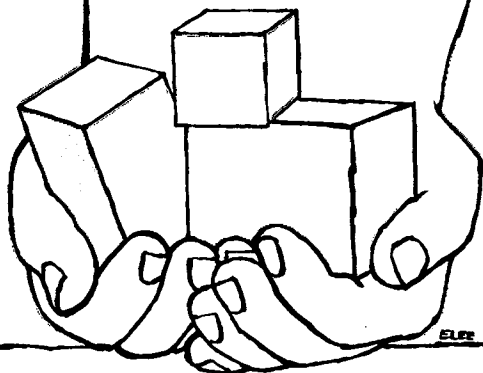


# *Managing God's Goods*



**4/73** OCTOBER  
NOVEMBER  
DECEMBER

ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

## Thirteenth Sabbath Offering Overflow

December 29, 1973—Trans-Africa Division

The Trans-Africa Division was greatly encouraged by the funds received from the Thirteenth Sabbath Overflow Offering for the third quarter of 1972. We are happy to report that, as a result of your liberal offering, we received sufficient funds to build an administration complex on our Gitwe Training School campus, which serves a constituency of over 100,000 members in the countries of Rwanda and Burundi. We were also able to complete the administration building which had been under construction for many years at Kivu in northern Zaire. Surplus funds also assisted in the improvement and expansion of the boys' dormitory there.

Again we come to you with an appeal for funds that will help with two much-needed projects—the improvement and expansion of the student housing at our Helderberg College and the erection of a publishing house at Malamulo in Malawi.

We have not been able to expand the 50-year-old housing facilities for our students at Helderberg for many years. The lack of money has made it necessary for both academy and college students to share the same facilities, with as many as four and at times, five in a room designed for two.

For some time we have been operating a small publishing house on the campus of Malamulo which has provided employment and training for some of the students at the college. This plant, with restricted capital, has attempted to meet the printing needs of our Malawi Union Mission, providing to the best of its ability literature that is needed by our colporteur evangelists. Developments of recent years have indicated that if this plant could be modernized and expanded it would not only make a valuable contribution in supplying literature for the union mission but for the neighboring unions as well.

As we come to you for special help for these two projects which will benefit from the Christmas offering, we sincerely hope that you will remember Trans-Africa in a special way by giving a little more than you had intended to give. This will not only make your fellow believers in Trans-Africa happy but will reveal to your Saviour, who was born as a babe in Bethlehem two milleniums ago, your great desire to hasten His coming as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Merle L. Mills, President  
Trans-Africa Division

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See page 108 for outlines of the first two lessons of first quarter, 1974.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The memory of each person extends back only to a point several years after his birth. He carries about in himself the evidence that he has arrived very recently on the scene and is not responsible for the surroundings into which he has come. It was true even of Adam and Eve that their environment preceded them. Nor are individuals responsible for their own existence.

The Bible points to God as the originator of the world and of the life it contains. This is God's world and we are His people. God has bestowed on each of us certain abilities and materials for use during our brief existence. We are in charge of these goods, and the question that confronts every responsible person is: To whose benefit shall these goods be used? The Christian answer is: To the benefit of God, the Owner.

The natural selfishness of man leads him to misappropriate the blessings of God and use them in a way that is foreign to God's intentions.

"Employed to bless others, his gifts increase. Shut up to self-serving they diminish, and are finally withdrawn. He who refuses to impart that which he has received will at last find that he has nothing to give. He is consenting to a process that surely dwarfs and finally destroys the faculties of the soul.

"Let none suppose that they can live a life of selfishness, and then, having served their own interests, enter into the joy of their Lord. In the joy of unselfish love they could not participate. They would not be fitted for the heavenly courts. They could not appreciate the pure atmosphere of love that pervades heaven. The voices of the angels and the music of their harps would not satisfy them. To their minds the science of heaven would be as an enigma.

"In the great judgment day those who have not worked for Christ, those who have drifted along, carrying no responsibility, thinking of themselves, pleasing themselves, will be placed by the Judge of all the earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation." —"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 364, 365.

The lessons for this quarter focus on the management, by each of us, of all that God has placed at our disposal. The hope that goes with the distribution of these lessons is that each of us might see himself as a manager for God, seeking to advance His cause and His kingdom with whatever is in his hand.

## **The Blessing of Daily Study**

"Every day some portion of time should be appropriated to the study of the lessons, not merely in learning to mechanically repeat the words, while the mind does not comprehend the meaning; but to go to the very foundation, and become familiar with what is brought out in the lesson."—"Counsels on Sabbath School Work," page 53.

### **My Pledge**

As one who greatly desires to improve his knowledge of the Scriptures, I pledge myself to the careful and prayerful study of some portion of my Sabbath School lesson each day of the week.

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(signed)

The regular adult Sabbath School lessons and regular Sabbath School World Mission Report are available free each month in Braille and 16 $\frac{2}{3}$  rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal inkprint. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accidents, old age, and so forth, cannot hold, or focus on, normal inkprint publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation, Box 6097, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506.

## **Lesson Titles for the Quarter**

1. God's Ownership
2. Man's Stewardship
3. Stewardship and Character
4. The Motive for Giving
5. Life's Center
6. Systematic Benevolence
7. Disinterested Benevolence
8. God First
9. Faithful Stewardship
10. Prosperity
11. Sacrifice
12. God's Guides for Stewardship
13. God's Gifts

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## GOD'S OWNERSHIP

### LESSON 1

*September 30-October 6*

**The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Ps. 24:1.**

Stewardship is a relationship—in this case, between God and man. Man must therefore know what God expects of him and what he can expect of God. Man must establish this partnership on reality and not on wishes.

No one existed before God. He is a Person. He feels, acts, thinks, et cetera. He is the Creator. The materials of the universe are the results of His creative power. Creatorship confers ownership, and God is thus the true owner of everything. The truth of God's ownership is often overlooked because, for one reason, people have a deficient view of the origin of things. Creation, the plan of salvation, and stewardship are closely related to each other.

God's ownership is not limited to ma-

terial possessions. We human beings belong to Him. God does not enforce this ownership; rather He seeks to have men voluntarily recognize it. This recognition leads to the relationship between God and man called stewardship. One cannot have a relationship with a nonpersonal power. If Satan can lead men to view God in a depersonalized way, he can thus prevent any sense of responsibility of man toward God. Without responsibility based on his origin from God, man easily falls into the attitude that he "belongs" to himself and that his possessions "belong" to him also. But the truth is that God made man only a steward of both life and possessions in the relationship with God—man never owns anything in the way he owns goods in relation to his fellowmen.

Our study of stewardship begins where the Bible itself begins—"In the beginning God—"

**Part 1**  
**GOD IS**  
**ETERNAL**  
**Ps. 90:2**

**What seemingly permanent things are compared with God's existence?**

**"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."**

It is impossible for man fully to comprehend the eternity of God who alone sits enthroned as Lord of time, without beginning and without end. But we accept God's eternal existence by faith. The problem that the human mind encounters in thinking of the eternal existence of God is very similar to the problem of the infinity of space. Our minds boggle at both. The limit of our understanding is stated in the opening words of the scriptures—"In the beginning God—" Gen. 1:1.

With the truth of God's eternal existence we begin our study of stewardship.

"God is from eternity in the past to eternity in the future (see Ps. 93:2; Prov. 8:23; Micah 5:2; Hab. 1:12). He is 'the Ancient of days' (Dan. 7:9). There could not be a more sublime statement of the eternity of God. The man who recognizes the eternity of God and regards his own life as related to the Eternal, has a powerful stimulus to dignified, worthy living."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Ps. 90:2.

"No finite mind can fully comprehend the existence, the power, the wisdom, or the works of the Infinite One. . . . [Job 11:7-9 quoted]. The mightiest intellects of earth cannot comprehend God. Men may be ever searching, ever learning, and still there is an infinity beyond."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 116.

**What is God's declaration about His position in the universe? Isa. 43:10, last part.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways can God's eternal existence have meaning in my existence?**

"God always has been. He is the great I AM."—*Medical Ministry*, page 92.

"Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship. Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 305.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*The Ministry of Healing*, pages 409-412.



**Part 2**  
**GOD IS**  
**A PERSON**  
**Ps. 86:15**

**What are some attributes of God that belong only to personal beings?**

**"But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."**

These attributes are possessed only by persons, never by impersonal powers. God is a personal, living being. He personally created the universe, and He personally owns it.

"It was He who in the material world provided that every desire implanted should be met. It was He who created the human soul, with its capacity for knowing and for loving. And He is not in Himself such as to leave the demands of the soul unsatisfied. No intangible principle, no impersonal essence or mere abstraction, can satisfy the needs and longings of human beings in this life of struggle with sin and sorrow and pain. It is not enough to believe in law and force, in things that have no pity, and never hear the cry for help. We need to know of an almighty arm that will hold us up, of an infinite Friend that pities us. We need to clasp a hand that is warm, to trust in a heart full of tenderness. And even so God has in His word revealed Himself."—*Education*, page 133.

**By what outstanding means has God been revealed as a personal being? Heb. 1:2, 3; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 1:1-4.**

One of the ploys of Satan is to lead men to believe in a depersonalized God. God is thus regarded as a creative force, natural law, or eternal energy. Such a view of God strikes a blow at the very heart of Christianity, for it leaves no room for Jesus as the revelation of the Father. Human beings can have no sense of responsibility to an impersonal force. Only persons are owners, and an impersonal view of God makes divine ownership impossible. The logical result of an impersonal view of God is for man to look upon himself as owner, and thus man would put himself in God's place.

**THINK IT THOUGH**

**In my daily activities how can I be conscious of a personal God who sees and loves me and to whom I am responsible?**

Nature is not God, nor was it ever God. The voice of nature testifies of God, but nature is not God. As His created work, it simply bears a testimony to God's power. Deity is the author of nature. The natural world has, in itself, no power but that which God supplies. There is a personal God, the Father; there is a personal Christ, the Son."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, p. 293.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*The Ministry of Healing*, pages 427-438.

**Part 3**  
**GOD IS THE**  
**CREATOR**

**Gen. 1:1**  
**Ps. 102:25**

**"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."  
"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and  
the heavens are the work of thy hands."**

Since God is the Creator, then He existed before the things and beings of His creation. He therefore exists distinctly above that which He has created.

**Why do people belong to the Lord? Ps. 100:3.**

What God created, God owns. He created the universe, and thus it belongs to Him. Only God can create in the strictest sense. Only He could bring into existence the original substances of the cosmos. Man, in his creative work, is dependent on what God has created. God is always the ultimate owner of all things.

**In the first angel's message, who are the world's inhabitants called upon to worship? Rev. 14:6, 7.**

"The work of creation can never be explained by science. What science can explain the mystery of life?

"The theory that God did not create matter when He brought the world into existence is without foundation. In the formation of our world, God was not indebted to preexisting matter. On the contrary, all things, material or spiritual, stood up before the Lord Jehovah at His voice and were created for His own purpose. The heavens and all the host of them, the earth and all things therein, are not only the work of His hand; they came into existence by the breath of His mouth."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 8, pp. 258, 259.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What evidences do I see about me that there is a personal, Creator-God?**

"There are many who in their hearts charge God with being a hard master because He claims their possessions and their service. But we can bring to God nothing that is not already His. 'All things come of Thee,' said King David; 'and of Thine own have we given Thee.' 1 Chron. 29:14. All things are God's, not only by creation, but by redemption. All the blessings of this life and of the life to come are delivered to us stamped with the cross of Calvary. Therefore the charge that God is a hard master, reaping where He has not sown, is false."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 362.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*The Story of Redemption*, pages 20-23.

**Part 4**  
**GOD IS**  
**REDEEMER**  
**Isa. 43:1**

**"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."**

God's message to Israel, assuring of redemption by the Creator, is pertinent to God's people today. It is because of man's rejection of God's claims on him by virtue of creation that redemption is necessary.

"Man does not belong to himself; he has no right to use his powers according to the wishes and promptings of his unconverted body. He is the property of God by creation and by redemption. Man is bound to live mentally, physically, and spiritually as God directs, to the glory of His name, and not to the gratification of fleshly desires. The converted man is, indeed, a willing slave of Jesus Christ . . . , who lives only to please his Master."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on 1 Cor. 6:19.

**What reason does Paul cite as the basis of God's ownership of man? 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.**

The redemption through Jesus Christ includes not only man, but his possessions as well.

"All things come of God. We have nothing that we have not received; and, more than this, we have nothing that has not been purchased for us by the blood of Christ. Everything we possess comes to us stamped with the cross, bought with the blood that is precious above all estimate, because it is the life of God."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 66.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What are the implications of recognizing that God by creation and redemption is the owner of myself and of my possessions?**

"All men have been bought with this infinite price. By pouring the whole treasury of heaven into this world, by giving us in Christ all heaven, God has purchased the will, the affections, the mind, the soul, of every human being. Whether believers or unbelievers, all men are the Lord's property. All are called to do service for Him, and for the manner in which they have met this claim, all will be required to render an account at the great judgment day."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 326.

"To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 660.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 479-482.

**Part 5**  
**GOD-MAN RELATION**  
**Ps. 24:1**

**"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."**

God's eternity, His personality, His creatorship, and His act of redemption combined together make Him always the absolute owner of all creation.

**What arrangement served as a continued reminder to Israel that God was the owner of their land? Lev. 25:23, 24.**

"Though God had given the land of Palestine to His people, He still held title to it. The Israelites were stewards, not owners."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Lev. 25:23.

It is God who has made available the elements and materials from which man produces the goods he claims to own. All come from the earth. Man himself is nourished by the earth's products. "God desires Christians to respect the liberty that He has in so marvelous a manner given them. In Christ is vested the ownership of every man. Man should not be another man's property. God has bought mankind."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, pp. 1106, 1107.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How many production steps are there, from original source to consumer, for some commonly used items in your home? Do you think this "production distance" can have an influence on the God-man relation?**

"All that we have is from God. He lays His hand upon our possessions, saying: 'I am the rightful owner of the whole universe; these are My goods.'"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 245.

"All the good that man enjoys comes because of the mercy of God. He is the great and bountiful Giver. His love is manifest to all in the abundant provision made for man. He has given us probationary time in which to form characters for the courts above. And it is not because He needs anything that He asks us to reserve a part of our possessions for Him. . . .

"Did He not give His only-begotten Son because He loved us and desired to save us from death? And shall not our gratitude offerings flow into His treasury to be drawn therefrom to advance His kingdom in the earth? Since God is the owner of all our goods, shall not gratitude to Him prompt us to make freewill offerings and thank offerings, thus acknowledging His ownership of soul, body, spirit, and property? Had God's plan been followed, means would now be flowing into His treasury; and funds to enable ministers to enter new fields, and workers to unite with ministers in lifting up the standard of truth in the dark places of the earth, would be abundant."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 385, 386.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 389-391.

**Part 6**  
**MAN-GOD RELATION**  
**Luke 12:18-20**

**Read Luke 12:18-20.**

"By the parable of the foolish rich man, Christ showed the folly of those who make the world their all. This man had received everything from God. The sun had been permitted to shine upon his land; for its rays fall on the just and on the unjust. The showers of heaven descend on the evil and on the good. The Lord had caused vegetation to flourish, and the fields to bring forth abundantly. The rich man was in perplexity as to what he should do with his produce. His barns were full to overflowing, and he had no place to put the surplus of his harvest. He did not think of God, from whom all his mercies had come. He did not realize that God had made him a steward of His goods that he might help the needy. He had a blessed opportunity of being God's almoner, but he thought only of ministering to his own comfort. . . .

"This man's aims were no higher than those of the beasts that perish. He lived as if there were no God, no heaven, no future life; as if everything he possessed were his own, and he owed nothing to God or man."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 256-258.

God is the absolute owner of all things. Man is always a steward of God's goods. A steward is a person who manages the business of another. The person who was once called a steward could be called in modern English a manager or business manager. This stewardship, or management, entrusted to man includes even the life of the steward himself, for man is not self-created.

**What is the primary qualification of a steward? 1 Cor. 4:2.**

A steward controls the goods of the owner, but control is not ownership. Man's control is temporary; God's ownership is perpetual. Man's control is relative; God's ownership is absolute. There is no such thing as absolute human ownership. Man may control goods for a lifetime, but at his death his possessions pass on to another, who in turn is tested concerning their use.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Consider the pattern of your daily life. How does it say, "God, I belong to You"?**

"To live for self is to perish. Covetousness, the desire of benefit for self's sake, cuts the soul off from life. It is the spirit of Satan to get, to draw to self. It is the spirit of Christ to give, to sacrifice self for the good of others [1 John 5:11, 12 quoted]." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 259.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 384, 385.



## MAN'S STEWARDSHIP

### LESSON 2

October 7-13

**"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."**  
Matt. 25:21.

Stewardship implies three elements—the owner, the goods he owns, and the one to whom the goods are entrusted. Last week we noted that God is the owner, and man is the one to whom His goods have been entrusted. This week we will study the nature of the goods entrusted to man by God.

The prime possession of man is life. Just as God's ownership depends on His being a living person, so man's stewardship depends on his being a living person also. Man's life comes from God, belongs to God, and is sustained by God. Thus man's life, his existence, is involved with stewardship on two counts: (1) his very life, which comes from God, and (2) this life is the

basic element for which he is responsible as a steward.

It is rudimentary in the owner-steward relation that the steward handle the owner's goods to the benefit of the owner and not of himself. Since life itself and all it includes are owned by God, then faithful stewardship requires that life and all it includes shall be used to the benefit of God, the owner. The selfish use of the Lord's goods is thus excluded from the Christian life.

"A steward identifies himself with his master. He accepts the responsibilities of a steward, and he must act in his master's stead, doing as his master would do were he presiding. His master's interests become his. The position of a steward is one of dignity, because his master trusts him. If in any wise he acts selfishly, and turns the advantages gained by trading with his lord's goods to his own advantage, he has perverted the trust reposed in him."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 246.

**Part 1**  
**STEWARDSHIP**  
**OF LIFE**  
**Acts 17:24, 25, 28**

**"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."**

**"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."**

Man's life not only originated with God but it continues by His power. Man has nothing in and of himself that perpetuates his life.

"The mechanism of the human body cannot be fully understood; it presents mysteries that baffle the most intelligent. It is not as the result of a mechanism, which, once set in motion, continues its work, that the pulse beats and breath follows breath. In God we live and move and have our being. The beating heart, the throbbing pulse, every nerve and muscle in the living organism, is kept in order and activity by the power of an ever-present God."—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 417.

**What is the Christian purpose for life's continuance? Ps. 91:15, 16.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**If man regards life's origin and continuance as from God, how should he use his life?**

"Christ came to this world to reveal the love of God. His followers are to continue the work which He began. Let us strive to help and strengthen one another. Seeking the good of others is the way in which true happiness can be found. Man does not work against his own interest by loving God and his fellow men. The more unselfish his spirit, the happier he is, because he is fulfilling God's purpose for him. The breath of God is breathed through him, filling him with gladness. To him life is a sacred trust, precious in his sight because given by God to be spent in ministering to others."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 24, 25.

"God created man for His own glory, that after test and trial the human family might become one with the heavenly family. . . . Adam was to be tested, to see whether he would be obedient, as the loyal angels, or disobedient. If he stood the test, his instruction to his children would have been only of loyalty. His mind and thoughts would have been as the mind and thoughts of God. . . . His character would have been moulded in accordance with the character of God."—*Ellen G. White Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 1082.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, pp. 197-200.

**Part 2**  
**STEWARDSHIP**  
**OF THE BODY**  
**Rom. 12:1**

**"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."**

"Life is a gift of God. Our bodies have been given us to use in God's service, and He desires that we shall care for and appreciate them. We are possessed of physical as well as mental faculties. Our impulses and passions have their seat in the body, and therefore ye must do nothing that would defile this entrusted possession. Our bodies must be kept in the best possible condition physically, and under the most spiritual influences, in order that we may make the best use of our talents. . . .

"A misuse of the body shortens that period of time which God designs shall be used in His service. By allowing ourselves to form wrong habits, by keeping late hours, by gratifying appetite at the expense of health, we lay the foundation for feebleness. By neglecting to take physical exercise, by overworking mind or body, we unbalance the nervous system. Those who thus shorten their lives by disregarding nature's laws are guilty of robbery toward God. We have no right to neglect or misuse the body, the mind, or the strength, which should be used to offer God consecrated service."—*Counsels on Health*, page 41.

**What is to be the Christian's object of bodily activities?**  
**1 Cor. 10:31, 32.**

Guidelines based on Biblical principles for the care of the body are contained in the health messages of the spirit of prophecy. One purpose of these messages is to teach the church a stewardship of the body that is based on Christian principles.

**Do you recognize any way in which stewardship of the body is related to the three angels' messages? Rev. 14:6-12.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Am I caring for and using my body as a steward would or as an owner?**

"Many seem to think they have a right to treat their own bodies as they please, but they forget that their bodies are not their own. Their Creator, who formed them, has claims upon them that they cannot rightly throw off. Every needless transgression of the laws which God has established in our being is virtually a violation of the law of God, and is as great a sin in the sight of Heaven as to break the Ten Commandments. Ignorance upon this important subject is sin. . . ."—*Counsels on Health*, page 40.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*The Ministry of Healing*, pages 318-324.



