 (2003) ([link](#)).

¹⁴⁶ Noonan, *Development*, at 673.

experiences of the horrors of slavery, for example, changed Christian understandings of bondage. That change came about in part from Christians who took an active role in Biblical reading and contemplation. Careful and ongoing evaluation of Christian doctrine is therefore necessary to ensure justice and fidelity to Biblical commands.

Regarding usury, shifts from agrarian to commercial economics and a changed understanding of the investment opportunity lenders lose when giving away money all changed doctrine. Consideration of the Biblical teachings on money as parables and not strict rules also changed doctrine. Not every line of the Bible must be interpreted literally. Where the Bible commands to lend freely, expecting nothing in return,¹⁴⁷ this can be understood not as a technical command never to lend to anyone but rather an exemplary exhortation.¹⁴⁸ After all, the Bible would not discuss debt if there was never to be any debt.

There will always be resistance to change of doctrine. Humans crave intellectual consistency, people might fear what else might change, and the idea that God is unchanging and divine complicates attitudes towards change.¹⁴⁹ However, so long as consistency sought is consistency with Christ, then Christians are on a path towards conformance with God's will. This openness to change requires a humility essential to the teaching of Christ. Christians should thus endeavor to live like the command to scribes in Matthew's Gospel, bringing from our storeroom things old and new: "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Luke 6:35.

¹⁴⁸ Noonan, *Development*, at 673.

¹⁴⁹ *Id.* at 676.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew 13:52.

IV. Christians and Lending Dilemmas Today

There is a great role for Christians today in the global debate on lending. We live in a debt-fueled society. There are more issues with the financial system than there is room to list: excessive interest rates charged by payday lenders, excessive interest rates on credit cards, excessive charges on remittances, fraudulent investors, bad behavior by collection agencies, excessive payment to pastors of megachurches, and excessive debts on mortgages, car loans and student loans. How can Christians engage?

It unrealistic to yearn for the days when there was a universal prohibition of any lending at interest. In the modern world it is impossible not to lend at some interest. Maturity transformation is fundamental to modern development. It is remarkable that the average American can, with very little money down, buy or rent a car and own a home. This privilege must be protected and necessarily requires the creation of debt. However, just because lending at interest is valuable, does not mean that all lending is valuable or that financial institutions can charge exorbitant fees. Christians must make sure that the modern economy works for people instead of them working for it.

The Biblical laws identified in this essay are a starting point for increased Christian perspectives on lending. The Bible stresses the importance of stewardship in relation to lending. God owns all things, and we are mere stewards.¹⁵¹ Paired with Biblical prohibitions against greed and collateral, gleaning laws, and calls for mercy and forgiveness, to lead a truly Christian life requires bringing that Christian understanding to the financial world. While we might not return to Jubilean forgiveness of all debt, that same spirit of mercy and forgiveness ought to motivate

¹⁵¹ In addition to Biblical provisions on stewardship, John Locke further emphasized that God gave earth to mankind for common use. See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government, Second Treatise*, Chapter V, Sec. 24, Cambridge University Press (Peter Laslett ed., 1988) (“it is very clear that God, as King David says (Psalm 115. 16), “has given the earth to the children of men,” given it to mankind in common.”).

Christians today. As Christians continue to evaluate their perspective on lending, there are two areas that call for immediate increased engagement: (1) calling for caps of excessive interest rates and (2) lending more freely to the poor.¹⁵²