**Part 3**  
**STEWARDS OF TIME**  
**Ps. 90:12**

**What reason does the psalmist give for desiring to be taught to number days?**

**"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."**

To examine the stewardship of time is really just another way of viewing life, for Franklin's observation is correct that time is "the stuff that life is made of." To use time wisely is to use life wisely. Ellen White spoke of time as "life's great capital" and further claimed that the "waste of time is a waste of intellect."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 146.

"The cultivation of the intellect need not be prevented by poverty, humble origin, or unfavorable surroundings. Only let the moments be treasured. A few moments here and a few there, that might be frittered away in aimless talk; the morning hours so often wasted in bed, the time spent in traveling on trams or railway cars, or waiting at the station; the moments of waiting for meals, waiting for those who are tardy in keeping an appointment—if a book were kept at hand, and these fragments of time were improved in study, reading, or careful thought, what might not be accomplished. A resolute purpose, persistent industry, and careful economy of time, will enable men to acquire knowledge and mental discipline which will qualify them for almost any position of influence and usefulness."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 343, 344.

**What is the significance of Sabbath time? Ex. 20:11.**

"When man observes the Sabbath he is recognizing God's claim upon his life, his time, his strength. The Sabbath was intended as a test of man's loyalty to the God who made him, just as much as the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a test of the loyalty of Adam and Eve. God has given us all things to enjoy; His gifts are for our good; but to enjoy these gifts now and in the eternal years, we must show evidence of our loyalty by keeping the day God set apart for a holy use. This requirement was made not only of those who are recognized as the servants of God but of all mankind. 'The sabbath was made for man,' made to be a blessing to him. In it he should rest from labor. In keeping the Sabbath holy man would be recognizing his relationship to his Creator."—S. A. Wellman, *Your Stewardship and Mine*, page 58.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How am I using my leisure time? Does this use glorify God or merely give self-satisfaction?**

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 145-148; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "Talents—Time," pages 342-346.

**Part 4**  
**STEWARDS OF**  
**ABILITIES**  
**Gen. 2:15**

**What was man's first work?**

**"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."**

God gave man abilities—the skill and energy of the mind and the body—and then He gave him dominion and responsibility that matched these abilities.

"Adam was crowned king in Eden. To him was given dominion over every living thing that God had created. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature. He made Adam the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands. Man, made in the divine image, could contemplate and appreciate the glorious works of God in nature."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 1082.

The ability which God gives to men today is really a capacity that can be developed into special skills. "The development of all our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men. No one who is not growing daily in capability and usefulness is fulfilling the purpose of life. In making a profession of faith in Christ we pledge ourselves to become all that it is possible for us to be as workers for the Master, and we should cultivate every faculty to the highest degree of perfection, that we may do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 329, 330.

It is not the quality of the ability by which God judges man, but by the faithfulness in which the ability is employed.

"A man may be in the active service of God while engaged in the ordinary, everyday duties—while felling trees, clearing the ground, or following the plow. The mother who trains her children for Christ is as truly working for God as is the minister in the pulpit. . . .

"It is not the possession of splendid talents that enables us to render acceptable service, but the conscientious performance of daily duties, the contented spirit, the unaffected, sincere interest in the welfare of others. In the humblest lot true excellence may be found. The commonest tasks, wrought with loving faithfulness, are beautiful in God's sight."—*Prophecies and Kings*, page 219.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How faithfully am I developing and using my abilities?**

"Had happiness consisted in doing nothing, man, in his state of holy innocence, would have been left unemployed. But He who created man knew what would be for his happiness; and no sooner had He created him than He gave him his appointed work."—*The Adventist Home*, page 27.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Christ's Object Lessons*, "Talents," pages 325-342.

**Part 5**  
**STEWARDS OF**  
**MATERIAL**  
**POSSESSIONS**  
**Gen. 2:16, 17**

**Read Gen. 2:16, 17.**

The world and its contents were given over to man's management, but all of these really belonged to God. The fruit of one tree in the garden of Eden was withheld from man's use. On this point man could only obey or disobey. This was a test on the use of possessions.

"This tree God reserved as a constant reminder of His ownership of all. Thus He gave them opportunity to demonstrate their faith and trust in Him by their perfect obedience to His requirements."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 386.

**What did God warn would be the results to man if he used the world's goods contrary to divine command? Gen. 2:16, 17.**

After man's expulsion from Eden, the tithe became a test to man as the tree of knowledge of good and evil had been a test in the garden. "He places His treasures in the hands of men, but requires that one tenth shall be faithfully laid aside for His work. He requires this portion to be placed in His treasury. It is to be rendered to Him as His own; it is sacred and is to be used for sacred purposes, for the support of those who carry the message of salvation to all parts of the world. He reserves this portion, that means may ever be flowing into His treasure house, and that the light of truth may be carried to those who are nigh and those who are afar off. By faithfully obeying this requirement we acknowledge that all belongs to God."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 386.

**What reason did Jesus give for His warning against covetousness? Luke 12:15.**

"The system of benevolence was arranged to prevent that great evil, covetousness. Christ saw that in the prosecution of business the love of riches would be the greatest cause of rooting true godliness out of the heart. He saw that the love of money would freeze deep and hard into men's souls, stopping the flow of generous impulses and closing their senses to the wants of the suffering and the afflicted."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 547.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the focal point of my life?**

"God's hand can prosper or withhold; and he frequently withholds from one while He seems to prosper another. All this is to test and prove men, and to reveal the heart."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 547.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Christ's Object Lessons*, "Talents—Money," pages 351, 352.

**Part 6**  
**TESTED BY GOD**  
**Matt. 25:40**

**What is the ultimate test of all of life?**

**"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."**

"Disrobe yourselves of selfishness, and see if there are not many whom you can help and bless with your homes, your sympathy, your love, and in pointing them to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. Do you wish to make any sacrifice to save souls? Jesus, the dear Saviour, is preparing a home for you; and why will not you in your turn prepare a home for those who need it, and in thus doing imitate the example of your Master? If you are not willing to do this, when you shall feel that you need a habitation in the heavens, none will be awarded you. For Christ declares: 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.' You that have been selfish, studying your own ease and advantage all your life, your hours of probation are fast closing. What are you doing to redeem your life of selfishness and uselessness? Wake up! wake up!"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 30.

Before Adam and Eve could be eternally secure, they had to develop a character that could be trusted for eternity. In the process of this development, they would be confronted with the decision to be obedient or disobedient to God. They failed the test.

"Our first parents, though created innocent and holy, were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing. God made them free moral agents, capable of appreciating the wisdom and benevolence of His character and the justice of His requirements, and with full liberty to yield or to withhold obedience. They were to enjoy communion with God and with holy angels; but before they could be rendered eternally secure, their loyalty must be tested."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 48.

From then till now God has been testing people's characters that they might see and remedy their needs.

**What admonition to Judah is appropriate for people today? Lam. 3:40.**

In our lesson this week, we have noted that God gave man life, taught him how to use it unselfishly, and then tested him concerning its use.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways is God testing me? Are there tests in my life that I have not recognized before as tests?**

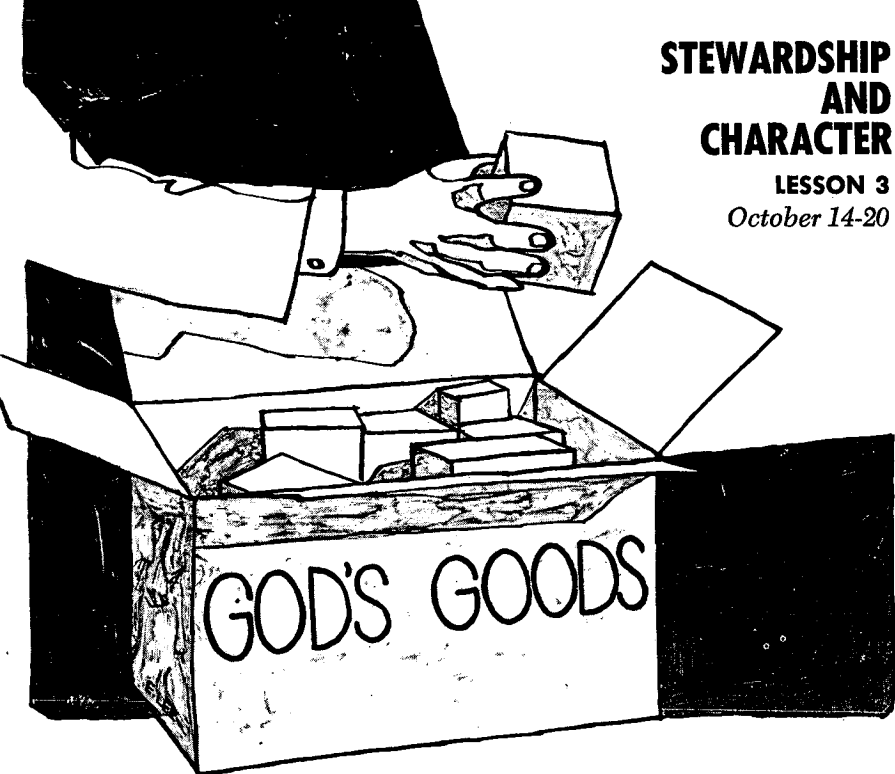
**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, pp. 245, 246.

# STEWARDSHIP AND CHARACTER

## LESSON 3

October 14-20



**"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col. 1:27.**

What is character? It is the distinctive qualities or traits which set one apart—the habitual responses to stimuli. Ellen G. White points to the thoughts and feelings combined as the root of character. See *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 310.

To have a Christian character is to have habitual responses to one's surroundings that are like Christ's responses, or thoughts and feelings that correspond to His. A person who thus responds will be a special kind, having turned the gospel into actual living.

Faithful stewardship requires the use of life and its products to the glory and benefit of God. What you do with the life God has given you to use both re-

veals and develops your character. The motive and degree of faithfulness in your stewardship show whether or not you are in harmony with His kingdom, and are thus safe to save.

"A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. . . . How important, then, is the development of character in this life."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 332.

The article by Ellen G. White which follows this lesson was printed in the *Review and Herald*, April 7, 1896. "Treasure Laid Up in Heaven" is to be read as supplementary material for this week.

**Part 1** Read John 3:16.**GOD'S CHARACTER**  
John 3:16

In this verse Jesus spoke of God as One who loved and gave. God's love is expressed through giving. The Son gave Himself for man even before man had been created. See Rev. 13:8. He gave from principle.

"Turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. 'I do nothing of Myself,' said Christ; 'the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.' 'I seek not Mine own glory,' but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 21.

Love expressed in self-sacrificial giving is the divine characteristic that God is seeking to develop in man.

God demonstrated to the universe how far He was willing to go, how much He was willing to give, to redeem and save man. "Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; but mercy does not set aside justice. The law reveals the attributes of God's character, and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 762.

For God to change the law would be for Him to change His character, for the law is a transcript of His character. For God to change character would mean that He was imperfect either before or after the change.

But man is the one who is imperfect and in need of change. Faith in God that leads to giving oneself to God, is the beginning point for the development of God's character in man.

**THINK IT THROUGH****What does it mean to give oneself to God?**

"But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These he offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 762.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 475.

Part 2  
IMAGE OF GOD  
Gen. 1:26

What is the believer's relation to God?

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

The expression "the image of God" has very broad implications. Notice Ellen G. White's comments on this term in the following quotations:

"God created man a superior being; he alone is formed in the image of God, and is capable of partaking of the divine nature, of cooperating with his Creator and executing His plans."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, page 7.

"Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is 'the express image' (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 45.

"And God's character was reflected in the character of Adam. His glory was revealed in every object of nature."—*The Adventist Home*, page 27.

"Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man. To bring him back to the perfection in which he was first created is the great object of life—the object that underlies every other. . . .

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I best cooperate with Jesus for the restoration of the image of God in me?

"Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity. Then Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 37, 38.

FURTHER STUDY

*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, pp. 737-746.

**Part 3**  
**THE EXAMPLE**  
**OF JESUS**  
**Phil. 2:5-8****What attribute of Jesus are believers to emulate? Phil. 2:5-8.**

"Did not our Exemplar tread a hard, self-denying, self-sacrificing, humble path on our account in order to save us? He encountered difficulties, experienced disappointments, and suffered reproach and affliction in His work of saving us. And shall we refuse to follow where the King of glory has led the way? Shall we complain of hardship and trial in the work of overcoming on our own account, when we remember the sufferings of our Redeemer in the wilderness of temptation, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on Calvary? All these were endured to show us the way and to bring us the divine help that we must have or perish."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 371.

God's plan for character development involves the rejection of a "getting," self-serving life and the acceptance of a "giving," self-sacrificing life motivated by faith in and love for Jesus Christ.

"But Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 331.

**What does Paul say is the purpose of God's work in us through Jesus? Eph. 2:10.**

God seeks to involve man as His co-worker. This is essential for the development of character. "Not even God can make our characters noble or our lives useful, unless we become co-workers with Him."—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 487.

**THINK IT THROUGH****How does giving relate to my character development?**

"By a chain of circumstances which would call forth his charities, He [God] bestows upon man the best means of cultivating benevolence, and keeps him habitually giving to help the poor and to advance His cause. By its necessities a ruined world is drawing forth from us talents of means and of influence to present to men and women the truth, of which they are in perishing need. And as we heed these calls, by labor and by acts of benevolence, we are assimilated to the image of Him who for our sakes became poor."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, pp. 253, 254.

**FURTHER STUDY***The Desire of Ages*, pages 693, 694.



**Part 4**  
**THE CHURCH**  
**AND GIVING, I**  
**Titus 1:5**

**After Paul organized the church in Crete, what further work did he ask Titus to do?**

**"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting."**

Paul sent Titus to "complete the work of organizing the Cretan church. Perhaps because the Cretans may have thought no additional organization necessary after Paul's departure, Titus stood in need of this special authorization in order to perfect an efficient organization."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Titus 1:5.

One of the purposes of our denominational structure is to educate people in giving their whole being to God. Making God the center of one's life is the whole crux of character development. Plans which provide members ways by which to give their time, abilities, and possessions to God's work are developed by the church. The local church elects leaders in each department for the very purpose of encouraging members to give themselves in a service of love for those whom they can help within the church and the community. Pastors are the spiritual leaders, but each pastor can give only as one person. He is to lead in giving and thus provide an example to the flock to follow him to the extent that he follows Jesus.

"Objects that call benevolence into action must be placed before them, or they cannot pattern after the character of the great Exemplar."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 255.

**Whom did Paul tell Titus to appoint to have oversight of the churches? Titus 1:5, last part.**

Elders led out in the spiritual work of each congregation in the early church. In our church we still follow this plan, and Ellen G. White has counseled that: "The elders and those who have leading places in the church should give more thought to their plans for conducting the work. They should arrange matters so that every member of the church shall have a part to act, that none may lead an aimless life, but that all may accomplish what they can according to their several ability."—*Christian Service*, page 62.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Why do many members not participate in God's work?**

"The people have had too much sermonizing; but have they been taught how to labor for those for whom Christ died? Has a line of labor been devised and placed before them in such a way that each has seen the necessity of taking part in the work?"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 431.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Christian Service*, pages 58-60.

**Part 5**  
**THE CHURCH**  
**AND GIVING, II**  
**Eph. 5:27****What condition does Jesus look for in His church?**

**“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”**

The spots, wrinkles, and blemishes are, at their root, the results of selfishness. The glory and holiness of the church is the self-sacrificing character of Jesus reproduced in the members of the church. Self-sacrificial giving by church members does not purchase salvation, but it is an outgrowth of faith in Jesus. The Christian who gives is working in cooperation with his Saviour.

Conversion is the first need of every person. The self must first be given to God to fill with His Spirit before a member has sanctified ability to work for others. Further, worldliness is not merely a mental condition that reduces the positive effectiveness of the church's witness, but it is a negative influence in the church that prevents the conversion of others. “The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 371. The spiritual responsibility of the church is to encourage the member in first giving himself to God. “God calls for workers. Personal activity is needed. But conversion comes first; seeking for the salvation of others, next.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 48.

**What counsel did Paul give for conduct of the church in Corinth? 1 Cor. 14:40.**

To be effective, spiritual plans should be so carefully laid and implemented that each member will not only have opportunity to be actively engaged but will with alacrity voluntarily choose to be involved. “Those who have the spiritual oversight of the church should devise ways and means by which an opportunity may be given to every member of the church to act some part in God's work. Too often in the past this has not been done. . . . There are but few who realize how much has been lost because of this.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 116.

**THINK IT THROUGH****How can I become seriously involved in God's work?**

“The churches are withering up because they have failed to use their talents in diffusing light. Careful instruction should be given which will be as lessons from the Master, that all may put their light to practical use.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 431.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Christian Service*, pages 61-63.

**Part 6**  
**THE WHOLE**  
**LIFE GIFT**  
**1 John 3:2****Read 1 John 3:2.**

This verse looks forward to the full restoration of the image of God in man. The image of God was diminished in man as a result of sins, and sin changed man's view of himself from that of a steward caring for God's goods to that of an owner handling his own possessions. The restoration of God's image in man reverses this view he has of himself so that he recognizes himself as a steward who is managing the property of the Great Owner. The property includes his whole life and its assets. Godly character is developed as the believer views life and its assets as belonging to God and uses them in the way he recognizes that God would use them, were He dealing with them directly.

Ellen G. White identifies some of these assets as follows:

1. **The Body.** "The body is a most important medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character. Hence it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling and degrading of the physical powers. His success here often means the surrender of the whole being to evil."—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 488, 489.

"But those who are slaves to appetite will fail in perfecting Christian character."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 492.

2. **Material Possessions.** "It was not God's purpose that poverty should wholly cease. It is one of His means for the development of character."—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 186. "This tithing system, I saw, would develop character, and manifest the true state of the heart."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 237.

3. **Abilities.** "He desires each child of His to build a noble character, by the doing of pure, noble deeds. . . .

"It is only by the right use of the talents that the character can develop harmoniously."—*Child Guidance*, page 166.

4. **Time.** "The only way in which we can redeem our time is by making the most of that which remains, by being co-workers with God in His great plan of redemption."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 342.

**What does the hope of seeing Jesus and of being like Him cause a person to do? 1 John 3:3.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Am I responding to God by giving the whole life to Him?**

"To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in His creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life."—*Education*, pages 15, 16.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Messages to Young People*, pages 163-165.

## TREASURE LAID UP IN HEAVEN

Ellen G. White

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead [to earthly pleasures and worldly attractions], and your life is hid with Christ in God." What follows this experience?—"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

Truth languishes in our earth, and he that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey. What shall I eat? and what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed? are the questions which are occupying the minds of men, while eternity is dropped out of their reckoning. Men do not look upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the only hope of the world. He sees his purchased possession the sport of every kind of deception, and knows that the end thereof is eternal ruin. Those for whom he died are absorbed in providing themselves with temporal things that are not required. At the same time they are neglecting the preparation of character which would fit them for an abode in the mansions which he has purchased for them at an infinite price. Christ calls upon them to change this order of things, and to act as rational beings. He would have them use their

God-given faculties in contemplating eternal realities. He lifts his voice in warning, saying, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . 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."

When temporal matters absorb the mind and engage the attention, the whole strength of the being is engaged in the service of man, and men look upon the worship due to God as a trifling matter. Religious interests are made subservient to the world. But Jesus, who has paid the ransom for the souls of the human family, requires that men shall subordinate temporal interests to the heavenly interests. He would have them cease to indulge in hoarding up earthly treasures, in spending money upon luxuries, and in surrounding themselves with those things which they do not need. He would not have them destroy spiritual power, but directs their attention to heavenly things. He urges that men should seek more earnestly and continually for the bread of life than for the bread which perishes. He says, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." It is the word of God that is essential for our spiritual growth. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh

profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Those who are doers of the words of Christ will bring heaven into their life.

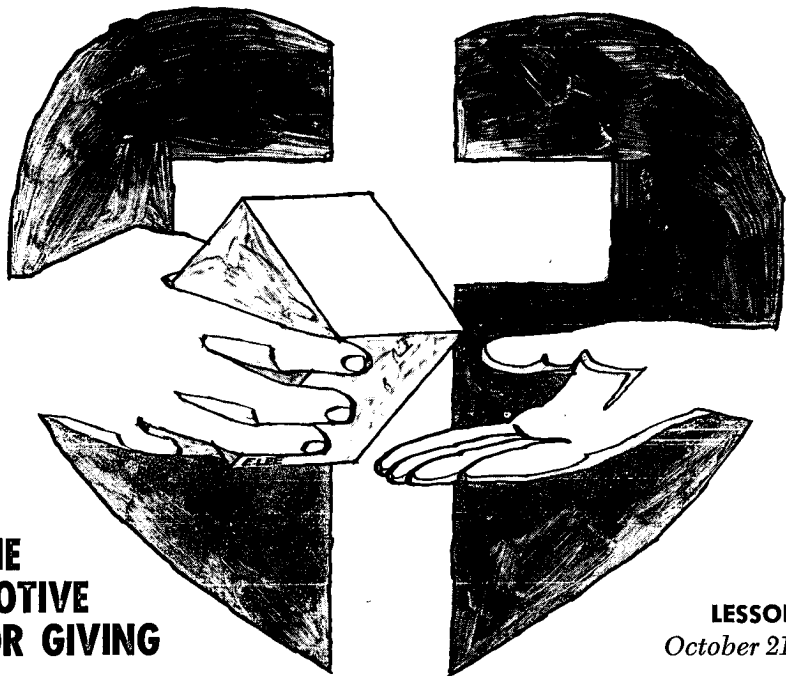
Christ is our Redeemer, our owner, and he is intensely interested that we shall have peace in this world. He seeks to present before us the attractions of heaven; for where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. To lay up treasure in heaven is to use our God-given capabilities in acquiring means and influence that may be used for the glory of God. Every dollar we earn is the Lord's property, and should be used in reference to the time when we shall be called to give an account of our stewardship. No one of us will be able to evade the future reckoning. By choosing to lay up treasure in heaven, our characters will be molded after the likeness of Christ. The world will see that our hopes and plans are made in reference to the advancement of the truth and the salvation of perishing souls. They will see that Christ is all in all to those who love him.