Caps on interest rates

Market forces alone cannot curb excessive greed. Even libertarians agree that some market rules are necessary for a functioning economy.¹⁵³ Friedrich Hayek, father of the libertarian Austrian School of economics, wrote that “An effective competitive system needs an intelligently designed and continuously adjusted legal framework as much as any other.”¹⁵⁴ Excessive interest rates on loans has enabled an increasing cycle of poverty in the United States. Exorbitant credit card fees and payday lenders take advantage of the poor and create debts that far exceed initial loans. In the United States today, there is essentially no limit on usury rates. In *Marquette National Bank of Minneapolis v. First of Omaha Service Corp.*,¹⁵⁵ the Supreme Court held that the National Banking Act of 1863 allowed nationally chartered banks to charge the legal rate of interest in their state regardless of the borrower’s state of residence, which effectively overrode the freedom of states to set their own usury laws. The Dodd-Frank Act, passed after the financial crisis, explicitly forbids the CFPB from imposing a “usury limit,”¹⁵⁶ meaning that usury limits must come from express Congressional limitation. Whether or not there ought to be a usury cap, against whom, and by whom, is a subject for public debate.

¹⁵² These are the same recommendations as the 217TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, A REFORMED UNDERSTANDING OF USURY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 7 (2006) ([link](#)).

¹⁵³ See Brian Fitzpatrick, *Deregulation and Private Enforcement*, 24 LEWIS & CLARK L. REV. 685 (2020) ([link](#)).

¹⁵⁴ See FRIEDRICH A. HAYEK, *THE ROAD TO SERFDOM* 39 (1944).

¹⁵⁵ 439 U.S. 299 (1978).

¹⁵⁶ Pub. L. No. 111-203, 124 Stat. 1376 (2010) (codified in scattered sections of the U.S. Code).

In the United States there has been a recent appetite for bipartisan legislation to limit excessive interest rates against vulnerable populations. This legislation is motivated by Christian perspectives. Conservative Tucker Carlson recently joined liberals Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders in supporting a federally-imposed 15-percent cap on interest rates.¹⁵⁷ Carlson noted that “There’s a reason why the world’s great religions condemn usury and why societies have restricted it for thousands of years.”¹⁵⁸ He explained that credit card debt destroys people and chided both Republicans and Democrats: “ So the real question is why did it fall to a couple of childish socialists to point this out?”¹⁵⁹

Critics claim that high interest rates are necessary to compensate for risk. Better excessive interest than no access to credit at all. While recognizing a need for firms to make a profit to exist and continue serving communities, there is a need for better research on ideal usury rates. Christians should help frame this conversation, turning to Biblical provisions forbidding usury and commanding forgiveness of debt. There is also a need for Christians to experiment with lending programs for those who have no choice but to take out credit card debt with exorbitant interest rates or pay for payday loans. Financial illiteracy, the root of most debt, is an important obligation too often ignored.

Lending freely

The Biblical provisions forbidding usury are instructive because they remind us to give generously. Whether we define usury as excessive interest or no interest at all, it is clear that the Bible commands compassion for the poor. Modern Christians should ask themselves how best to

¹⁵⁷ Morgan Gstalter, *Tucker Carlson says Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez are ‘indisputably right’ on Loan Shark Prevention Act*, THE HILL (May 11, 2019) ([link](#)).

¹⁵⁸ *Id.*

¹⁵⁹ *Id.*

give freely. To simply tithe and rely on the Church to give is not to fully lend of ourselves. As the Gospel of James explains, faith without works is meaningless.¹⁶⁰ Biblical commands for gleaning should guide Christians not only in their understanding of systemic lending, but also in their own personal life. This means that Christians should consider more carefully whether or not they are actually giving freely in their own lives, be they lending money, time or grace. When payment is required, Christians ought to remember the Biblical rules on collateral, requiring that no livelihood be destroyed, and that the dignity of debtors be preserved. In the face of insurmountable debt, Christians should renew discussions of Jubilee and how modern conceptions of bankruptcy might accomplish goals of forgiveness.

Despite Biblical and doctrinal calls for generous lending, there is a tendency for Christians to quickly separate money into a non-Christian sphere, relying on Jesus's command to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's.¹⁶¹ Yet money and debt influence nearly all acts of life. Christians should take ownership of their financial choices and how our modern financial system affects fellow Christians and the global population. There is too little discussion about Christian lending in the modern world and too much suffering as a result of neutered dialogue.