The world is stirred to intense activity in seeking for earthly treasure. Men prostitute their God-given powers in devising and executing earthly projects; but Christ lifts his voice, like the trump of God, and calls the attention of men, saying, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

In securing treasure in heaven, we place ourselves in living connection with God, who owns all the treasures of the earth, and supplies all temporal mercies that are essential for life. Every soul may secure the eternal inheritance. The Lord opens the fact before his people that

there is full room for the exercise of their faculties, for the fulfilment of their loftiest aims, for the acquirement of the choicest and most enduring treasure. They may lay up treasures where neither fire nor flood nor any manner of adversity can touch. It is the highest wisdom to live in such a way as to secure eternal life. This may be done by not living in the world for ourselves, but by living for God; by passing our property on to a world where it will never perish. By using our property to advance the cause of God, our uncertain riches are placed in an unfailling bank. But it is not riches alone that is accounted as treasure. We are to dispense our wealth of thought, to use our God-given wisdom in devising and executing plans to honor and glorify God. We are to make to ourselves friends by relieving the distress of the poor and by building up every interest we possibly can in the earth, to keep heaven and God continually in view, and to lift up the standard of righteousness among men. In so doing we are using the means and the influence that the Householder has lent us in trust to make for ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. The world may condemn us for using our means in building meeting-houses, in feeding the hungry, in helping the oppressed and suffering out of their difficulties; but the Lord says that this is the very work that should be done with his intrusted capital. Those who make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness will be received into everlasting habitations. Every sacrifice made for the purpose of blessing others, every appropriation of means for the service of God, will be treasure laid up in heaven.—*Review and Herald*, April 7, 1896.

## THE MOTIVE FOR GIVING



**LESSON 4**  
*October 21-27*

**"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."**

**"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 John 4:9, 11.**

The basic motive for giving is love. This giving is a means of expressing love, and this expression causes love to increase and mature. Unless love is expressed by the entire life, the life becomes warped and does not grow and develop properly or fully.

Why are you a Christian? Is it because you love God, or because you are afraid of the consequences of not surrendering to the will and way of God? Do you think you will have an easier and better life here and now? Are you concerned about what others will think of you if you don't?

The possible answers are numerous,

but one reason alone must predominate. One is a Christian because he loves God above everything and everyone else, including "self."

Changes take place in the life of a person as soon as he begins to understand and practice God's love. Attitudes, values, and perspectives all change. Such a person does not need to be begged or compelled to give his life back to God. He gives willingly, cheerfully, eagerly, systematically, disinterestedly, and sacrificially because he loves God.

He gives God the control and use of his life—the body, material possessions, abilities, and time. He recognizes that they belong to God and are ready and waiting to be used.

By his love, others learn to love God.

By his gift, others learn to give.

By his life, others learn to live.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13.

**Part 1**  
**GOD'S MOTIVE**  
**FOR GIVING**  
**1 John 4:9**

**How has God expressed His love for mankind?**

**"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."**

We often consider the gift of Jesus Christ at Calvary as the first great sign of God's love, but the creation of this world was also a demonstration of His great love. "This world was established and is sustained by the compassionate love of the Creator."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 50.

"All created things testify to His power, His wisdom, His love."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 8, p. 265.

**What was God's motive for giving His Son? John 3:16.**

Here is the example for each of us to follow. The only motive for giving which is acceptable to God is the motive He Himself has—love.

"As Christ in His expiring agony upon the cross cried out, 'It is finished' (John 19:30), a shout of triumph rang through every world and through heaven itself. The great contest that had been so long in progress in this world was now decided, and Christ was conqueror. His death had answered the question whether the Father and the Son had sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice. Satan had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he had ruled the children of men who were under his power, he would have manifested if permitted to control the intelligences of heaven. With one voice the loyal universe united in extolling the divine administration."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 69, 70.

God gave because He "so loved the world." No other reason is given. No other reason is needed. No other reason is valid.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How should I respond to God's love?**

"Could God give us any greater proof of His love than in thus giving His Son to pass through this scene of suffering? And as the gift of God to man was a free gift, His love infinite, so His claims upon our confidence, our obedience, our whole heart, and the wealth of our affections, are correspondingly infinite. He requires all that it is possible for man to give. The submission on our part must be proportionate to the gift of God; it must be complete and wanting in nothing. We are all debtors to God. He has claims upon us that we cannot meet without giving ourselves a full and willing sacrifice."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 369, 370.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Steps to Christ*, "God's Love for Man," pages 9-15.

**Part 2**  
**MAN'S MOTIVE**  
**FOR GIVING**  
**Luke 21:1-4**

"Thus He taught that the value of the gift is estimated not by the amount, but by the proportion that is given and the motive that actuates the giver."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 342.

**"And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."**

"It is the motive that gives character to our acts, stamping them with ignominy or with high moral worth. Not the great things which every eye sees and every tongue praises does God account most precious. The little duties cheerfully done, the little gifts which make no show, and which to human eyes may appear worthless, often stand highest in His sight. A heart of faith and love is dearer to God than the most costly gift. The poor widow gave her living to do the little that she did. She deprived herself of food in order to give those two mites to the cause she loved. And she did it in faith, believing that her heavenly Father would not overlook her great need. It was this unselfish spirit and childlike faith that won the Saviour's commendation."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 615.

**What attitudes did Paul commend to Corinthian believers who were giving offerings for the Jerusalem saints? 2 Cor. 9:7.**

"God will have a free-will offering. Those who give must esteem it a privilege to do so."—*Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 2, p. 249.

"Every action derives its quality from the motive which prompts it, and if the motives are not high, and pure, and unselfish, the mind and character will never become well balanced."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, page 171.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**If I followed the principle of giving taught by the story of the widow's mite, how much would I give?**

"When Christ abides in the soul, the thought of reward is not uppermost. This is not the motive that actuates our service. It is true that in a subordinate sense we should have respect to the recompense of reward. God desires us to appreciate His promised blessings. . . . We should not be so anxious to gain the reward as to do what is right, irrespective of all gain. Love to God and to our fellow men should be our motive."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 398, 399.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 180.



**Part 3**  
**APPEALS FOR**  
**GIVING**  
**2 Cor. 8:4, 5**

**What was the attitude of the Macedonian believers toward giving for relief of the Christians in Jerusalem?**

**"Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."**

"God designs that the exercise of benevolence shall be purely voluntary, not having recourse even to eloquent appeals to excite sympathy. 'God loveth a cheerful giver.' He is not pleased to have His treasury replenished with forced supplies."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 413.

"True Christian benevolence springs from the principle of grateful love. Love to Christ cannot exist without corresponding love to those whom He came into the world to redeem. Love to Christ must be the ruling principle of the being, controlling all the emotions and directing all the energies. Redeeming love should awaken all the tender affection and self-sacrificing devotion that can possibly exist in the heart of man. When this is the case, no heart-stirring appeals will be needed to break through their selfishness and awaken their dormant sympathies, to call forth benevolent offerings for the precious cause of truth."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 396.

**What has Jesus promised will be the result of giving? Luke 6:38.**

Give what God has enabled you to give. It isn't necessary to wait for an appeal. Give when you see a need either in God's work or among your fellowmen. Give what you have. Jesus has given us all that we have. "Freely ye have received, freely give." Matt. 10:8.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What has been my past response to the needs of God's work and to the needs of my fellowmen? What changes should I make?**

"There may sometimes have been too much urging for means. But when the light and love of Jesus illuminates the hearts of His followers, there will be no occasion for urging or begging their money or their service. When they become one with Jesus, and realize that they are not their own, that they are bought with a price and are therefore the Lord's property, and that all they have is simply entrusted to them as His stewards, they will with cheerful heart and unswerving fidelity render to God the things that are His."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 285.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 195-197.

**Part 4**  
**UNACCEPTABLE**  
**OFFERINGS**  
**Mal. 1:8, 13, 14**

**What are the modern equivalents of the unacceptable offerings given by some Jews in postexilic Judah?**

**"And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts."**

**"Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."**

God does not accept an unwilling offering as a gift at all. It may be used in His work, but the blessing that could come to the giver of the offering is not granted. To the giver it is as though the offering were never given. The formality of the offering is carried out, but the heart is not in the gift. The grudging gift is given from some other motive than love. The seriousness of this type of an experience is that the time comes when a person no longer distinguishes the good motive from the bad motive even though the giving of offerings continues.

"The Lord will not accept an offering that is made unwillingly, grudgingly. With your present feelings there would be no virtue in making more pledges. When you recover from this snare of the enemy, when you heal the breach that you have made, and realize that the wants of God's cause are as continual as are His gifts to the children of men, your works will correspond with your faith, and you will receive a rich blessing from the Lord."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 285.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is my motive for giving my life to Christ?**

"We do not propose to appeal to the lust of the appetite or resort to carnal amusements as an inducement to Christ's professed followers to give of the means which God has entrusted to them. If they do not give willingly, for the love of Christ, the offering will in no case be acceptable to God."  
—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 202.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 339.

**Part 5**  
**MATURITY**  
**AND GIVING**  
Eph. 4:13

**To what degree of maturity is the church to attain?**

**"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."**

The church, as well as the individual, is to come to maturity. To refuse to mature or "grow up" is a greater sin than the immaturity, and is an outcome of self-satisfaction and low ideals. The call for unity and maturity of verse 13 is contrasted with the immaturity and disunity of verse 14.

Immaturity in the church is encouraged by appealing to the wrong motives for giving to Christ. Candy sales, bake sales, fairs, dinners, prizes for services performed for Christ, are a few examples of appeals to wrong motives for giving. The mature Christian needs no gimmicks to encourage his liberality.

"Wherever there is life in a church, there is increase and growth. There is also a constant interchange, taking and giving out, receiving and returning to the Lord His own. To every true believer God imparts light and blessing, and this the believer imparts to others in the work that he does for the Lord. As he gives of that which he receives, his capacity for receiving is increased. Room is made for fresh supplies of grace and truth. Clearer light, increased knowledge, are his. On this giving and receiving depend the life and growth of the church. He who receives, but never gives, soon ceases to receive. If the truth does not flow from him to others, he loses his capacity to receive. We must impart the goods of heaven, if we would receive fresh blessing."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 36.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Why is it unsafe for me to rely on emotions and appeals to determine when and how much to give?**

"Here [2 Cor. 8:7] benevolence is placed by the side of faith, love, and Christian diligence. Those who think that they can be good Christians, and close their ears and hearts to the calls of God for their liberalities, are in a fearful deception. There are those who abound in professions of great love for the truth, and, so far as words are concerned, have an interest to see the truth advance, but who do nothing for its advancement. The faith of such is dead, not being made perfect by works. The Lord never made such a mistake as to convert a soul and leave it under the power of covetousness."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 393.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 340, 341.

Part 6  
LOVE VOLUNTEERS  
John 10:17, 18

What was Christ's example of initiative in giving?

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."

Love volunteers. Love makes a gift of itself. It is open, expansive, and receptive; not closed and narrowed by self-interests.

Regardless of the urgency of the need, its importance or merit, the basic motive for giving is love. Love is impartial. Jesus gave Himself. His gift was not for any special class or group. Whosoever will may receive Him. He will satisfy the needs of the life, regardless of the amount needed or who and where it is. This is the example we are to follow.

Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. He gave with the correct motive and with joy. (Heb. 12:2.) He was not deterred by the ingratitude or mistakes of others. Following His example, we should voluntarily give ourselves to God.

"To give or to labor when our sympathies are moved, and to withhold our gifts or service when the emotions are not stirred, is an unwise and dangerous course. If we are controlled by impulse or mere human sympathy, then a few instances where our efforts for others are repaid with ingratitude, or where our gifts are abused or squandered, will be sufficient to freeze up the springs of beneficence. Christians should act from fixed principle, following the Saviour's example of self-denial and self-sacrifice."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 25.

THINK IT THROUGH

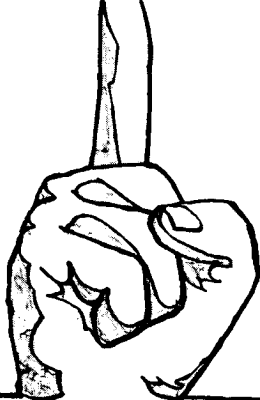
Is my love for God demonstrated by a flow of my life to Him and to my fellowmen?

"This world was established and is sustained by the compassionate love of the Creator. God is the giver of all we have. He calls upon us to return to Him a portion of the abundance He has bestowed on us. Think of the care He gives the earth, sending the rain and sunshine in their season, to cause vegetation to flourish. He bestows His favors on the just and on the unjust. Shall not the recipients of His blessings show their gratitude by giving of their means to help suffering humanity? . . .

"Think of the Saviour's matchless love. While we were yet sinners, Christ died to save us from eternal death. In return for the great love wherewith Christ has loved you, you are to bring to Him your thank offering. You are to make a gratitude offering of yourself. Your time, your talents, your means—all are to flow to the world in a tide of love for the saving of the lost."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 50.

FURTHER STUDY

*Messages to Young People*, pages 24, 25.



“When once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center. The enthusiasm, the generous devotion, the passionate ardor, of the youth find here their true object. Duty becomes a delight and sacrifice a pleasure. To honor Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him, is the life’s highest ambition and its greatest joy.”—*Education*, p. 297.

**“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” Phil. 2:20, 21.**

The root question in measuring the quality of human life is, “What is the center of your life?” There may appear to be many possible answers to this question, but answers grow out of two life orientations. The life of every person is centered in God or in self. Since a self-centered existence is the principle of Satan’s rebellion, then to live a self-centered life is really the same as to live a Satan-centered life.

“God is the great center. From Him all life proceeds. To Him all service, homage, and allegiance belong. For all created beings there is the one great principle of life—dependence upon and co-operation with God. The relationship existing in the pure family of God in

heaven was to exist in the family of God on earth. Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the earthly family to maintain the principles of the heavenly family. This would have brought peace and happiness. But the law that none ‘liveth to himself’ Satan was determined to oppose. He desired to live for self. He sought to make himself a center of influence. It was this that incited rebellion in heaven, and it was man’s acceptance of this principle that brought sin on earth. When Adam sinned, man broke away from the heaven-ordained center. A demon became the central power in the world. Where God’s throne should have been, Satan had placed his throne. The world laid its homage, as a willing offering, at the feet of the enemy.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 236.

In our lesson this week we will note self-centeredness in the human life, its results, and how it may be overcome.

**Part 1**  
**WHAT IS**  
**SELFISHNESS?**  
**John 5:42-44**

**"But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"**

These verses set forth the difference between Jesus and the Jews who were opposing Him. Jesus' life was centered in God. His opponents could not understand that kind of life, for their lives were centered in themselves. Their lives ministered to their own glory instead of to God's glory, and they thus put themselves in God's place in their experience. They were idolators, and self was their god. Thus it is with all who live self-centered, or selfish, lives. They are guilty of self-idolatry.

"The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully do we become partakers of the divine nature. We are fitted for heaven, for we receive heaven into our hearts."—*Education*, page 16.

"Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name.

"It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity. And all who accept this principle are to be workers together with Him in demonstrating it in practical life. To choose the right because it is right; to stand for truth at the cost of suffering and sacrifice—'this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.' Isaiah 54:17."—*Education*, pages 154, 155.

**THINK IT THROUGH****What forms of selfishness seek control of my life?**

"What revelations will be made in the day of judgment! Many who have called themselves Christians will be found to have been not servants of God, but servants of themselves. Self has been their center; self-service has been their lifework. By living to please themselves and to gain all they could for themselves, they have crippled and dwarfed the capabilities and powers entrusted to them by God. They have not dealt honestly with God. Their lives have been one long system of robbery."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 128.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 24-26.

**Part 2**  
**RESULTS OF**  
**SELF ATTITUDES**  
**John 5:30-32**

**What elements of a selfless life are recorded in the following text?**

**"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true."**

Jesus' life on earth was a lesson in self-denial. His selfless life was a continual demonstration of the principle of love in action. He withheld nothing. He did only the will of His Father and sought only the Father's glory or reputation.

Selfishness causes a person to withhold from God what is rightfully His. Selfishness is at the root of unfaithful stewardship in all areas of life. It causes a person to deceive himself and to attempt to deceive God. Such a person wishes it to appear as though his life has been given to God.

**Explain the relation of selfishness and deceit in the experience of Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5:3.**

Consider what selfishness does to man:

1. "It is earthliness and selfishness that separate from God."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 254.
2. "It is selfishness that causes variance in the family circle and in the church."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 610.
3. "Selfishness and love of display have been corrupting the heart and deteriorating the character."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 638.
4. "It is vain for others to seek to please you, for you could not please yourself, even if all your wishes were indulged. You are a capricious child and have become sick of yourself through very selfishness."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 325.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What do my actions reveal about the principles by which I make decisions?**

"These offerings were varied according to the donor's estimate of the blessings which he was privileged to enjoy. Thus the characters of the people were plainly developed. Those who placed a high value upon the blessings which God bestowed upon them brought offerings in accordance with this appreciation of His blessings. Those whose moral powers were stupefied and benumbed by selfishness and idolatrous love of the favors received, rather than inspired by fervent love for their bountiful Benefactor, brought meager offerings. Thus their hearts were revealed."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 598.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 27-30.

**Part 3**  
**SELFISHNESS**  
**AND THE CHURCH**  
**Rev. 3:17**

**"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."**

God counsels the church, in verse 18, to look away from self and to look to Him. He is here speaking to a church which is deceiving itself. It does not realize that it is wretched, miserable, blind, and naked. Selfishness has affected the understanding so severely as to be compared with being unaware of the loss of possessions, sight, and clothing.

"The sin that is most nearly hopeless and incurable is pride of opinion, self-conceit. This stands in the way of all growth."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 7, pp. 199, 200.

Selfishness causes the church to feel self-sufficient, having great profession but with little vital godliness and true piety. Consider what selfishness does to the church.

1. "Selfishness is driving benevolence and the love of Christ from the church."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 205.

2. "It is this increasing devotion to money getting, the selfishness which the desire for gain begets, that removes the favor of God from the church and deadens its spirituality."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 82.

3. "Selfishness has brought discord into the church, filling it with unholy ambition."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 24.

**What, in the following reference, indicates the nature of the straying sheep? Isa. 53:6.**

Sheep who follow self, or go their "own way," are heading for trouble. Unity, direction, and purpose are the results of following the shepherd. Today the lost people of the world need to see a "selfless" flock which they can join and accompany into the kingdom.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Am I following the Shepherd, or going my own way?**

"The house where God is worshiped should be in accordance with His character and majesty. There are small churches that ever will be small because they place their own interests above the interests of God's cause. While they have large, convenient houses for themselves, and are constantly improving their premises, they are content to have a most unsuitable place for the worship of God, where His holy presence is to dwell."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, pp. 268, 269.

"The sin of these last days is upon the professed people of God. Through selfishness, love of pleasure, and love of dress, they deny the Christ that their church membership says that they are following."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 129.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, pp. 202-207.



**Part 4**  
**THE FRUITS OF**  
**SELFISHNESS**  
**Matt. 7:16, 17**

**What principle for identification of false prophets also reveals the condition of the inner life?**

**"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."**

The fruits of selfishness are not always visible to the selfish individual. Selfishness may seem to be sweet and satisfying in its early stages. However, as it grows and ripens, it bears a fruit which is unsavory. It is a poison which destroys character. The end result is eternal death.

**What fruits of selfishness did Paul prophesy would characterize the last days? 2 Tim. 3:2-5.**

"God cannot pour out His Spirit when selfishness and self-indulgence are so manifest."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 52. Life is taken up with self. There is no room for the Holy Spirit to dwell in the life. It is the Holy Spirit which adds power to the life and the gospel. "Nothing saps spirituality from the soul more quickly than to enclose it in selfishness and self-caring."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 27.

"The Holy Spirit illumines our darkness, informs our ignorance, and understands and helps us in our manifold necessities. But the mind must be constantly going out after God. If coldness and worldliness are allowed to come in, we shall have no heart to pray, no courage to look up to Him who is the source of strength and wisdom. Then pray always, dear brethren and sisters, 'lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.' Urge your requests to the throne of grace, and rely upon God hour by hour and moment by moment. The service of Christ will regulate all your relations with your fellow men and make your life fruitful in good works.

"Let none imagine that selfishness, self-esteem, and self-indulgence are compatible with the Spirit of Christ."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 410.

Selfishness will destroy one's Christian experience. "Selfish interest, if given room to act, dwarfs the mind and hardens the heart; if allowed to control, it destroys moral power. Then disappointment comes."—*Messages to Young People*, page 150.

"Doubts, jealousies, and suspicion are the fruits of selfishness, and seem to be interwoven with their very natures. I shall name this class chronic church grumblers. They do more harm in a church than two ministers can undo."—*Evangelism*, pages 370, 371.

**THINK IT THROUGH**  
**FURTHER STUDY**

**What fruit does my life bear?**

*Christ's Object Lessons*, "Talents—The Talent Removed," pages 364, 365.

**Part 5**  
**COLLECTIVE**  
**SELFISHNESS**  
**Haggai 1:9**

**What condition developed among the returnees from Babylon as a result of selfish neglect of God's house?**

**"Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house."**

The experience related in this text was a collective selfishness. The Jews neglected to rebuild the temple while they built houses for themselves.

Two common forms of collective selfishness are seen when the members of a local church (1) refrain from adequately supporting God's work in their local church and community, or, (2) withhold their support from needs beyond their immediate area of personal interest.

"Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him. He will labor for those near and those afar off. He will have no sectional feeling, no interest merely to build up one branch of the work over which he presides and there let his zeal end. All will work with interest to make every branch strong. There will be no self-love, no selfish interest. The cause is one, the truth a great whole.

"Well may the question be asked with earnest, anxious heart, 'Is envy cherished, is jealousy permitted to find a place in my heart?' If so, Christ is not there. 'Do I love the law of God, is the love of Jesus Christ in my heart?' If we love one another as Christ has loved us then we are getting ready for the blessed heaven of peace and rest. There is no struggling there to be first, to have the supremacy; all will love their neighbor as themselves. Oh, that God would open the understanding and speak to the hearts of our churches by arousing the individual members."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 2, pp. 381, 382.

When a church refuses to assume its responsibilities within the worldwide organization, it is setting an example to each local member to refuse to assume individual responsibility to the local church. The church cannot expect loyalty from its members for part of its local program when it is not loyal to its obligations for the worldwide work of the church.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways am I contributing to collective selfishness or unselfishness in my church?**

"Selfishness, the sin of the world, has become the prevailing sin of the church."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 204.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Christ's Object Lessons*, "The Sower Went Forth to Sow," pages 49, 50.

**Part 6**  
**HOW TO**  
**OVERCOME**  
**SELFISHNESS**  
**Gal. 2:20**

**"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."**

The conquest over the sinful self Paul describes as a crucifixion, and the subsequent life he attributes to faith in Jesus.

"Human nature is ever struggling for expression, ready for contest; but he who learns of Christ is emptied of self, of pride, of love of supremacy, and there is silence in the soul. Self is yielded to the disposal of the Holy Spirit. Then we are not anxious to have the highest place. We have no ambition to crowd and elbow ourselves into notice; but we feel that our highest place is at the feet of our Saviour. We look to Jesus, waiting for His hand to lead, listening for His voice to guide."  
—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 15.

"Everything good in men and women is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit teaches us to reveal righteousness in our lives. The greatest work that can be done in our world is to glorify God by living the character of Christ. God will make perfect only those who will die to self. Those who are willing to do this can say, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'"—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1109.

This death of the self is not a once-for-all experience. "Paul's sanctification was the result of a constant conflict with self. He said: 'I die daily.' 1 Corinthians 15:31. His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did God's will, however crucifying to his own nature.

**THINK IT THROUGH****How complete is my surrender of self to God?**

"I saw that those who are thus prospered can thwart the design of Satan if they will overcome their selfish covetousness by laying all their possessions upon the altar of God. And when they see where means are needed to advance the cause of truth and to help the widow, the fatherless, and afflicted, they should give cheerfully and thus lay up treasure in heaven.

"Heed the counsel of the True Witness."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 142.

"Men and women may reach God's ideal for them if they will take Christ as their Helper. Make an unreserved surrender to God. To know that you are striving for eternal life will strengthen and comfort you. Christ can give you power to overcome. By His help you can utterly destroy the root of selfishness."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 7, p. 49.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, on Matt. 5:5, pages 15, 16.



**"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness." Lam. 3:22, 23, RSV.**

The title for this week's lesson is a term that comes from the early days of Adventist development—Systematic Benevolence. "In its general meaning it represents the principle of denominational financing followed from the 1850's to the present. As a specific term it applied specifically to the method of financing denominational evangelistic work until the late 1870's, when the present system of tithes and offerings was recommended and generally adopted."—*SDA Encyclopedia*, page 1287.

Since this lesson is not a historical study of systematic benevolence, it is in the general meaning that the term is used here, thus including the plan of tithes and freewill offerings as practiced by the SDA Church today. It should be

noted, however, that the use of the term "systematic benevolence" in Ellen G. White quotations is in the specific sense of the plan followed until about 1879. Since the principles of stewardship involved in both meanings is the same, except for the concept of tithe, the quotations have been included here without explanation in regard to the historical context.

"This system is so arranged that men may give something from their wages every day and lay by for their Lord a portion of the profits of every investment. The constant practice of God's plan of systematic benevolence weakens covetousness and strengthens benevolence. If riches increase, men, even those professing godliness, set their hearts upon them; and the more they have, the less they give to the treasury of the Lord. Thus riches make men selfish, and hoarding feeds covetousness; and these evils strengthen by active exercise."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 548.

**Part 1**  
**PURPOSE OF**  
**SYSTEMATIC**  
**BENEVOLENCE**  
**Luke 12:15**

**What reason did Jesus give for His warning against covetousness?**

**“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”**

Systematic benevolence is designed to combat covetousness by encouraging believers to give as frequently as they receive increase. The abundance of possessions is not always a blessing to the owner. The mind may become so occupied in caring for or seeking to increase one’s holdings, or in buying to satisfy one’s desires, that God is left out of the thoughts. The constant attention to *my* holdings and desires makes a self-centered situation that produces a selfish character. By diverting one’s thoughts and means to the needs of God’s cause and the needs of one’s fellowmen, the self-centeredness is broken up and a new center is formed in God.

Dissatisfaction with what we are or have, the desire for more, leads us either to want more things or to seek the real reason for our dissatisfaction. God encourages us to seek Him who will bring satisfaction, purpose, and meaning to life.

“The system of benevolence was arranged to prevent that great evil, covetousness. Christ saw that in the prosecution of business the love of riches would be the greatest cause of rooting true godliness out of the heart. He saw that the love of money would freeze deep and hard into men’s souls, stopping the flow of generous impulses and closing their senses to the wants of the suffering and the afflicted.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 547.

The idea of systematic giving also sharpens recognition of the constancy of the needs of the church and the world. These needs are as constant as my needs. The provision for God’s work should be as frequent as my provision for myself.

**What reason did David give for asking the question about why he and his people were able to offer so willingly to God? 1 Chron. 29:14.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Is the principle of systematic benevolence limited to money? Or how else might it be applied?**

“He has ordained that giving should become a habit, that it may counteract the dangerous and deceitful sin of covetousness. Continual giving starves covetousness to death. Systematic benevolence is designed in the order of God to tear away treasures from the covetous as fast as they are gained and to consecrate them to the Lord, to whom they belong.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 548.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 389-392.

**Part 2**  
**A BLESSING TO MAN**  
**1 Tim. 6:18, 19**

**What admonition does Paul give to those who are "rich in this world"?**

**"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."**

An important objective of systematic benevolence is to help the believer in the development of Christian character. "God planned the system of beneficence, in order that man might become like his Creator, benevolent and unselfish in character, and finally be a partaker with Christ in the eternal, glorious reward."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 15. Systematic giving is a blessing to you and a blessing to your fellowmen.

**What was Paul's attitude toward the Corinthian believers?**  
**2 Cor. 12:15.**

God cannot save a person who gives only a fraction of his life to Him. He is seeking to develop the whole man.

"God's providence has arranged the entire plan of systematic benevolence for the benefit of man. His providence never stands still. If God's servants follow His opening providence, all will be active workers."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 399. Paul's life was a living demonstration of continual giving. He even welcomed death as the fulfillment of service.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways have I been blessed as a result of faithfulness in giving systematically?**

"I saw that in the arrangement of systematic benevolence, hearts will be tested and proved. It is a constant, living test. It brings one to understand his own heart, to see whether the truth or the love of the world predominates. Here is a test for the naturally selfish and covetous. They will put down their possessions at very low figures."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 221.

*Note:* This last sentence refers to the plan recommended in Adventist papers in the early 1860's of making contributions to the cause on property holdings, as well as income, as though these properties increased in value at a rate of 10 percent annually, the going rate for money in savings accounts. See *SDA Encyclopedia*, page 1287.

"The plan of systematic benevolence will prove a safeguard to every family against temptations to spend means for needless things, and especially will it prove a blessing to the rich by guarding them from indulging in extravagances."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 412.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 393-396.

**Part 3**  
**A BLESSING**  
**TO THE CHURCH**  
**Luke 6:38****What principle of giving did Jesus emphasize?**

**"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."**

Here Jesus lays down a principle which holds true whether it be judging another or giving an offering. We receive as we have given.

Jesus is seeking to develop a church that gives liberally of what it has for the purposes of God. A church that is giving the most is receiving the most from God. "Those churches who are the most systematic and liberal in sustaining the cause of God are the most prosperous spiritually. True liberality in the follower of Christ identifies his interest with that of His Master."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 405. Working churches are spiritually strong. A body that does not follow God's instructions for healthful living is weaker than one that does, and a working, giving, sharing church is much stronger than one that refuses to give.

"The spiritual health and prosperity of the church is dependent in a great degree upon her systematic benevolence. It is like the lifeblood which must flow through the whole being, vitalizing every member of the body. It increases love for the souls of our fellow men; for by self-denial and self-sacrifice we are brought into a closer relationship to Christ, who for our sakes became poor."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 405.

**THINK IT THROUGH****What blessings can I recognize in my church as the result of our members' faithfulness?**

"God is leading His people in the plan of systematic benevolence, and this is one of the very points to which God is bringing up His people which will cut the closest with some."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 191.

"Every true Christian will develop in his life the characteristics of this divine love; he will reveal a spirit of forbearance, of beneficence, and a freedom from envy and jealousy. This character developed in word and act will not repulse, and will not be unapproachable, cold, and indifferent to the interests of others. The person who cultivates the precious plant of love will be self-denying in spirit, and will not yield self-control even under provocation. He will not impute wrong motives and evil intentions to others, but will feel deeply over sin when discovered in any of the disciples of Christ."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 123.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, pp. 189-192.

**Part 4  
NO CALLS  
NECESSARY  
Rev. 13:8****What does Rev. 13:8 imply as to the time when the plan of salvation was formed?****"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."**

God provided salvation for us before we existed. If we come as close as we can to following the example of God in our salvation, we shall give for His cause even before the need is apparent for which our gift will eventually be used.

"God has devised a plan by which all may give as He has prospered them, and which will make giving a habit without waiting for special calls. Those who can do this, but will not because of their selfishness, are robbing their Creator, who has bestowed upon them means to invest in His cause to advance its interest."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 411.

The apparent necessity for appeals for funds in church is an affront to God. It is offensive to visitors and detracts from the spirit of worship. From where, then, will the church receive the means needed to carry on the work? From following God's plan of systematic benevolence in returning to Him His own.

God has made full provision for His work. He has given explicit instructions which He asks His leaders to carry out. "Ministers have neglected to enforce gospel beneficence. The subject of tithes and offerings has not been dwelt upon as it should have been."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 382.

Not upon the minister alone rests the responsibility of kindly explaining God's plans, and their spiritual and financial meaning and possibilities. He is to be assisted by those elected to serve with him. "Let the elders and officers of the church follow the direction of the Sacred Word, and urge upon their members the necessity of faithfulness in the payment of pledges, tithes, and offerings."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 107.

**Under what circumstances did Jesus give His life for us?  
Rom. 5:6-8.****THINK IT THROUGH****How spontaneous are my gifts for God's work?**

"Greater effort should be put forth by responsible men in the different churches to have all follow the plan of God's arrangement. If systematic benevolence is carried out, the urgent calls at the camp meetings for means for various enterprises will not be necessary."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 411.

**FURTHER STUDY***Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 401-405.



**Part 5**  
**RESULTS IF**  
**NEGLECTED**  
**Neh. 13:10-12**

**What evil resulted from Judah's delinquency in benevolence?**

**"And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries."**

This experience of Nehemiah and the people of Judah brings into focus a searching question that could be asked today wherever the work of God languishes: "Why is the house of God forsaken?" One of the most serious neglects by a person, family, church, or conference is the neglect to provide for God's work.

Is it still true today as it was in the 1860's that "there has been a neglect in the churches of keeping up the plan of systematic benevolence, and the result has been an impoverished treasury and a backslidden church"?—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 409.

"Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because there is no other way to save man than to cut away those things which, if entertained, will demoralize the whole being.

"When Christ's followers give back to the Lord His own, they are accumulating treasure which will be given to them when they shall hear the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, page 523.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What reasons are there for my increased faithfulness in stewardship?**

"Whenever God's people, in any period of the world, have cheerfully and willingly carried out His plan in systematic benevolence and in gifts and offerings, they have realized the standing promise that prosperity should attend all their labors just in proportion as they obeyed His requirements. When they acknowledged the claims of God and complied with His requirements, honoring Him with their substance, their barns were filled with plenty. But when they robbed God in tithes and in offerings they were made to realize that they were not only robbing Him but themselves, for He limited His blessings to them just in proportion as they limited their offerings to Him."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 395.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 408-410.

**Part 6**  
**GOD'S OWN PLAN**  
**Deut. 16:17**

**What instruction did God give to Israel for the three annual convocations?**

**"Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee."**

The plan that God established was fair. Gifts to Him were to be determined by the giver's prosperity, and the giver was the one who determined what he was able to give.

"Anciently the Lord instructed His people to assemble three times a year for His worship. To these holy convocations the children of Israel came, bringing to the house of God their tithes, their sin offerings, and their offerings of gratitude. They met to recount God's mercies, to make known His wonderful works, and to offer praise and thanksgiving to His name. And they were to unite in the sacrificial service which pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Thus they were to be preserved from the corrupting power of worldliness and idolatry. Faith and love and gratitude were to be kept alive in their hearts, and through their association together in this sacred service they were to be bound closer to God and to one another."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 39.

"The simplicity of the plan of systematic benevolence does not detract from its merits, but extols the wisdom of God in its arrangement. Everything bearing the divine stamp unites simplicity with utility."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 409.

"While in poverty, many regard systematic giving as a Bible requirement; but when they come into possession of money or property, they do not acknowledge God's claim upon them. They look upon their means as their own."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 1130. One needs to consider seriously whether or not, and to what degree, he has been affected by such reasoning.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

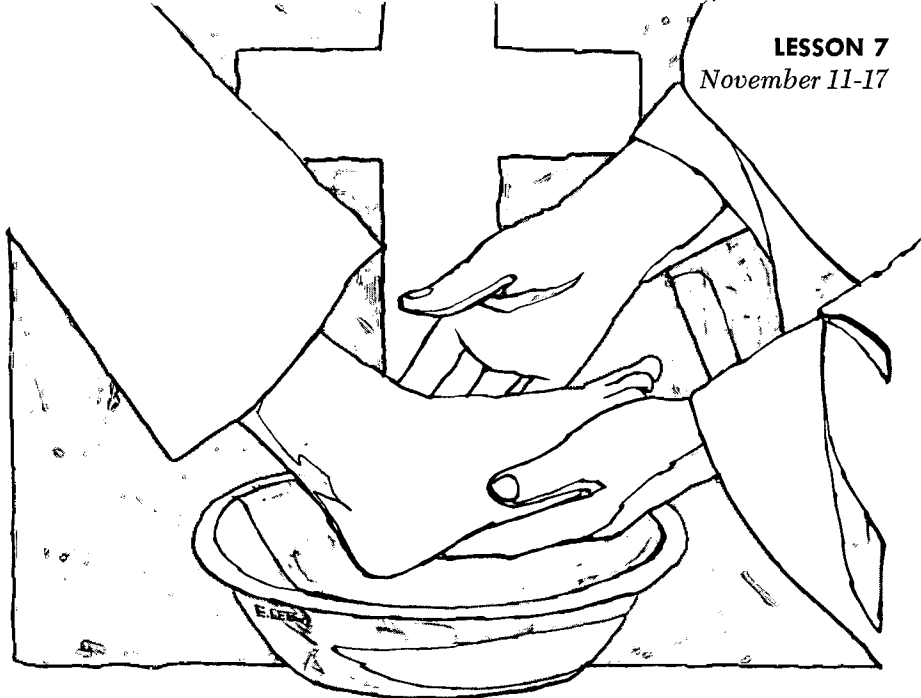
**In what way has prosperity, or poverty, affected my systematic benevolence?**

"Our Redeemer, who knew man's danger in regard to covetousness, has provided a safeguard against this dreadful evil. He has arranged the plan of salvation so that it begins and ends in benevolence. Christ offered Himself, an infinite sacrifice. This, in and of itself, bears directly against covetousness and exalts benevolence.

"Constant, self-denying benevolence is God's remedy for the cankering sins of selfishness and covetousness. God has arranged systematic benevolence to sustain His cause and relieve the necessities of the suffering and needy."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 548.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 389-392.



## DISINTERESTED BENEVOLENCE

**"And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matt. 26:39.**

The term "disinterested benevolence" was used by Ellen G. White in five primary references, and it is from her use of the term that the title of this week's lesson is derived. The meaning of this expression as used here must be determined by the sense in which Ellen G. White used it. By this she means that which is opposite to selfish interest—sacrifice for another's benefit, or care for the unfortunate.

In four of the above five references Jesus Christ is the example given of what disinterested benevolence is. The first dictionary meaning for "benevolence" is the "kindly disposition to do

good," and the relevant meaning for "disinterest" is "free from selfish motive or interest." The two words combined then, mean the disposition to do good without selfish motive or interest. This is the same sense in which Ellen G. White used the term, and then used Christ's life to illustrate it.

Our lesson this week will follow that lead, noting the disinterested benevolence of our Lord, and then how this trait can be lived by the Christian today.

The article by Ellen G. White which follows this lesson was printed in the *Review and Herald*, July 13, 1886. "The Sin of Selfishness" is to be read as supplementary material with this week's lesson.

**Part 1**            **What evidence of Christ's "disinterested benevolence" do**  
**JESUS BECAME**        **you find in 2 Cor. 8:9?**

**POOR**            **"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that,**  
**2 Cor. 8:9**        **though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that**  
                      **ye through his poverty might be rich."**

"Paul presents his pattern, his ideal. Christ had given Himself to a life of poverty that they might become rich in heavenly treasure. He would refresh their memories in regard to the sacrifice made in their behalf. Christ was commander in the heavenly courts, yet He took the lowest place in this world. He was rich, yet for our sakes, He became poor. It was not spiritual riches that He left behind; He was always abounding in the gifts of the Spirit. But He was of poor parentage. The world never saw its Lord wealthy."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1104.

**What further change in the existence and experience of the Son of God points to His selflessness? Phil. 2:5-7.**

"Under the mighty impulse of His love, He took our place in the universe, and invited the Ruler of all things to treat Him as a representative of the human family. He identified Himself with our interests, bared His breast for the stroke of death, took man's guilt and its penalty, and offered in man's behalf a complete sacrifice to God. By virtue of this atonement, He has power to offer to man perfect righteousness and full salvation. Whosoever shall believe on Him as a personal Saviour shall not perish, but have everlasting life."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, pp. 924, 925.

Paul's reference to Christ's equality with the Father reminds us of the depth of Christ's selfless interests in man. His completely "disinterested" gift of Himself—His whole being—became the ruling desire and principle of His life. Consider three steps involved in this process:

1. Christ left His place and position in heaven.
2. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, or slave.
3. He did the will of His Father.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Was Jesus, in His human life, "underprivileged"?**

"God gave His Son to die for sinful human beings a death of ignominy and shame. He who was Commander in the heavenly courts laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and clothing His divinity with humanity, came to this world to stand at the head of the human race as the pattern-man."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 904.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*The Desire of Ages*, pages 43, 44.

**Part 2**  
**SELFLESS SERVICE**  
**John 13:3-5**

By what act did Jesus teach the ideal relation of the disciples to other persons? What is this relation? Read also verses 12-15.

**"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."**

"To those who receive the spirit of this service, it can never become a mere ceremonial. Its constant lesson will be, 'By love serve one another.' Gal. 5:13. In washing the feet of His disciples, Christ gave evidence that He would do any service, however humble, that would make them heirs with Him of the eternal wealth of heaven's treasure. His disciples, in performing the same rite, pledge themselves in like manner to serve their brethren. Whenever this ordinance is rightly celebrated, the children of God are brought into a holy relationship, to help and bless each other. They covenant that the life shall be given to unselfish ministry. And this, not only for one another. Their field of labor is as wide as their Master's was. The world is full of those who need our ministry. The poor, the helpless, the ignorant, are on every hand. Those who have communed with Christ in the upper chamber will go forth to minister as He did."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 651.

"The ordinance of feet washing is an ordinance of service. This is the lesson the Lord would have all learn and practice. When this ordinance is rightly celebrated, the children of God are brought into holy relationship with each other, to help and bless each other.

"That His people might not be misled by the selfishness which dwells in the natural heart, and which strengthens by self-serving, Christ Himself set us an example of humility. He would not leave this great subject in man's charge. Of so much consequence did He regard it that He Himself, One equal with God, washed the feet of His disciples [John 13:13-17 quoted]. . . .