V. Conclusion

Modern debates on lending are not so simple as to respond to general exhortations against greed. Governments debate the merits of free markets versus government restriction, whether it is private citizens or the government who ought to lend freely, and how much lending is appropriate. As this debate unfolds, I conclude that Christians ought to engage. Biblical passages

¹⁶⁰ See James 2:1-7.

¹⁶¹ See Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26.

on payment of debts, stewardship, Jubilee, rules governing collateral and gleaning can all color the modern financial debate. When critics claim that Christian doctrine has changed, and thus has no place in modern discussion, Christians should not turn away. Instead, Christians should continue to evaluate Christian perspectives on lending and bring those insights into the political arena. This paper offers a base of Biblical commands and Christian doctrine for further study and engagement.

To conclude, when facing questions about lending, Christians should remember that we are all made in the image of God.¹⁶² As C.S. Lewis wrote, because we are all children of God, there are no ordinary people.¹⁶³ We have never talked with mere mortals.¹⁶⁴ It is immortals with whom we work and exploit. Therefore, our charity must be a real and costly love.¹⁶⁵ Christians must continue to study the word of God on lending, a central aspect of every life. For Christians who reflect on the Bible and lending, there is one final Biblical command that should inform thought and act: Here I am, send me.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² See Genesis 1:27.

¹⁶³ See C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (1941) ([link](#)).

¹⁶⁴ *Id.*

¹⁶⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶⁶ Isaiah 6:8.

APPENDIX

BIBLICAL TEXT ON LENDING

Old Testament – New Testament

I was not able to find a catalog of Biblical text on lending. This catalog comes from my own research. While not exhaustive, I believe this list is representative of Biblical teaching on lending. All quotes come from the King James Version of the Bible. I have added tags in brackets to summarize how each passage references the above-mentioned Biblical laws on lending.

Old Testament		
Book	Chapter: Verse	Summary / Quote
Amos	2:6	[Greed] I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes.
Deuteronomy	10:14	[Stewardship] To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.
	15:1-11	[Jubilee] [Charging Interest] 1 At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. 2 This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite. They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because the Lord's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. 3 You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you. 4 However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, 5 if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. 6 For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you. 7 If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. 8 Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. 9 Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people

		in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.
	15:12-18	[Jubilee] 12 If any of your people—Hebrew men or women—sell themselves to you and serve you six years, in the seventh year you must let them go free. 13 And when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed. 14 Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to them as the Lord your God has blessed you. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today. 16 But if your servant says to you, “I do not want to leave you,” because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, 17 then take an awl and push it through his earlobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your female servant. 18 Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because their service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand. And the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do.
	23:19-20	[Charging Interest] 19 Do not charge a fellow Israelite interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest. 20 You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a fellow Israelite, so that the Lord your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess.
	23:21-23	[Pay Debts] 21 If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. 22 But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. 23 Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the Lord your God with your own mouth.
	23:24-25	[Gleaning] 24 If you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. 25 If you enter your neighbor’s grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to their standing grain.
	24:6	[Collateral] 6 Do not take a pair of millstones—not even the upper one—as security for a debt, because that would be taking a person’s livelihood as security.
	24:10-13	[Collateral] 10 When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into their house to get what is offered to you as a pledge. 11 Stay outside and let the neighbor to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. 12 If the neighbor is poor, do not go to sleep with their pledge in your possession. 13 Return their cloak by sunset so that your neighbor may sleep in it. Then they will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the Lord your God.
	24:17	[Collateral] 17 Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. 18 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

	24:19	[Gleaning] 19 When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. 21 When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. 22 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.
	28:12-13	[Stewardship, No Debts] 12 The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. 13 And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:
Ecclesiastes	5:10	[Greed] He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.
Exodus	20:1-17	[Ten Commandments] 20 And God spake all these words, saying, 2 I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. 7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. 12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. 13 Thou shalt not kill. 14 Thou shalt not commit adultery. 15 Thou shalt not steal. 16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. 17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