"It is to reveal the great truth that Christ is an example of what we through His grace are to be in our intercourse with each other. It shows that the entire life should be one of humble, faithful ministry."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, pp. 1138, 1139.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways do I need to begin practicing the lesson of the ordinance of feet washing?**

**FURTHER STUDY**

*The Desire of Ages*, pages 649-651.

**Part 3**  
**THE UNRESTRICTED**  
**GIFT**  
**Matt. 26:39**

**Even when facing death, how did Jesus relate to the Father's will?**

**"And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."**

This experience of Jesus is an illustration of love and disinterested benevolence. Jesus did not say, "No one else is being asked to give as much as I am. They won't appreciate my gift anyway. Why should I give?" Jesus knew many would never accept His gift, yet He gave. He realized that some would actually misuse His gift of life, but He gave it anyway. Why did He? Why should I? Because He viewed the purpose for which He gave as more valuable than the gift itself. The purpose of Jesus' gift was the salvation of a person. The gift was His life.

**Consider again the unrestricted nature of God's gift. John 3:16.**

Self-interest and personal advantage have sometimes been the basis for giving. Such motives for giving make the gift not really a gift at all, but a kind of purchase, because one is seeking advantage for which he is willing to pay the price of the gift. The Father and the Son sought advantage only for the creatures of the universe. Their's was a true gift.

**What words in Christ's invitation show that His relationship with people is impartial? Matt. 11:28.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways do my attitudes and responses demonstrate Christlike benevolence? In what ways not?**

"Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The Scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and a national benefit of all the gifts of heaven and to exclude the rest of God's family in the world. But Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth.

"The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, pp. 190, 191.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pp. 55-57.

**Part 4**  
**BENEVOLENCE**  
**PERVERTED**  
**Isa. 14:12-14****What attitude of Lucifer was the root of his fall?**

**"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."**

Speaking to the angelic host, Satan "introduced his subject, which was himself. . . . He stated to them that he had called them together to assure them that he no longer would submit to this invasion of his rights and theirs; that never would he again bow down to Christ; that he would take the honor upon himself which should have been conferred upon him, and would be the commander of all who would submit to follow him and obey his voice."—*The Story of Redemption*, pages 14, 15.

"The greatness and power with which the Creator endowed Lucifer, he has perverted; yet when it suits his purpose, he can impart to men sentiments that are enchanting. Satan can inspire his agents with thoughts that appear elevating and noble. Did he not come to Christ with quotations of Scripture when he designed to overthrow Him with specious temptations? It is thus that he comes to men, disguising his temptations under an appearance of goodness and making them believe him to be the friend rather than the enemy of humanity. In this way he has deceived and seduced the race, beguiling them with subtle temptations, bewildering them with specious deceptions."—*Counsels to Teachers*, page 27.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Is my life patterned after the example of Christ or of Satan?**

"I point you to the life of Jesus as a perfect pattern. His life was characterized by disinterested benevolence. Precious Saviour! What sacrifices has He made for us that we should not perish, but have everlasting life! Heaven will be cheap enough if we resign every selfish interest to obtain it. Can we afford to have our own way, and take ourselves out of the hands of God, because it is more pleasing to the natural heart? God requires perfect submission and perfect obedience. Eternal life is worth everything to us. You may come in close connection with God if you will agonize to enter in at the strait gate."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 218.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 8, pp. 24, 25.

**Part 5**  
**OUR GIFTS TO BE**  
**UNRESTRICTED**  
**2 Cor. 5:15**

**Since Jesus died for us, for whom are we to live?**

**"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."**

When we give the self to God without restrictions, we no longer belong to self. We are dead to self. In this time of the end every member and family in the local congregation should look for ways to cooperate and assist each other to finish the work of God. A spirit of disinterested benevolence, unselfish liberality, would allow God to work miracles among us.

"Unselfish liberality threw the early church into a transport of joy; for the believers knew that their efforts were helping to send the gospel message to those in darkness. Their benevolence testified that they had not received the grace of God in vain. What could produce such liberality but the sanctification of the Spirit? In the eyes of believers and unbelievers it was a miracle of grace."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 344.

**What directions for sharing the gospel were given to us by Christ? Mark 16:15.**

The gospel message and invitation is open to all persons in all the world. Each Christian, anywhere in the world, is to share what he has that another may hear the message and the invitation of Jesus. God calls us out from our narrow, restricted sphere. He urges us to expand our thinking and our concept of a completed work in our own lives and throughout the world.

"The liberality required of the Hebrews was largely to benefit their own nation; today the work of God extends over all the earth. In the hands of His followers, Christ has placed the treasures of the gospel, and upon them He has laid the responsibility of giving the glad tidings of salvation to the world. Surely our obligations are much greater than were those of ancient Israel."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 337, 338.

The message—as well as money—must not be restricted by God's people.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways do my attitudes expand or restrict the work of my local church?**

"They should also feel it a solemn duty to illustrate in their characters the teachings of Christ, being at peace one with another and moving in perfect harmony as an undivided whole. They should defer their individual judgment to the judgment of the body of the church."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 18.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pp. 18-20.



**Part 6**  
**NO LOST BLESSINGS**  
**Rom. 8:32**

**What is the extent of God's generosity toward us?**

**"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"**

**What illustration did Jesus give of the Father's impartial gifts? Matt. 5:45.**

"God pours His blessings upon all. 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' He is 'kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.' Luke 6:35. He bids us to be like Him. 'Bless them that curse you,' said Jesus; 'do good to them that hate you, . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.' These are the principles of the law, and they are the well-springs of life."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 311.

All of our gifts are gifts to Christ if they are given from the right motive. The question of consequence to the giver is not how the gift is eventually used, but Why did he give it? Jesus healed ten lepers, and nine of them, ungrateful, continued their same old sinful life.

"For the sake of this one man, who would make a right use of the blessing of health, Jesus healed the whole ten. The nine passed on without appreciating the work done, and rendered no grateful thanks to Jesus for doing the work."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 180.

"Those self-sacrificing, consecrated ones who render back to God the things that are His, as He requires of them, will be rewarded according to their works. Even though the means thus consecrated be misapplied, so that it does not accomplish the object which the donor had in view,—the glory of God and the salvation of souls,—those who made the sacrifice in sincerity of soul, with an eye single to the glory of God, will not lose their reward.

"Those who have made a wrong use of means dedicated to God will be required to give an account of their stewardship."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 519.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**As I review my attitudes toward God's work, in what ways should I change?**

"Christ unsparingly condemned abuses, but He was careful not to lessen obligation. He rebuked the selfishness that extorted and misapplied the widow's gifts. At the same time He commended the widow who brought her offering to God's treasury. Man's abuse of the gift could not turn God's blessing from the giver."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 614.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pp. 58, 59.

## THE SIN OF SELFISHNESS

Ellen G. White

The simplicity of the truth will ever lead us to feel a sympathy for others' woes. There are those who need our sympathy and our love. To exercise these traits of character, is a part of the life work which Christ has given us all to do.

There exists in the hearts of many an element of selfishness which clings to them like the leprosy. They have so long consulted their own wishes, their own pleasure and convenience, that they do not feel that others have claims upon them. Their thoughts, plans, and efforts are for themselves. They live for self, and do not cultivate disinterested benevolence, which, if exercised, would increase and strengthen until it would be their delight to live for others' good. This selfishness must be seen and overcome; for it is a grievous sin in the sight of God. They need to exercise a more special interest for humanity; and in thus doing, they would bring their souls into closer connection with Christ, and would be imbued with his Spirit, so that they would cleave to him with so firm a tenacity that nothing could separate them from his love.

God will not excuse us for not taking up the cross, and practicing self-denial, in doing good to others with unselfish motives. We may, if we will take the trouble to make the self-denial required of Christians, be qualified, by the grace of God, to win souls to Christ. God has claims upon many of us to which we have never responded. There are those all around us who hunger for sympathy and love. But many of us are nearly destitute of that humble love which naturally flows out in pity and sympathy for the destitute, the suffering, and the needy. The human countenance itself is a mirror of the soul, read by others, and leaving a telling influence upon them for good or evil. God does not call

upon any of us to watch our brethren, and to repent of their sins. He has left us a work to do, and calls upon us to do it resolutely, in his fear, with an eye single to his glory.

Every one must give to God an account of himself, not of others, whether he is faithful or otherwise. Seeing faults in other professors, and condemning their course, will not excuse or offset one error of ours. We should not make others our criterion, nor excuse anything in our course because others have done wrong. God has given us consciences for ourselves. Great principles have been laid down in his word, which are sufficient to guide us in our Christian walk and general deportment. Those have not kept the principles of the law of God who have never felt the burden of the duty devolving upon men to his fellow-men.

"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as

he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."

Here the conditions of inheriting eternal life are plainly stated by our Saviour in the most simple manner. The man wounded and robbed represents those who are subjects of our interest, sympathy, and charity. If we neglect the cases of the needy and the unfortunate that are brought under our notice, no matter who they may be, we have no assurance of eternal life; for we do not answer the claims that God has upon us. We are not compassionate and pitiful to humanity, because they may not be kith or kin to us. All such are found transgressors of the second great commandment, upon which the last six commandments depend. Whosoever offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all. Those who do not open their hearts to the wants and sufferings of humanity, will not open their hearts to the claims of God stated in the first four precepts of the decalogue. Idols claim the heart and affections, and God is not honored and does not reign supreme.

Some are quite exact in some things, yet neglect the weightier matters—judgment, mercy, and the love of God. Although the customs of the world are no criterion for us, yet the pitying sympathy and the benevolence of the world for the unfortunate, in many cases, shame the professed followers of Jesus Christ. Many manifest indifference to the cases of those whom God has thrown in their midst for the purpose of testing and

proving them, and developing what is in their hearts. God reads. He marks every act of selfishness, every act of indifference to the afflicted, the widows, and the fatherless; and he writes against their names, *Guilty, wanting, law-breakers*. We shall be rewarded as our works have been. Any neglect of duty to the needy and to the afflicted is a neglect of duty to Christ in the person of his saints.

When the cases of all come in review before God, the question, What did they profess? is never asked, but, What have they done? Have they been doers of the word? Have they lived for themselves? or have they been exercised in works of benevolence, in deeds of kindness, in love, preferring others before themselves, and denying themselves that they might bless others? If the record shows that this has been their life, that their characters have been marked with tenderness, self-denial, and benevolence, they will receive the blessed assurance and benediction from Christ, "Well done," "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Christ has been grieved and wounded by our marked selfish love, and indifference to the woes and needs of others.

Many times our efforts may be disregarded and apparently lost upon others. But this should be no excuse for us to become weary in well-doing. How often has Jesus come to find fruit upon the plants of his care, and found nothing but leaves! We may be disappointed as to the result of our best efforts; but this should not lead us to be indifferent to others' woes, and to do nothing. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." How often is Christ disappointed in those who profess to be his children! He has given them unmistakable evidences of his love. He became poor, that through his poverty we might be made rich. He died for us, that

we might not perish, but have eternal life. What if Christ had refused to bear our iniquity because he was rejected by many, and so few appreciated his love and the infinite blessings he came to bring to them? We need to encourage patient, painstaking efforts. Courage is now wanted, not lazy despondency and fretful murmuring. We are in this world to do work for the Master, and not to study our inclination and pleasure, and to serve and glorify ourselves. Why, then, should we be inactive and discouraged because we do not see the immediate results we desire?

Our work is to toil in the vineyard of the Lord, not merely for ourselves, but for the good of others. Our influence is a blessing or a curse to others. We are here to form perfect characters for heaven. We have something to do besides repining and murmuring at God's providence, and writing bitter things against ourselves. Our adversary will not allow us to rest. If we are indeed God's children, we shall be harassed and sorely beset; and we need not expect that Satan or those under his influence will treat us well. But there are angels who excel in strength, who will be with us in all our conflicts, if we will only be faithful. Christ conquered Satan in our behalf in the wilderness of temptation. He is mightier than Satan, and he will shortly bruise him under our feet.

Our spiritual strength and blessing will be proportionate to the labor of love and good works which we perform. The

injunction of the apostle is, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Keeping the commandments of God requires of us good works, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and devotion for the good of others, not that our good works alone can save us, but that we surely cannot be saved without good works. After we have done all that we are capable of doing, we are then to say, We have done no more than our duty, and at best are unprofitable servants, unworthy of the smallest favor from God. Christ must be our righteousness, and the crown of our rejoicing.

All must be lost who will not arouse themselves and work with Christ. Many encase themselves in cold, unfeeling, unsympathizing armor. There is but little life and warmth in their associations with others. They live for themselves, not for Jesus Christ. They are careless and indifferent to the needs and conditions of others less fortunate than themselves. All around us there are those who have soul hunger, and who long for love expressed in words and deeds. Friendly sympathy and real feelings of tender interest for others would bring to our souls blessings that we have never yet experienced, and would bring us into close relation to our Redeemer, whose advent to the world was for the purpose of doing good, and whose life we are to copy. What are we doing for Christ? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—*Review and Herald*, July 13, 1886.

“The word of God defines covetousness as idolatry. It is impossible for men and women to keep the law of God and love money. The heart’s affections should be placed upon heavenly things. Our treasure should be laid up in heaven, for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 130.

**“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” Matt. 6:33, first part.**

The first secret of victorious Christian living is putting God first in the life. It is on this point that true religion begins. It is on this point of placing Him first that God has been testing man from the very beginning.

Putting God first in our lives should be easy, yet many people find it difficult in everyday practice. Taking time for the study of the Bible and the Sabbath School lessons, time for personal prayers and family worship, are among the most difficult areas for putting God first in a practical manner.

A practical result of living according to the God-first principle is that it will simplify our personal lives and the whole program of the church. Time and abilities will be voluntarily budgeted for missionary outreach, thus eliminating the

need for appeals to us to take time to witness. We will follow God’s plan for healthful living. We will set aside God’s tithe and offerings, thus eliminating the need for appeals to get us to give. What a change this could make in the spiritual atmosphere of our worship. A large increase in time and money could be available for God’s work in the church and the community if we were all following the God-first principle of living.

God wants us to believe in Him, trust Him, and depend on Him. He wants to demonstrate, to us and to the world, what happens when He is first in the lives of His people. The natural man puts self first. He seeks survival and happiness. But seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness is the only way to lasting happiness now or to survival hereafter.

The practical lesson of placing God first can change your life if you practice it. Apply this basic principle to each of the four parts of your life.

**Part 1**  
**GOD IS FIRST**  
**Ex. 20:3**

**In what position are we commanded to place God?**

**"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."**

"God appeals to us to put Him before all else, to put Him first in our affections and in our lives, in harmony with our Lord's injunction in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 6:33). Mere belief alone will not do, nor even the acknowledgment that He is the one and only God. We owe wholehearted allegiance and devotion to Him as a personal Being whom it is our privilege to know, to love, and trust, and with whom we may have blessed fellowship. Dependence upon something else than God, whether it be wealth, knowledge, position, or friends, places us in peril."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Ex. 20:3.

**How does the second commandment enlarge upon the first? Ex. 20:4, 5.**

"Are we worshipers of Jehovah, or of Baal? of the living God, or of idols? No outward shrines may be visible; there may be no image for the eye to rest upon; yet we may be practicing idolatry. It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 1105.

**What two truths about God the Son mentioned in Heb. 1:10-12 establish His importance?**

The Godhead is the original and permanent Intelligence which is both the Source and Sustainer of the universe. Man should regard Him as first because He is first in every way. God must become the supreme meaning in the life of each one seeking salvation. No thing and no one is to come before Him, because that which replaces God is in a false position. God was first from the very beginning. He is first today. He will ever be first. When a person accepts this reality experientially he has found the key point in overcoming idolatry. When a person really knows God, "whom to know is life eternal," he will want it no other way. Duty becomes a delight.

**THINK IT THROUGH**  
**FURTHER STUDY**

**What are the gods of our world today?**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 103, 104.

**Part 2**  
**WARNINGS AGAINST**  
**SELF FIRST**  
Jer. 45:5**What divine message to Baruch is still appropriate today?**

**"And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."**

"The Lord has no place in His work for those who have a greater desire to win the crown than to bear the cross. He wants men who are more intent upon doing their duty than upon receiving their reward—men who are more solicitous for principle than for promotion.

"Those who are humble, and who do their work as unto God, may not make so great a show as do those who are full of bustle and self-importance; but their work counts for more. Often those who make a great parade call attention to self, interposing between the people and God, and their work proves a failure."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pages 476, 477.

"Lucifer thought that he was himself a favorite in heaven among the angels. He had been highly exalted, but this did not call forth from him gratitude and praise to his Creator. He aspired to the height of God Himself. He gloried in his loftiness. He knew that he was honored by the angels. He had a special mission to execute. He had been near the great Creator, and the ceaseless beams of glorious light enshrouding the eternal God had shone especially upon him. He thought how angels had obeyed his command with pleasurable alacrity. Were not his garments light and beautiful? Why should Christ thus be honored before himself."—*The Story of Redemption*, page 14.

**What warning does Paul give about the self? Rom. 12:3.****What unwise and deceptive measure of the self does Paul condemn? 2 Cor. 10:12.****THINK IT THROUGH****How far from God have I permitted Satan to lead me? How do I view myself? Am I comparing myself with Jesus? What will be the result of such a comparison?**

"Human beings belong to one great family—the family of God. The Creator designed that they should respect and love one another, ever manifesting a pure, unselfish interest in one another's welfare. But Satan's aim has been to lead men to self first; and yielding themselves to his control, they have developed a selfishness that has filled the world with misery and strife, setting human beings at variance with one another."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 24.

**FURTHER STUDY***Prophets and Kings*, pages 344-346.

**Part 3**  
**THE CURSE OF**  
**SELF FIRST**  
**Mal. 3:9**

**When Judah was accused of robbing God, what did God say was the result?**

**"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."**

When one man robs another, the robber has considered himself before his victim, and enriches himself at the victim's expense.

A curse is a strong denunciation and is the opposite of a blessing. While both curse and blessing are verbal, there are literal results that follow when God is the speaker. The blessings promised in verses 10-12 are pronounced on the crops, and the curse, unidentified, is presumably crop failure.

**What curses came upon Judah after the exile when self-interest dictated their priorities? Hag. 1:4-11.**

"Because they had let the temple lie waste, the Lord sent upon their substance a wasting drought. God had bestowed upon them the fruits of field and garden, the corn and the wine and the oil, as a token of His favor; but because they had used these bountiful gifts so selfishly, the blessings were removed. . . .

"The lack of temporal prosperity was the result of a neglect to put God's interests first, the prophets declared. Had the Israelites honored God, had they shown Him due respect and courtesy, by making the building of His house their first work, they would have invited His presence and blessing."—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 573, 574.

"God's requirements come first. We are not doing His will if we consecrate to Him what is left of our income after all our imaginary wants have been supplied. Before any part of our earnings is consumed, we should take out and present to Him that portion which He claims. . . . But when a man robs God by withholding that which He requires, His curse rests upon the whole."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 477.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What in my life am I putting before God?**

"The increase of their property strengthens the eager desire for more, until some consider that their giving to the Lord a tenth is a severe and unjust tax. . . . God has tested some of these by giving them riches; but with the riches came the fiercer temptation, and their benevolence was far less than in the days of their poverty. A grasping desire for greater riches absorbed their minds and hearts, and they committed idolatry."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 403.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 24-26.



Part 4  
THE BLESSINGS  
OF PUTTING  
GOD FIRST  
Prov. 3:9, 10

**Upon what principle are God's blessings promised?**

**"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."**

"Every believer should be wholehearted in his attachment to the church. Its prosperity should be his first interest. . . . It is in the power of all to do something for the cause of God."  
—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 18.

**What blessings were promised to Judah if they would put God first in specific ways? Mal. 3:10-12; Isa. 58:13, 14.**

God makes an unusual promise to those who put Him first. "Those who are ready and willing to invest in the cause of God, will be blessed in their efforts to acquire money. . . .

"We must ever bear in mind that we are in copartnership with God. His work and His cause demand the first consideration."—*Our High Calling*, page 194.

God's share of our life should be reserved first. (1) Adhere to the health message for the care of your body. (2) Return the tithe and give liberal offerings to God. (3) Dedicate and use a portion of your abilities in daily working for God. Take time to be a real Christian every day. (4) Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Make the Sabbath "a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable."

This must not be an occasional consecration, but a way of life, done systematically, disinterestedly because you love God.

The question is not if God can supply whatever is needed to advance His work, but can man be a channel which will not be blocked by selfishness. "And if men will become channels through which heaven's blessing can flow to others, the Lord will keep the channel supplied."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 36.

THINK IT THROUGH

**What blessings have I received as a result of making God first in my life?**

"There are but few who consider the binding claims that God has upon them to make it their first business to meet the necessities of His cause and let their own desires be served last. There are but few who invest in God's cause in proportion to their means. Many have fastened their money in property which they must sell before they can invest it in the cause of God. . . . They have as effectually buried their money in the earth as had the man in the parable. They rob God of the tenth, . . . and in robbing Him they rob themselves of the heavenly treasure."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 398.

FURTHER STUDY

*The Desire of Ages*, pages 369-371.

Part 5  
A LESSON OF TRUST  
1 Kings 17:13

**What seemingly selfish request did Elijah make of the widow of Zarephath?**

**“And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first.”**

Why should God, through Elijah, ask this poor woman to share with Elijah the very last food she had for her son and herself? The request was even more unusual coming from a stranger and a foreigner.

**What promise accompanied this request? Verse 14.**

“No greater test of faith than this could have been required. The widow had hitherto treated all strangers with kindness and liberality. Now, regardless of the suffering that might result to herself and child, and trusting in the God of Israel to supply her every need, she met this supreme test of hospitality by doing ‘according to the saying of Elijah.’

“Wonderful was the hospitality shown to God’s prophet by this Phoenician woman, and wonderfully were her faith and generosity rewarded. ‘She, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah.’”—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 130, 131.

“Give what you can now, and as you cooperate with Christ, your hand will open to impart still more. And God will refill your hand.”—*Our High Calling*, page 199.

God repeats, in principle, the same promises today as He did through Elijah to the widow. Each individual is given opportunity to demonstrate trust in God by putting Him first.

God expects to be first in every respect. He desires to demonstrate that He provides for those who put their trust and confidence in Him. It may take some nearly bare cupboards, and a request to give what is left to a stranger, before some of us will know whether or not we have put God first in our lives and believe His promises.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**To those who know me best, is my life a demonstration of trust in God?**

“We try too hard to take care of self ourselves. We are uneasy and greatly lack a firm trust in God. Many worry and work, contrive and plan, fearing they may suffer need. They cannot afford time to pray or to attend religious meetings and, in their care for themselves, leave no chance for God to care for them. And the Lord does not do much for them, for they give Him no opportunity. They do too much for themselves, and believe and trust in God too little.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 196.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 197-199.

**Part 6**  
**GOD CARES FOR**  
**HIS OWN**  
**Deut. 16:16, 17**

**How often were the men of ancient Israel to go to the temple?**

**“Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; . . . every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.”**

Three times each year all able-bodied men went to Shiloh, and later to Jerusalem. Behind them they left their orchards, crops, herds, and homes. It would seem that they were inviting plunder from the people who previously occupied the land Israel now held. There were no visible signs of protection along their nonpermanent borders.

**What promise did God make and fulfill during the absence of these men from their homes? Ex. 34:23, 24.**

In order to appreciate what was happening, one must note that God promised that these people were (1) to come into possession of a land they could not conquer alone, (2) to houses they had not built, and (3) to fields they had not cleared. God said He would cast out the nations before them, fight their battles, and provide for all their needs if He was given first place in their lives. No man would even desire their land.

They gave tithes, offerings, and time—more than thirty days yearly, besides the regular Sabbath days.

Why did God ask this? So that in their individual lives they would be related to God's interests. His interests were becoming theirs. Also they would be remembering their origin and the origin of all they possessed.

“We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”—*Life Sketches*, page 196.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How can I more consistently put God first in my whole life?**

“The lesson is for God's children in every age. When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey.”—*Prophets and Kings*, page 243.

“Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 481.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 186-188.



**"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." 1 Cor. 4:2.**

It has been noted previously that a steward is a manager. One who is entrusted with *management* makes a "judicious use of means to accomplish an end."—*Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*. The Christian steward, entrusted with the Lord's goods, is to use those goods judiciously to accomplish the Lord's purposes. A judicious use of the Lord's goods requires planning, as opposed to a haphazard use of his talent.

The sincere Christian "has not lost by any means, the power of accumulation; but he employs his active energies in seeking for spiritual attainments; then all his entrusted talents will be appreciated as God's gifts to be employed to His glory. By him property will be prized, not hoarded, valued only inasmuch as it

can be used to advance the truth, to work as Christ worked when He was upon the earth, to bless humanity. For this purpose he will use his powers, not to please or glorify self, but to strengthen every entrusted gift that he may do the highest service to God. Of him it can be said, 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.' " —*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 158, 159.

The article by Ellen G. White which follows this lesson was printed in the *Review and Herald*, September 18, 1893. "Now Is the Time to Dedicate All to God" is to be read as supplementary material with this week's lesson.

**Part 1**  
**GRACE OF GIVING**  
**2 Cor. 8:7**

**What instructions concerning offerings did the apostle Paul give to the Corinthians?**

**"Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."**

Paul was here commending the Corinthians in their attainment of certain virtues and admonishing them not to come short in the virtue of giving. His words were not written as an order (verse 8) but to encourage them in giving as proof of their love.

"This matter of giving is not left to impulse. God has given us definite instruction in regard to it. He has specified tithes and offerings as the measure of our obligation. And He desires us to give regularly and systematically."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 80, 81.

Some people wait until an appeal for money is made for some particular purpose before they give. The practice of giving only in response to an appeal most often results in church poverty.

"The Lord requires gifts to be made at stated times, being so arranged that giving will become habit and benevolence be felt to be a Christian duty. The heart, opened by one gift, is not to have time to become selfishly cold and to close before the next is bestowed. The stream is to be continually flowing, thus keeping open the channel by acts of benevolence."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 393, 394.

"The cause of benevolence would no longer be dependent on the uncertain gifts of impulse, and vary according to the changing feelings of men."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 199, 200.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**As I examine my stewardship practices, what do I find determines the occasion and amount of my gifts?**

"I was shown the awful fact that Satan and his angels have had more to do with the management of the property of God's professed people than the Lord has. Stewards of the last days are unwise. They suffer Satan to control their business matters, and get into his ranks what belongs to, and should be in, the cause of God. God takes notice of you, unfaithful stewards; He will call you to account. . . . But I saw that Satan and his angels exult over their success in this matter. And those who should be wise heirs of salvation almost willingly let their Lord's money slip out of their hands into the enemy's ranks. In this way they strengthen Satan's kingdom, and seem to feel very easy about it."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, pp. 199, 200.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*; Vol. 1, pp. 197-199.

**Part 2**  
**COLLECTIONS**  
**OR OFFERINGS?****What positive guide did Paul give concerning the offering of the Corinthians? 2 Cor. 8:11, 12.**

Paul was here admonishing the Corinthians to follow through with a previous willingness (verse 10) to give an offering for the needs of their fellow believers.

God does not expect us to give more than we are able to give. If we give willingly as we are able, God accepts it as the fulfillment of our stewardship. He does not ask us to give what we do not have.

The Sabbath services are not the ideal time to determine how much we are able to give. A look at two words—collection and offering—may help point out two different attitudes in giving. We say that we “take up” a collection. The initiative is with the one in charge of the meeting and those helping him, and people respond to the leader’s appeal by placing money in a plate or basket. On the other hand we say that we “give” an offering. The initiative in this instance is with the giver. He has brought an offering to the meeting and is waiting for the opportunity to give it. This does not mean that “collections” are wrong, but it points out that planned offerings are the better way.

**What equality of responsibility did Paul teach to the Corinthian church? 2 Cor. 8:13, 14.**

“He had established in the Corinthian church, as also in Galatia, a system of weekly offerings, and had enjoined upon Titus, in his visit to Corinth, to give special attention to forwarding this benevolent enterprise.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, page 174.

**THINK IT THROUGH****Is my gift presented as an offering or as a collection?**

“As the persevering, systematic workers see that the tendency of their benevolent efforts is to nourish love to God and their fellow men, and that their personal efforts are extending their sphere of usefulness, they will realize that it is a great blessing to be co-workers with Christ. The Christian church, as a general thing, are disowning the claims of God upon them to give alms of the things which they possess to support the warfare against the moral darkness which is flooding the world.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 389.

**FURTHER STUDY***Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 391, 392.

**Part 3**  
**THE APOSTOLIC**  
**RULE**  
**1 Cor. 16:2**

**What is the apostle Paul's rule for giving?**

**"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."**

This verse contains what Ellen G. White refers to as the rule of the apostle. It gives information about why, how, how much, and when to give.

"The apostle suggests the first day of the week as a proper time to review the course of Providence and the prosperity experienced, and in the fear of God, with true gratitude of heart for the blessings He has bestowed, to decide how much, according to His own devised plan, shall be rendered back to Him."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 413.

"The directions given by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in regard to gifts, present a principle that applies also to tithing: 'Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.' Parents and children are here included. Not only the rich, but the poor, are addressed. 'Every man according as he purposeth in his heart [through the candid consideration of God's prescribed plan], so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.' The gifts are to be made in consideration of the great goodness of God to us."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 80.

**What is the purpose of this apostolic rule? 1 Cor. 16:2.**

The people were to make their decisions at home. Here, with your own conscience, you may reflect upon God's blessings and respond as God has made it possible for you to respond. The offering should be brought to the place of worship at the proper time. The offering is "offered" to God as an act of worship. It is an intergral part of worship.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Am I planning my offerings or putting money into a collection?**

"And what more appropriate time could be chosen for setting aside the tithe and presenting our offerings to God? On the Sabbath we have thought upon His goodness. We have beheld His work in creation as an evidence of His power in redemption. Our hearts are filled with thankfulness for His great love. And now, before the toil of a week begins, we return to Him His own, and with it an offering to testify our gratitude. Thus our practice will be a weekly sermon, declaring that God is the possessor of all our property, and that He has made us stewards to use it to His glory."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 80.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 548, 549.

**Part 4**  
**PLANNED GIVING**  
**2 Cor. 9:5, RSV**

**What principle for giving did Paul advocate?**

**"So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift."**

Paul arranged, in the experience recorded in 2 Cor. 9, that the amount of the Corinthian believers' gifts would be determined prior to the occasion upon which they were to be offered. And also today there should be a plan for giving worked out by each believer to fit his particular circumstances. Some common practices that reflect careless stewardship are noted below:

1. Waiting until Sabbath to set aside the tithe.
2. Making the decision on the amount of an offering at church instead of at home.
3. Borrowing from money set aside for tithe or offering.
4. Making offerings from money needed for family necessities.
5. Giving for expenses instead of to God.

Planned giving is God's plan. Happiness in giving is the result. Here is God's plan for happy giving.

1. Determine and set aside the tithe (10 percent) first, at home.
2. Determine how much you are going to give to God in offerings. Set this aside at the time you separate the tithe.
3. Distribute your offerings at home by recording the tithe and offerings on the envelope provided for this purpose. Remember world missions as well as local budget.
4. Use *your* money as you see best.
5. Carry God's tithe and offerings to church.
6. View your gift as an offering to God, not as a collection for expenses.
7. Increase the percentage of your offerings as God increases your income and/or ability to give.

**What principle applicable to the whole life should be the basis for determining the amount of offerings? Luke 12:48, last part.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Do I plan my giving, or am I an impulse giver?**

"To give or to labor when our sympathies are moved, and to withhold our gifts or service when the emotions are not stirred, is an unwise and dangerous course."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 25.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 477.



**Part 5**  
**ACCUMULATED**  
**POSSESSIONS**  
**2 Kings 20:1**

**What command did God give Hezekiah near the close of his life?**

**"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."**

King Hezekiah was told to set his "house in order." The king was to make preparation for turning over the realm to another and care for all the details implied in such plans.

We are not kings, nor has a special revelation been given to us pointing out the time of our death, but the counsel is appropriate to all of us. Life is uncertain. We have no assurance of another day of life. "Set thine house in order!" The responsibility to arrange our affairs for the moment of death is a part of faithful stewardship.

**In the parable of Jesus about a certain rich man, what searching question did God ask? Luke 12:20.**

One must remember that man does not own anything in relation to God. Prior to our death, faithfulness to our trust requires that we plan our final gifts and make provision for the proper distribution and use of the possessions God has enabled us to accumulate during our lifetime.

"Whose shall these things be?" is a question that is applicable to each of us. This is an integral part of faithful stewardship, yet it is often at this critical stage in life that a person forgets God.

"Many are not exercised upon the subject of making their wills while they are in apparent health. But this precaution should be taken by our brethren. . . . They should arrange their property in such a manner that they may leave it at any time."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 328.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What provision have I made for the stewardship of my goods after my death?**

"Death will not come one day sooner, brethren, because you have made your will. In disposing of your property by will to your relatives, be sure that you do not forget God's cause. You are His agents, holding His property; and His claims should have your first consideration. Your wife and children, of course, should not be left destitute; provision should be made for them if they are needy."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 328.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 323-329.

**Part 6**  
**BLESSINGS OF**  
**GIVING**  
**2 Cor. 9:6**

**What is the meaning of Paul's sowing and reaping illustration?**

**"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."**

"The sower multiplies his seed by casting it away. So it is with those who are faithful in distributing God's gifts. By imparting they increase their blessings. God has promised them a sufficiency that they may continue to give. . . .

"And more than this is wrapped up in the sowing and the reaping. As we distribute God's temporal blessings, the evidence of our love and sympathy awakens in the receiver gratitude and thanksgiving to God. The soil of the heart is prepared to receive the seeds of spiritual truth. And He who ministers seed to the sower will cause the seed to germinate and bear fruit unto eternal life."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 86.

**What blessings is God able to provide to the cheerful giver? 2 Cor. 9:8.**

"God calls for what you owe Him in tithes and offerings. He calls for consecration in every line of His work. Act faithfully your part at your appointed post of duty. Work earnestly, remembering that Christ is by your side, planning, devising, and constructing for you."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 48, 49.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What shows that I realize that my church is a home base and a mission field?**

"To show a liberal, self-denying spirit for the success of foreign missions is a sure way to advance home missionary work; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off. . . .

"That which is given to start the work in one field will result in strengthening the work in other places. As the laborers are freed from financial embarrassment, their efforts can be extended; and as people are brought into the truth and churches are established, there will be increasing financial strength. As these churches grow stronger, they will be able not only to carry on the work in their own borders, but to send help to other fields."—*Gospel Workers*, pages 465, 466.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 47.

## NOW IS THE TIME TO DEDICATE ALL TO GOD

Ellen G. White

Our time and our talents belong to the Lord. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Then how can any one feel that he can be independent of God, and not subject to the Spirit of God? Those who imagine that they are independent of God's providences and plans, are in their supposed independence, in the veriest slavery to a power that is in rebellion against God.

"Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us. For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, a confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary."

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

We are not safe in following the imagination of our own hearts. We cannot

be independent of God. We are safe only as we realize our entire dependence upon him as our Creator and Redeemer.

Satan has many devices whereby he holds us back from rendering prompt and unquestioning obedience to God. We have often had strong promptings and conviction of duty, but have shrunk back from fulfilling them. Yet Jesus says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." How many at times have been deeply stirred, and yet because duty demanded a sacrifice, they have tampered with their conscience, seated themselves in the enemy's debating chair, and have not made the decision that God sought to have them make. They have not broken away from the associates whose seductive influence for evil, led them to follow their own carnal reasoning, and because there was no evidence of any immediate danger, they have rested down in their false security. They have debated in their minds, saying, Shall I obey the voice of God that bids me shake off the lethargy of the world, and escape from the world as did Lot from Sodom, or shall I listen to the voice of the world that cries peace and safety to my soul? Shall I wait for a more convenient season? All the sophistry of Satan is bound up in that one word, "wait." O that those who are now moved by the Spirit of God, would make a decided stand for God and for the truth!

We shall never be able to discern spiritual and heavenly things while we remain indifferent to the word of God. The voice of Jesus is calling, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Those who remain away from Jesus have placed their necks under a yoke that is not easy. They have clasped their arms about burdens that are not light. O, why not exchange the heavy yoke you now wear for the yoke of Christ? The voice of mercy is now sounding in warnings and entreaties, but that voice will not always be heard, if you continue to resist, and still choose your own way.

There is true missionary work to be done for those who move in higher circles, and the followers of Christ are to be true representatives of Christ, who though he was rich, for our sake became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. The rich should consecrate their all to God, and he who is sanctified through the truth in body, soul, and spirit, will also devote his property to God, and will become an agent whereby other souls will be reached. In his experience and example it will be made manifest that the grace of Christ has power to overcome covetousness and avarice, and the rich man who renders unto God his intrusted goods, will be accounted a faithful steward, and can present to others the fact that every dollar of their accumulated property is stamped with the image and superscription of God. He can present to those who are rich the truth as it is in Jesus, showing that it was God who intrusted him with ability to get wealth, and prospered his enterprises with his blessing that he might acquire wealth, and gladly acknowledging the fact that his talents are not his, but God's who gave. The wealthy man who is truly converted, can bring to bear upon his wealthy brethren the lessons of Christ, and show to them that their wealth is only safe as it is laid up in the bank of heaven.

There is great danger that the riches of the wealthy shall prove not a bless-

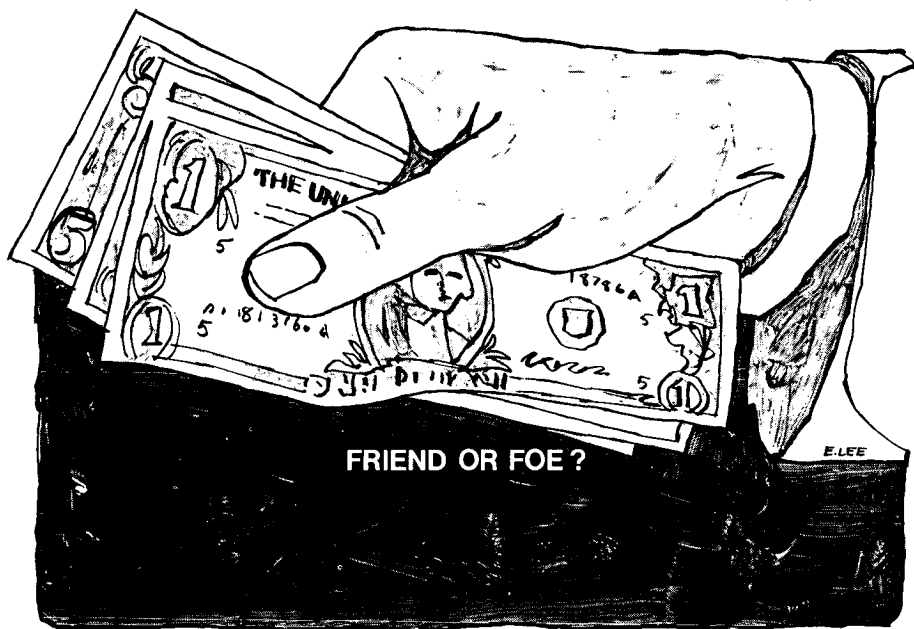
ing, but a curse to them. Rich men are in danger of trusting in their riches, of placing God's intrusted treasure where Christ should be in the heart, and interposing their wealth between the soul and God. Wealth thus becomes an idol, and separates the affection from its Giver. But let those who are fitted to work for the rich, and for those in high position, consecrate their all to God, and in the name of Jesus go forth to do this work. Paul had converts even in Caesar's household. Truth will have its adherents even in kings' courts. Paul wrote, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." The throne of the Caesars was then occupied by that monster of cruelty, Nero. If there ever was an atmosphere charged with the malarious influence of Satan, it was to be found in his household. The powers from beneath stirred up most fierce and determined hostility against Christians in that place, and Paul himself suffered death at the emperor's command. In such a household as this, it seemed impossible that truth should find favor, and yet in this place there were those who were worthy to be called saints, and who sent greetings to the saints of other cities. Nothing is impossible with God.

We need more faith to work for those who are rich and in high position. For though Christ has said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," every rich man who does yield himself to the converting power of God, and is an overcomer will find an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. The rich who are truly converted to God, will understand that they are stewards of the Lord's property; and through the grace given unto them, they will discern that they have been intrusted with property, only that they may use it to advance the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world. There are many among the rich, who, were the truth presented to them as it is in Jesus, would be charmed with, and transformed through, the grace of Christ, and would see that money is of value

only as it is devoted to doing good in the name and Spirit of Jesus. The wealthy man or woman converted to God, will begin to comprehend what good may be done with their intrusted capital. They will see that institutions are to be established for the education of the youth, and that they are to be sustained by gifts and offerings. They will know that many youth must be trained for the missionary field, and the wealthy will become agents in the hands of God to set in operation the instrumentalities whereby men and women may become enlightened, and turned from degradation and error unto the living God.

Through the grace of Christ, those who have riches and are connected with him, will sow abundantly, seeking out the youth, and running a risk in educating them, hoping that they will devote their lives to missionary work.

God has intrusted the rich with gifts, that, if wisely used, will produce a hundredfold in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting. To have the knowledge that our talents are being employed for the good of others, affords satisfaction in this life that brings a great reward. We know that if the Lord's intrusted capital is selfishly spent or hoarded, God will call us to an account. Because the rich are judgment-bound, we should put forth more decided efforts to win them to the service of Him who has intrusted them with large talents. God designed that through these very agents, many souls should be converted, and sent forth on a mission of blessing to the world. His cause would be greatly advanced if those to whom he has given talents of means, would devote their wealth to the upbuilding of his kingdom.—*Review and Herald*, September 19, 1893.



**"Remove far from me falsehood and lying;  
give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with the food that is need-  
ful for me,  
lest I be full, and deny thee,  
and say, 'Who is the Lord?'  
or lest I be poor, and steal,  
and profane the name of my God."  
Prov. 30:8, 9, RSV.**

Most people will agree that joy and a certain contentment attend prosperity. However, it is difficult for most, and almost impossible for some, to recognize there is a great danger in prosperity of any kind, whether it be good health, many abilities, material prosperity, or long life.