	22:25	[Charging Interest] 25 If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.
	22:26-27	[Collateral] 26 If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: 27 For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.
Ezekiel	18:7-8	[Pay Debts] 7 And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; 8 He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man
Genesis	1:1	[Stewardship] In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
	1:27	[Stewardship] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.
Haggai	2:8	[Stewardship] The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.
Jeremiah	15:10-11	[Charging Interest] 10 Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me. 11 The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.
Job	41:11	[Stewardship] Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.
II Kings	4:1-7	[Pay Debts] 4 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. 2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. 3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. 4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. 6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.
Leviticus	19:9	[Gleaning] And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

25:3-5	<p>[Jubilee] 3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; 4 But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. 5 That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land.</p> <p>Jubilee BUT for land transactions, can take Jubilee into account (Leviticus 25: 15-16)</p>
25: 8-24	<p>[Jubilee] 8 And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. 9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. 10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. 11 A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. 12 For it is the jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. 13 In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession. 14 And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another: 15 According to the number of years after the jubile thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: 16 According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee. 17 Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the Lord your God. 18 Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. 19 And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. 20 And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: 21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. 22 And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store. 23 The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. 24 And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.</p>
25:35-37	<p>[Charging Interest] 35 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. 36 Take thou</p>

		no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. 37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.
Nehemiah	5:3-13	[Charging Interest] 3 Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards. 6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. 7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. 8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? 10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. 12 Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. 13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise.
Psalms	24:1	[Stewardship] The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
	37:21	[Pay Debts] The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.
Proverbs	22:7	[No Debts] The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.
	23:4	[Work] Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.
	28:20	[Stewardship] A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.
Ruth	2:2-23	[Gleaning] 2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. 3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. 4 And, behold, Boaz came from

Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee. 5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? 6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: 7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. 8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: 9 Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. 10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? 11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. 12 The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. 13 Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. 14 And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. 15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: 16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. 17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. 18 And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed. 19 And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. 20 And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. 21 And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. 22 And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. 23 So

	she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.
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New Testament		
Book	Chapter: Verse	Summary / Quote (KJV)
Colossians	3:13	[Forgive Debts] Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
I Corinthians	10:26	[Stewardship] For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.
Ephesians	4:32	[Forgive Debts] And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.
John	2:13-16	[Chase Money Changers Out of Temple] 13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.
Luke	12:59	[Pay Debts] I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.
	14:28	[Pay Debts] 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.
	16:11-13	[Pay Debts] 11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
	18:24-27	[Greed] 24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? 27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

	19:11-27	[Parable of the Ten Minas] 11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.
	19:45-48	[Chase Money Changers Out of Temple] 45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; 46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. 47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, 48 And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.
	20:25	[Pay Debts] And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.
Mark	10:24-27	[Stewardship] 24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

	11:15-18	[Chase Money Changers Out of Temple] 15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. 17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.
	12:17	[Pay Debts] And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.
Matthew	5:42-46	[Stewardship] 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
	6:12-14	[Forgive Debts] 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation,[a] but deliver us from the evil one.[b]' 14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
	6:24	[Stewardship] No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
	13:52	[Stewardship] Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.
	18:21-35	[Forgiveness] 21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. 23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellow servant fell down at his

		feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.
	19:23-26	[Stewardship] 23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? 26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.
	21:12-17	[Chase Money Changers Out of Temple] 12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, 13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. 14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. 15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, 16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? 17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.
	22:21	[Pay Debts] They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.
	25:14-30	[Parable of the Ten Minas] 13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. 14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21

		His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
	26:15	[Greed] And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.
Romans	13:7-8	[Pay Debts] 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. 8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.
1 Timothy	6:10	[Stewardship] For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.