The imagination is staggered at the thought of the resources that could be used for God's work if they were available. Healthy bodies and minds dedi-

cated to the service of God, diverse abilities, immense sums of money and time, all are critically needed worldwide to complete God's work. No one person knows how much is needed. God desires to provide whatever is needed for a completed work. He has chosen to use men and women, boys and girls, as channels through which His final message will be shared and the final work will be financed. As God blesses His people all around the world with increasing possessions for a completed work, we must be certain that we do not retain for our own personal use the very means God has provided for the completion of His work.

This lesson touches one of the most sensitive areas of our lives. Our response can greatly affect the cause of God. Let us open our minds and our lives and see what God will do for us and through us to His glory.

**Part 1**  
**A TEST**  
**Deut. 8:18****What was the source of Israel's prosperity?**

**"But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day."**

There is recorded in *Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 268-291 a long communication from Ellen G. White to a sister who had suffered from domestic problems, ill health, and poverty, and who later was relieved of all of these problems. At one point in recounting this sister's experience, Ellen G. White recorded the following paragraph.

"The Lord said to His angel who had hitherto ministered unto you: 'I have proved her in poverty and affliction, and she has not separated herself from Me, nor rebelled against Me. I will now prove her with prosperity. I will reveal to her a page of the human heart with which she is unacquainted. I will show her that money is the most dangerous foe she has ever met. I will reveal to her the deceitfulness of riches; that they are a snare, even to those who feel that they are secure from selfishness, and proof against exaltation, extravagance, pride, and love of the praise of men.'"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 278.

We very easily conclude, as did the Jews of Jesus' time, that prosperity is God's reward to us for our faithfulness, and therefore an evidence of divine favor upon our lives. The above experience indicates the falsity of such conclusions.

"The Lord sometimes tests His people with prosperity in temporal things. But He intends that they shall make a right use of His gifts. Their property, their time, their strength, and their opportunities are all of God. For all these blessings they must account to the Giver."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 619.

**What do you think is included in the prosperity of the blessed man described in Ps. 1:1-3?**

**THINK IT THROUGH****How am I responding to prosperity?**

"The heavenly Guest is standing at your door, while you are piling up obstructions to bar His entrance. Jesus is knocking through the prosperity He gives you. He loads you with blessings to test your fidelity, that they may flow out from you to others. Will you permit your selfishness to triumph? Will you squander God's talents and lose your soul through idolatrous love of the blessings He has given?"—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 967.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pp. 626, 627.

**Part 2**  
**THE PURPOSE OF**  
**PROSPERITY**  
**John 6:27**

**For what purpose is man to labor?**

**"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."**

"The labor that Jesus rebukes here is not that which is necessary in order to gain a livelihood. His rebuke is directed rather toward those who carry such labor to the extent of neglecting the nourishment of the soul. What Jesus here re-proves is the common habit of laboring only for the things of time, and ignoring the things of eternity."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on John 6:27.

The desire to accumulate wealth is not necessarily an evil desire, but it "is an original affection of our nature, implanted there by our heavenly Father for noble ends."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 148. "Your means are of no more value than sand, only as used to provide for the daily necessities of life and to bless others and advance the cause of God."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 53.

"We claim to be Christians, waiting for the second appearing of our Lord in the clouds of heaven. Then what shall we do with our time, our understanding, our possessions, which are not ours, but are entrusted to us to test our honesty. Let us bring them to Jesus. Let us use our treasures for the advancement of His cause."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 116, 117.

As God raises our potential or ability to give, He also increases our responsibility to give. Possessions increase responsibilities. God prospers us to see whether or not we will keep all for ourselves or return God's share for the support of His cause.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How am I using God's gifts to me?**

"If they choose, men may refuse to connect themselves with their Maker; they may refuse to give themselves to His service, and trade upon His entrusted goods; they may fail to exercise frugality and self-denial, and may forget that the Lord requires a return of what He has given them. All such are unfaithful stewards.

"A faithful steward will do all he possibly can in the service of God; the one object before him will be the great need of the world. He will realize that the message of truth is to be given, not only in his own neighborhood, but in the regions beyond. When men cherish this spirit, the love of the truth and the sanctification they will receive through the truth, will banish avarice, overreaching, and every species of dishonesty."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 83.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 123-126.



**Part 3**  
**SATAN PROSPERS**  
**SOME PEOPLE**  
Jer. 12:1**What question did Jeremiah ask of God?**

**"Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?"**

"I saw that God is not in all the riches that are obtained. Satan often has much more to do with acquiring property than God."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 175.

This amazing statement explains why many of the wicked prosper. Satan aids some to obtain wealth.

**What principle taught by Jesus can explain why Satan prospers some people? Matt. 6:24.**

The danger of prosperity is made extremely clear in the following statement. "In the midst of prosperity lurks danger. Throughout the ages, riches and honor have ever been attended with peril to humility and spirituality. . . . Affliction and adversity may cause sorrow, but it is prosperity that is most dangerous to spiritual life. Unless the human subject is in constant submission to the will of God, unless he is sanctified by the truth, prosperity will surely arouse the natural inclination to presumption."—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 59, 60.

**What wages were many still seeking in Peter's day? Is it still true? 2 Peter 2:15.**

Worldly gain, honor, and riches are often employed by Satan to cause man's downfall. "The tempter is ever presenting worldly gain and honor to entice men from the service of God. He tells them it is their overconscientiousness that keeps them from prosperity. Thus many are induced to venture out of the path of strict integrity."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 440.

**THINK IT THROUGH****In what ways am I succumbing to the temptations of prosperity?**

"I saw that Satan watches the peculiar, selfish, covetous temperament of some who profess the truth, and he will tempt them by throwing prosperity in their path, offering them the riches of earth. He knows that if they do not overcome their natural temperament, they will stumble and fall by loving mammon, worshiping their idol. Satan's object is often accomplished. The strong love of the world overcomes, or swallows up, the love of the truth."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 142.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, pp. 141-143.

**Part 4**  
**ISRAEL FORGOT**  
**Deut. 8:19**

**What did God warn Israel would happen to them if they forgot Him and worshiped other gods?**

**“And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.”**

One of the greatest dangers of prosperity is that the one who has been prospered will forget God. Before God led the Hebrews out of Egypt, He had already planned for their prosperity. He carefully explained the dangers of prosperity. Part of His explanation is in Deut. 8:2, 7. God advised Israel to remember. In verses 11, 14, and 19 God implored them not to forget. He said that if they forgot they would perish. God blessed them as He promised, and with prosperity came the dangers of which He warned.

Israel forgot the 40 years of manna, the water from the rock, the clothing that did not wear out, the Red Sea, the Jordan River, and Jericho.

“It is not the empty cup that we have difficulty in carrying; it is the cup full to the brim that must be carefully balanced.”  
—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 59, 60.

**What experience of Israel showed their complete dependence on God for all they possessed? Deut. 6:10-12.**

We think it is unusual that God gave Israel great and goodly cities which they did not build, houses they did not construct, filled with things they did not make or purchase, wells of pure water they did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves ready to harvest. Do we forget that all we possess is of God? Why is it so easy to see the faults in the people of Israel but not those in our own lives? Have we forgotten God?

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways am I in danger of forgetting God?**

“God is constantly bestowing upon you the blessings of this life; and if He asks you to dispense His gifts by helping the various branches of His work, it is for your own temporal and spiritual interest to do so, and thus acknowledge God as the giver of every blessing. God, as the Master Worker, cooperates with men in securing the means necessary for their sustenance; and He requires them to cooperate with Him in the salvation of souls. He has placed in the hands of His servants the means wherewith to carry forward His work in home and foreign missions. But if only half the people do their duty, the treasury will not be supplied with the necessary funds, and many parts of the work of God must be left incomplete.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 47.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 147, 148.

**Part 5**  
**DANGERS OF**  
**PROSPERITY**

**Ps. 52:7**

**What is one source from which people who forget God seek security?**

**"Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness."**

"There are many whose hearts have been so hardened by prosperity that they forget God, and forget the wants of their fellow-men. Professed Christians adorn themselves with jewelry, laces, costly apparel, while the Lord's poor suffer for the necessities of life. Men and women who claim redemption through a Saviour's blood will squander the means intrusted to them for the saving of other souls, and then grudgingly dole out their offerings for religion, giving liberally only when it will bring honor to themselves. These are idolaters."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, page 57.

**What did Jesus teach is to be the object of the use of the believers' resources? John 6:27.**

Jesus urged the people not to spend energy, time, and money on things of little or no eternal consequence. God gives identical reproof today. "You have forgotten the claims of God upon you, and the wants of His cause. Selfishness has led you to expend money in ornaments for the gratification of yourself and your children. You did not think that this money was not yours; that it was only lent you to test and prove you, to see if you would shun the evils you had marked in others. God made you His steward, and when He cometh and reckoneth with His servants, what account can you give of your stewardship?"

"Your faith and simple trust in God began to wane as soon as means flowed in upon you. You did not depart from God all at once. Your backsliding was gradual. You ceased the morning and evening devotions because it was not always convenient. . . . Your house became a prayerless house. Your business was made primary, and the Lord and His truth were made secondary. Look back to the days of your earlier experience; would these trials then have driven you from family prayer?"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 280, 281.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What are the steps down which prosperity may be leading me?**

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 149, 150.

**Part 6**  
**THE DANGER OF**  
**ACCUMULATING**  
**POSSESSIONS**

Hag. 1:2, 4

**What sin of Israel was rebuked through Haggai?**

**"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."**

**"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?"**

For fifteen years Israel neglected the cause of God. The foundation of the temple had been laid the year following their return from Babylon, 535 B.C., and by 520 B.C. no additional work had been done on the building. They worked hard for themselves, but they did not prosper, for God had removed His blessing from them. They were putting self before God.

"The lack of temporal prosperity was the result of a neglect to put God's interests first, the prophets declared. Had the Israelites honored God, had they shown Him due respect and courtesy, by making the building of His house their first work, they would have invited His presence and blessing."—*Prophets and Kings*, pages 573, 574.

**What advice and comfort did Jesus give to His followers about possessing goods? Luke 12:15, 32.**

"Those who are fastening their means in large houses, in lands, in worldly enterprises, are saying by their actions: 'God cannot have it; I want it for myself.' . . . Brethren, God has not entrusted means to you to lie idle nor to be covetously retained or hid away, but to be used to advance His cause, to save the souls of the perishing. It is not the time now to bind up the Lord's money in your expensive buildings and your large enterprises, while His cause is crippled and left to beg its way, the treasury half-supplied. The Lord is not in this way of working. Remember, the day is fast approaching when it will be said: 'Give an account of thy stewardship.' Can you not discern the signs of the times?"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 465.

**THINK IT THROUGH****How severely have I been affected by the accumulation of property?**

"Some are continually increasing their cares and labors; they are overcharged. The result is, God and the wants of His cause are nearly forgotten by them; they are spiritually dead. They are required to make a sacrifice to God, an offering. A sacrifice does not increase, but decreases and consumes. . . . Much of the means among our people is only proving an injury to those who are holding on to it."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 492.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 151-153.

“Sacrifice is the very beginning of our work in advancing the truth and in establishing institutions. It is an essential part of education. Sacrifice must become habitual in all our character building in this life if we would have a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p.214.

**“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13.**

The word “sacrifice” has two main meanings. In the Bible it refers to the slaughter of an animal at an altar dedicated to a deity. In modern usage it usually refers to something given up, lost, or of which one is deprived. When we speak of sacrificing for the cause of God we usually mean to convey the idea of “giving until it hurts,” and of going without something we need or want in order to give to the Lord. These two usages—animal offering and deprivation—contain different emphases. The animal offering was sacrificed in the sense that it was given completely to a deity. It was slain and its flesh was burned. The worshiper retained nothing of the animal sacrificed. The emphasis is thus on the completeness of the offering and not on the size of the gift in relation to what one had left. In the

modern sense sacrifice does not refer to the completeness of the offering, but to the self-denial out of which one makes an offering to God. It is in this latter meaning that the word sacrifice is used in this week’s lesson, rather than in the Biblical meaning.

Sacrifice involves quality more than quantity; the giver more than the gift.

Those who have the most to give have always been asked to give the most. The Godhead has had the most to give, and surely the Godhead has given the most.

God will ask us to give ourselves until we recognize that we do belong to Him. He will ask us to increase our giving until we have willingly, systematically, disinterestedly given Him our whole life because we love Him.

Study this lesson carefully. Reflect often upon the gift of God. Apply these principles to your entire life, body, abilities, money, and time. Learn how to submit to the will and way of God.

**Part 1**  
**WHAT IS**  
**SACRIFICE?**  
**Heb. 10:9, first part**

**What was the Son's purpose in becoming man?**

**"Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."**

The word "sacrifice" has always had an elusive meaning to those suffering from prosperity. Sacrifice has sometimes been carried to extremes, and has often been misused. Children have been given as living sacrifices. Food is offered to gods of stone by starving people. There have been those who have sacrificed because they felt it was necessary in order to secure the favor of deity. Even today some Christians may give to secure God's favor.

Sacrifice begins as an attitude. An evaluation then takes place in the mind, and the decision is carried out in the life. Sacrifice is an attitude that leads to action toward God in regard to your life and experience. Because of this, sacrifice varies with each of us in application.

If your attitude is correct, you will regard your life, body, abilities, possessions, and time, as belonging to God and as available for Him to do with them as He will. It is not only a matter of how much God wants, but also of when He wants it. You will be ready to surrender any part, or all, of your life into His service whenever He calls for help or you see a need.

**What true sacrifice replaced the symbol of sacrifice? Heb. 10:5, 6.**

Sacrifice was planned in heaven and inaugurated in the Garden of Eden. Its greatest manifestation was on a cross where hung the body of Jesus Christ. The whole plan of salvation was founded upon the principle of sacrifice. Later the Christian church was founded upon the same principle.

The result of sacrifice is that God can do with you whatever He desires. "Then he said, 'Here I am, God, to do what you want me to do.'" Heb. 10:9, TEV.

**THINK IT THROUGH****What is my attitude toward God and my life?**

"From the creation the moral law was an essential part of God's divine plan, and was as unchangeable as Himself. The ceremonial law was to answer a particular purpose in Christ's plan for the salvation of the race. The typical system of sacrifices and offerings was established that through these services the sinner might discern the great offering, Christ. But the Jews were so blinded by pride and sin that but few of them could see farther than the death of beasts as an atonement for sin; and when Christ, whom these offerings prefigured, came, they could not discern Him."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, pp. 1094, 1095.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 46-50.

**Part 2**  
**A LIVING**  
**SACRIFICE**  
**Gen. 22:2**

**What sacrifice did God ask of Abraham?**

**"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."**

Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son. He did not withhold him. As far as Abraham was concerned he had sacrificed his son; Isaac had been given. God did not actually take the gift, for He knew Abraham's intentions and his attitude without taking it. It was offered. It was accepted. It was ready to be used. Abraham did not withhold his son. This demonstrated that he would withhold nothing from God.

**What sacrifice did Paul appeal to the believers in Rome to make? Rom. 12:1.**

Money alone has become the common denominator of sacrifice to most people today. Even in the church, money, instead of Jesus, too often comes to the forefront of our thinking when the word "sacrifice" is heard. Money is absolutely essential. It must be sacrificed or yielded along with abilities, time, and the body temple. Any of these given separately without the others and without the correct attitude are not the gift God desires from us. They are of significance only when they indicate that the complete life has been yielded to God. God seeks a living sacrifice.

We cannot atone for our sins. Why then does God call upon us to be living sacrifices? It is an indication to Him that we have accepted His gift of love and sacrifice, the gift of Himself, in our behalf. It is a sign to Him that we have given ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him. We have placed ourselves upon the altar of sacrifice, living a life which meets His approval.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Am I a vibrant, optimistic, joyous, living sacrifice?**

"In the words of Abraham, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering' (Gen. 22:8), and in God's provision of a sacrifice instead of Isaac, it was declared that no man could make expiation for himself. The pagan system of sacrifice was wholly unacceptable to God. No father was to offer up his son or his daughter for a sin offering. The Son of God alone can bear the guilt of the world."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 469.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 51-53.

**Part 3**  
**SELF-DENIAL**  
**Matt. 16:24****What instruction did Jesus give for one who would follow Him?****"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."**

"Christians who live for self dishonor their Redeemer. They may apparently be very active in the service of the Lord, but they weave self into all that they do. Sowing the seeds of selfishness, they must at last reap a harvest of corruption. . . . Service for self takes a variety of forms. Some of these forms seem harmless. Apparent goodness gives them the appearance of genuine goodness. But they bring no glory to the Lord. By their service His cause is hindered. Christ says, 'He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.'

"Those who bring self into their work cannot be trusted. If they would lose sight of self in Christ, their efforts would be of value to His cause. They would then conform the life to His teachings. They would form their plans in harmony with His great plan of love. Selfishness would be banished from their efforts. . . . Self-denial, humility of mind, nobility of purpose, marked the Saviour's life . . . [Matt. 16:24 quoted]."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1096.

"As we follow Him in the path of self-denial, lifting the cross and bearing it after Him to His Father's home, we shall reveal in our lives the beauty of the Christ life. At the altar of self-sacrifice,—the appointed place of meeting between God and the soul,—we receive from the hand of God the celestial torch which searches the heart, revealing the need of an abiding Christ."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 30.

**What contrast does Paul make between things seen and unseen? What is the implication for stewardship? 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.****THINK IT THROUGH****Is your life upon the altar of self-sacrifice?**

"Unselfish devotion and a spirit of sacrifice have always been and always will be the first requisite of acceptable service. . . . Yet in all our labors we are to remember that the greatest talents or the most splendid services are acceptable only when self is laid upon the altar, a living, consuming sacrifice."—*Prophets and Kings*, page 65.

**FURTHER STUDY***Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 54-57.



**Part 4**  
**PRACTICAL**  
**APPLICATIONS**  
**Matt. 19:16, 21**

**What answer did Jesus give to one who sought eternal life?**

**"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"**

**"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."**

What sacrifices does God ask of you? He may ask of you what He asked of the rich young ruler. You may be asked to sell some or all of what you possess to support His cause.

Many people are willing to trade away eternity for temporary life. God has given guides to teach us how to sacrifice and where to begin sacrificing. Here is where to begin:

"Let the members of the church now put away their pride and lay off their ornaments."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 291.

Next, lay aside useless and injurious things. Sacrifice by depriving self of unnecessary gratification. Sacrifice hate, envy, evil habits. Sacrifice sin! See *Early Writings*, pages 121, 122.

The next step is this: "But something more must be done than merely to dispense with superfluities. Self-denial must be practiced. Some of our comfortable and desirable things must be sacrificed. The preachers must sharpen up their message, not merely assailing self-indulgence, and pride in dress, but presenting Jesus, His life of self-denial and sacrifice."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 291.

It is easier now to understand that sacrifice is an attitude. Consider the contrast between your home and one that was near a carpenter's shop in Nazareth of Galilee.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Would I feel at ease with Jesus physically present in my home? Why?**

"If ever there was a time when sacrifices should be made, it is now. My brethren and sisters, practice economy in your homes. Put away the idols that you have placed before God. Give up your selfish pleasures. Do not, I beg of you, spend means embellishing your houses; for your money belongs to God, and to Him you must give an account for its use. Do not use the Lord's money to gratify the fancies of your children. Teach them that God has a claim on all they possess, and that nothing can ever cancel this claim. . . ."

"If you have extravagant habits, cut them away from your life at once. Unless you do this, you will be bankrupt for eternity."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 37.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 298-302.

**Part 5**  
**NOW IS THE TIME**  
**TO SACRIFICE**  
**Matt. 19:29, 30**

**What is promised to those who forsake what they love for the benefit of the kingdom?**

**"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."**

Is this the time of the end? Is it the time for Jesus to return? Is it the time for a completed work? Then it is time to sacrifice. Sacrifice time, abilities, money, the pleasures of the body. It is time to have more than a spirit of liberality. It is time to sacrifice for God and His cause. It will be easy or difficult, depending on your attitude.

**Who only can buy or sell when the image of the beast becomes established? Rev. 13:16, 17.**

Whatever is not disposed of prior to the close of probation will be of no use to the cause of God. What a sobering thought this is! "I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar, and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things. . . .

"I saw that if any held on to their property, and did not inquire of the Lord as to their duty, He would not make duty known, and they would be permitted to keep their property, and in the time of trouble it would come up before them like a mountain to crush them, and they would try to dispose of it, but would not be able."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 59, 60.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**To what extent is my self-denial reflecting what I claim is my love for God?**

"In redemption God has revealed His love in sacrifice, a sacrifice so broad and deep and high that it is immeasurable. . . .

"The gift of God to man is beyond all computation. Nothing was withheld. God would not permit it to be said that He could have done more or revealed to humanity a greater measure of love. In the gift of Christ He gave all heaven."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, page 11.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 58-60.

**Part 6**  
**NOTHING**  
**WITHHELD**  
**2 Cor. 8:5****What was the real gift of the Macedonians?**

**"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."**

The Macedonians were following the example of Jesus Christ in their giving. The cause of the people in Jerusalem became their cause. They gave themselves as well as their gifts to God. They withheld nothing. They were consecrated and devoted followers of Jesus Christ, and as a result of this consecration and devotion their spiritual and financial gifts went out to those in need.

"It was not necessary to urge them to give; rather, they rejoiced in the privilege of denying themselves even of necessary things in order to supply the needs of others. When the apostle would have restrained them, they importuned him to accept their offering. In their simplicity and integrity, and in their love for the brethren, they gladly denied self, and thus abounded in the fruit of benevolence."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 172.

Sacrifice is not dealing primarily with how much you give or do not give, but with how much you give in relation to how much you have left. All, even yourself, is available to the One you love and to your brethren everywhere. This is what it means in *Welfare Ministry*, page 203, where it says that even the poor are to sacrifice. They are not forced or compelled to do so. They cannot be prevented from doing so. Sacrifice becomes a pleasure and a delight.

**What is the ultimate sacrifice? John 15:13.****THINK IT THROUGH**

**What evidence is there in my experience that I have the faith to trust God with my entire life?**

"It is the heart service that makes the gift valuable. When the Majesty of heaven became a babe, and was entrusted to Mary, she did not have much to offer for the precious gift. She brought to the altar only two turtledoves, the offering appointed for the poor; but they were an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. She could not present rare treasures such as the wise men of the East came to Bethlehem to lay before the Son of God; yet the mother of Jesus was not rejected because of the smallness of her gift. It was the willingness of her heart that the Lord looked upon, and her love made the offering sweet. So God will accept our gift, however small, if it is the best we have, and is offered from love to Him."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 176.

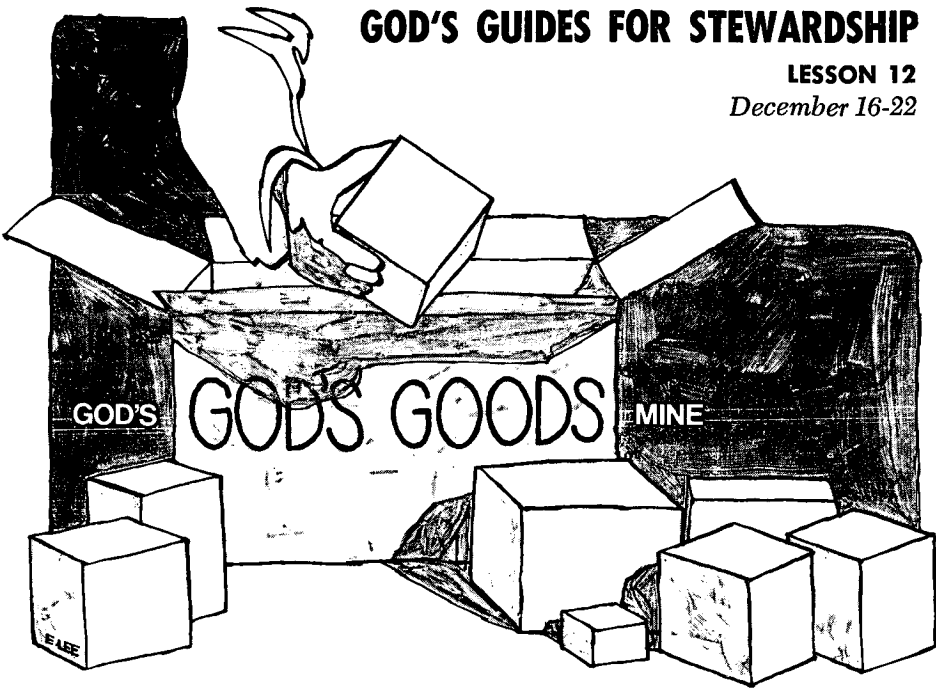
**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 180.

# GOD'S GUIDES FOR STEWARDSHIP

LESSON 12

December 16-22



**"According to your faith be it unto you." Matt. 9:29, last part.**

God has given man specific guidelines for living which involve each part of man's life. Many look upon God's guides for both living and giving as restrictive and domineering. Actually, God intends them to be positive guides which will assist us as we learn how to live and give ourselves completely to Him.

Material possessions have always served as a successful area of temptation by Satan. For this reason, this lesson will be concerned primarily with God's guides for the stewardship of material possessions.

Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptations of Satan on this very point. They took something which God had reserved for Himself. Men have been doing so ever since.

Many faithful members are honestly asking, How much should I return to

God? The more we study the subject of stewardship, the more we realize that the answer depends on our individual circumstances and our faith. Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you." Matt. 9:29. God's people in past ages have supported His work. How much did they give? Why did they give it? A prayerful look at their stewardship may help us to decide what our responsibility is in the light of our own prosperity or adversity, and considering the serious moment at which our world has arrived.

The article by Ellen G. White which follows this lesson was printed in the *Review and Herald*, April 18, 1912. "Our Gifts and Offerings" is to be read as supplementary material for this week's lesson.

**Part 1**  
**THE TITHE**  
**RETURNED FIRST**  
**Lev. 27:30****What claim did God make upon all that Israel acquired?**

**"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord."**

God has never disclaimed this principle. He still claims as His own the first 10 percent of all He gives us or helps us to acquire. It is reserved by God for His own purposes. Man does not give the tithe to God as a gift. It already belongs to God.

"'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse' (Malachi 3:10), is God's command. No appeal is made to gratitude or to generosity. This is a matter of simple honesty. The tithe is the Lord's; and He bids us return to Him that which is His own."—*Education*, pages 138, 139.

**When is the tithe to be returned? Prov. 3:9, 10.**

The returning of God's tithe comes first. "Let each regularly examine his income, which is all a blessing from God, and set apart the tithe as a separate fund, to be sacredly the Lord's. This fund should not in any case be devoted to any other use; it is to be devoted solely to support the ministry of the gospel. After the tithe is set apart, let gifts and offerings be apportioned, 'as God hath prospered' you."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 81.

"Not only does the Lord claim the tithe as His own, but He tells us *how* it should be reserved for Him. He says, 'Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the *first fruits* of all thine increase.' This does not teach that we are to spend our means on ourselves, and bring to the Lord the remnant, even though it should be otherwise an honest tithe. Let God's portion be first set apart."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 81.

**THINK IT THROUGH****In what ways do I need to correct my record of tithing?**

"That which has been set apart according to the Scriptures as belonging to the Lord, constitutes the revenue of the gospel and is no longer ours. It is no better than sacrilege for a man to take from God's treasury in order to serve himself or to serve others in their secular business. . . . All should regard this matter in the right light. Let no one, when brought into a strait place, take money consecrated to religious purposes and use it for his advantage, soothing his conscience by saying that he will repay it at some future time. Far better cut down the expenses to correspond with the income, to restrict the wants, and live within the means than to use the Lord's money for secular purposes."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, pp. 246, 247.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 73-76.

**Part 2**  
**GUIDES FOR**  
**OFFERINGS, I**  
**1 Cor. 16:2**

**What guide for giving did Paul give to the Corinthian believers?**

**"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."**

The tithe is not an offering. If a person returns the tithe, he is being honest, but he is not giving God anything. It is only after we return the tithe that we begin to give.

How much offering shall I give? This is a question frequently asked about giving. The answer is to give as God has made it possible for you to give. No one can tell you what is the correct amount for you to give.

There were at least fourteen offerings instituted by God in ancient Israel for religious and charitable purposes. Some were in force among God's people before Israel was a nation. However, the spirit of prophecy summarizes the combined amount of these offerings for religious and charitable purposes and reveals the percentage they amounted to.

It is not the purpose in noting these guides to set up a criterion that all must follow. The circumstances of believers vary greatly, and each one must be persuaded for himself what his duty is in stewardship. On the other hand, it is appropriate to note both the requirements of God and the liberality of His people in ages past; and while this information does not impose a requirement on us today, it can give us perspective in examining our stewardship.

"To promote the assembling of the people for religious service, as well as to provide for the poor, a second tithe of all the increase was required. . . . This tithe, or its equivalent in money, they were for two years to bring to the place where the sanctuary was established. After presenting a thank offering to God, and a specified portion to the priest, the offerers were to use the remainder for a religious feast, in which the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow should participate. Thus provision was made for the thank offerings and feasts at the yearly festivals, and the people were drawn to the society of the priests and Levites, that they might receive instruction and encouragement in the service of God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 530.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is my reaction to giving to the poor? Is it Christlike?**

"The Christian will be filled with joy in proportion as he is a faithful steward of his Lord's goods."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 136.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 71, 72.

**Part 3**  
**GUIDES FOR**  
**OFFERINGS, II**  
**Mal. 3:8**

**By what has God ordained that His work be sustained?**

**"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."**

Tithes and offerings constitute God's plan for sustaining His work. To refuse to return His tithe and give equitable offerings incurs His disfavor and pronouncement of robbery. Robbery is involved in withholding offerings as well as tithe. "The contributions required of the Hebrews for religious and charitable purposes amounted to fully one-fourth of their income. So heavy a tax upon the resources of the people might be expected to reduce them to poverty; but, on the contrary, the faithful observance of these regulations was one of the conditions of their prosperity."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 527.

Ellen G. White further writes: "When we speak of the tithe as the standard of the Jewish contributions to religious purposes, we do not speak understandingly. The Lord kept His claims paramount, and in almost every article they were reminded of the Giver by being required to make returns to Him. They were required to pay a ransom for their firstborn son, for the first fruits of their flocks, and for the first gathering of the harvest. They were required to leave the corners of their harvest fields for the destitute. Whatever dropped from their hands in reaping was left for the poor, and once in every seven years their lands were allowed to produce spontaneously for the needy. Then there were the sacrificial offerings, the trespass offerings, the sin offerings, and the remission of all debts every seventh year. There were also numerous expenses for hospitalities and gifts to the poor, and there were assessments upon their property.

"At stated periods, in order to preserve the integrity of the law, the people were interviewed as to whether they had faithfully performed their vows or not. A conscientious few made returns to God of about one-third of all their income for the benefit of religious interests and for the poor. These exactions were not from a particular class of the people, but from *all*, the requirement being proportioned according to the amount possessed."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 467.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**Is my conscience stricken when I rob God?**

"There must be an awakening among us as a people upon this matter. There are but few men who feel conscience stricken if they neglect their duty in beneficence. But few feel remorseful of soul because they are daily robbing God."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 318.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pp. 467, 468.

**Part 4**  
**GUIDES FOR**  
**OFFERINGS, III**  
**Phil. 3:8**

**How much did Paul give?**

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

"All things. In v. 7 Paul says that he counted the things previously mentioned as loss. In this verse he goes further and declares that *all* things are counted loss. He is ready to renounce not only the things he had specified but everything that could be imagined. If all the wealth and honor conceivable were his, he would cheerfully repudiate them that he might know Christ."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Phil. 3:8.

"Before he became a disciple of Christ, Paul had occupied a high position and was not dependent upon manual labor for support. But afterward, when he had used all his means in furthering the cause of Christ, he resorted at times to his trade to gain a livelihood. Especially was this the case when he labored in places where his motives might have been misunderstood."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 347.

**How were funds provided for construction of the tabernacle? Ex. 35:29; 36:6, 7.**

"The murmurings of the Israelites and the visitations of God's judgments because of their sins are recorded as a warning to after-generations. And their devotion, their zeal and liberality, are an example worthy of imitation. All who love the worship of God and prize the blessing of His sacred presence will manifest the same spirit of sacrifice in preparing a house where He may meet with them. They will desire to bring to the Lord an offering of the very best that they possess. A house built for God should not be left in debt, for He is thereby dishonored. An amount sufficient to accomplish the work should be freely given, that the workmen may be able to say, as did the builders of the tabernacle, 'Bring no more offerings.'"—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 344-347.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**In what ways am I practicing economy that others may know God?**

"There should be no extravagance in building fine homes, in buying costly furniture, in indulging in worldly dress, or in providing luxurious food; but in everything let us think of the souls for whom Christ has died. Let selfishness and pride die."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 298.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 298-300.



Part 5  
ALL IN A  
LIVING TRUST  
Luke 14:33

What giving guide did Jesus give?

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Discipleship involves placing everything on the altar—plans, possessions, riches, and relatives. Nothing is to stand between a person and his Lord.

For man's own spiritual welfare, God's guides for stewardship do not stop at any particular percentage.

"He deserves the whole heart, the property, all that they have and are. But many professed Christians put off the claims of Jesus in life, and insult Him by giving Him a mere pittance at death.

"Let all of this class remember that this robbery of God is not an impulsive action, but a well-considered plan which they preface by saying, 'Being in sound mind.' After having defrauded the cause of God through life, they perpetuate the fraud after death. And this is with the full consent of all the powers of the mind."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 326, 327.

God's guides for giving may include a will or a trust, but it is to be a living trust, working for God even while we still live. "And it should be distinctly understood that because parents have made their will, this will not prevent them from giving means to the cause of God while they live. This they should do. They should have the satisfaction here, and the reward hereafter, of disposing of their surplus means while they live."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 330.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I best use my possessions to God's glory?

"The children left to depend upon their own resources generally prize their abilities, improve their privileges, and cultivate and direct their faculties to accomplish a purpose in life. . . . Those children for whom parents do the most, frequently feel under the least obligation toward them."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 332.

FURTHER STUDY

*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 333-335.

**Part 6**  
**THESE GUIDES**  
**APPLY TODAY**  
**1 Cor. 10:11**

**Are there lessons for us to learn from the children of Israel?**

**"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."**

One of God's purposes in providing Israel with guidelines for giving was to teach them and, when applicable, to warn them not to trust in their own strength or wisdom. We today cannot return a substantial percentage of our income to God without His direct blessing any more than families in Israel could. It takes as much faith now as then.

One may wonder if these guidelines apply today. Through the spirit of prophecy directed specifically to His people today comes God's positive answer. Consider carefully His words to you.

After the death of Jesus the gospel message expanded rapidly. God had already provided a plan for its financial support. The plan was used prior to Israel, then by Israel, by the early church, and it is in force today. "The gospel, extending and widening, required greater provisions to sustain the warfare after the death of Christ, and this made the law of almsgiving a more urgent necessity than under the Hebrew government. Now God requires, not less, but greater gifts than at any other period of the world."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 392.

In reference to spiritual Israel, or the church of today, God says: "There are even more urgent necessities upon the Israel of God in these last days than were upon ancient Israel. There is a great and important work to be accomplished in a very short time."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 396.

Again God urges that more, not less, be given and explains why. "In the days of Israel the tithe and freewill offerings were needed to maintain the ordinances of divine service. Should the people of God give less in this age?"—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 528.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**How can I determine my stewardship requirements?**

"God requires no less of us than He required of His people anciently. His gifts to us are not less, but greater, than they were to Israel of old. His service requires, and ever will require, means."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 71.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 569-571.

## OUR GIFTS AND OFFERINGS

Ellen G. White

Our churches are often appealed to for gifts and offerings to aid missionary enterprises in the home field and to sustain the missionary work abroad. Let us not complain because we are often asked to give for the upbuilding of the cause. What is it that makes these frequent calls a necessity? Is it not the rapid increase of missionary enterprises? Shall we, by refusing to give, retard the growth of these enterprises? From every church, prayers should ascend to God for an increase of devotion and liberality. Those whose hearts are knit with the heart of Christ will be glad to do what they can to help the cause of God. They will rejoice in the continual expansion and advancement, which means larger and more frequently given offerings.

We may well feel that it is a privilege to be laborers together with God by giving of our means to set in operation that which will carry out his purposes in the world. All who possess the Spirit of Christ will have a tender, sympathetic heart, and an open, generous hand. Nothing can be really selfish that has Christ for its absorbing object. True faith works by love and purifies the soul. It is a holy faith, superior to sensual delight. It is a power enabling the soul to apply itself resolutely to irksome tasks and self-sacrifice for the Master's sake.

To us has been entrusted the work of proclaiming the last message of mercy to be given to our world,—the message that is to prepare a people to stand in the day of God. Do we realize our accountability? Are we acting our part in the proclamation of the message? The present time is burdened with eternal interests. We are to unfurl the standard of truth before a world perishing in error. God calls for men to rally under

Christ's blood-stained banner, give the Bible to the people, multiply camp-meetings in different localities, warn the cities, and send the warning far and near in the highways and byways of the world.

However large the income or the possessions of any person, any family, or any institution, let all remember that they are only stewards, holding in trust the Lord's money. All profit, all pay, our time, our talents, our opportunities, are to be accounted for to Him who gives them all. The Lord is constantly proving us, to see if our work is free from selfishness and pride. Those workers will have the richest reward who prove that they love God supremely and their neighbors as themselves.

Consider the necessities of our mission fields throughout the world. Our missionaries labor hard and earnestly, but often they are greatly hindered in their work because the treasury is empty, and they can not be given facilities necessary for the greatest success of their labor.

May God help those who have been entrusted with this world's goods to awaken to his design and to their individual responsibilities. God says to them, I have put you in possession of my goods that you may trade upon them to carry forward the Christian missions that are to be established far and near. I have given you the benefits of accumulated knowledge. The advantages of the past and present are yours. The truth for this time must be carried to those who have never heard it. Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all can do the work waiting for them in their own neighborhood. All can give of their means for the carrying forward of foreign missionary work.

Many to-day are keeping back that which the Lord has entrusted to them for the carrying forward of his work. Year after year thousands pass into the grave unwarned and unsaved, while the talent of means is hidden in a napkin, buried in worldly enterprises. The guilt of thus hiding the Lord's money passes all computation. When I see persons spending money for needless trimmings and needless furnishings, I think of Jesus. He might have come to this earth adorned with the glory of kingly power. But he chose a life of self-denial and self-sacrifice. "If any man will come after me," said Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Those who follow in his footsteps will remember that every dollar they can spare is needed in the work that God has said shall be done in the earth.

Be merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful. Think of the great gift God has made for you. Think of what he has done to secure your salvation. Your sinful condition demanded a sacrifice. In your spiritual destitution you had nothing to offer. But Christ came to the world, and on the cross offered himself as a sacrifice for you. Herein is love. God has given you a proof of his love that defies all computation. We have no line with which to measure it, no standard with which to compare it. God invites you to let your gratitude flow forth in gifts and offerings. He calls upon you to be his merciful helping hand. Can you refuse the request of One who has done so much for you?

Christ wept at the sight of woe. Let his tenderness come into your hearts. Practise self-denial that you may have wherewith to relieve the sufferings of God's children. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. He is the author of your faith, and he will be the finisher if you will be par-

takers of his self-sacrifice. Many of you enjoy a portion of this world's goods. When spending your money, think of what Jesus would do were he in your place. He calls upon his followers to tread in his footsteps of self-denial and self-sacrifice. The character of the Christian is to be a reproduction of the character of Christ. The same love, the same grace, the same unselfish benevolence, seen in his life, is to characterize the lives of his followers. God will bless all who are willing to give and to labor for the salvation of the world as did his beloved Son.

There are many clear and striking promises to the liberal. "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Brethren and sisters, try the experiment. Be liberal in your dealing with the Lord's work.

God will encourage his faithful stewards who are ready to put all their energies and God-given endowments to the very best use. As all learn the lesson of faithfully rendering to God what is his due, he through his providence will enable some to bring princely offerings. He will enable others to make smaller offerings; and the small and the large gifts are acceptable to him if given with an eye single to his glory. "He that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."—*Review and Herald*, April 18, 1912.

# GOD'S GIFTS

## LESSON 13

December 23-29



**"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Eph. 4:7,8.**

The first lesson of this quarter dealt with God's ownership, which was followed through the quarter with lessons on man's stewardship. But another way to look at the relationship between God and man is to see God as a giver and the Christian person as one who is constantly responding to God in gratitude for His gifts. Man is always in the position of being undeserving of that which God does for him, and with no means of really repaying God. But then, gifts are not meant to be repaid. The Giver is looking for gratitude, not payment. The immensity of His gifts provides a measure of the grateful response that is appropriate on the part of every person.

"But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. . . . It declares that while God's hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death. Having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 57.

The Lord "watches for some return of gratitude from us, as the mother watches for the smile of recognition from her beloved child. He would have us understand how earnestly and tenderly His heart yearns over us. He invites us to take our trials to His sympathy, our sorrows to His love, our wounds to His healing, our weakness to His strength, our emptiness to His fullness. Never has one been disappointed who came unto Him."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings*, pages 84, 85.

In this week's lesson we will study about God's gifts and what our response should be.

**Part 1**  
**GIFT AT**  
**BETHLEHEM**  
**Luke 2:10, 11**

**What identity did the angels give to the child whose birth they announced to the shepherds?**

**"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."**

"The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. In it is hidden 'the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.' Rom. 11:33. We marvel at the Saviour's sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. Human pride and self-sufficiency stand rebuked in His presence. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life."—*The Desire of Ages*, pages 48, 49.

**In what way did the Magi honor the infant Jesus? Matt. 2:11.**

"Through the gifts of the magi from a heathen country, the Lord supplied the means for the journey into Egypt and the sojourn in a land of strangers.

"The magi had been among the first to welcome the Redeemer. Their gift was the first that was laid at His feet. And through that gift, what privilege of ministry was theirs! The offering from the heart that loves, God delights to honor, giving it highest efficiency in service for Him. If we have given our hearts to Jesus, we also shall bring our gifts to Him. Our gold and silver, our most precious earthly possessions, our highest mental and spiritual endowments, will be freely devoted to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 65.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the significance of the birth of Jesus to me today?**

"While urging upon all the duty of first bringing their offerings to God, I would not wholly condemn the practice of making Christmas and New Year's gifts to our friends. It is right to bestow upon one another tokens of love and remembrance if we do not in this forget God, our best Friend."—*Review and Herald*, Dec. 26, 1882.

"Let there be recorded in the heavenly books such a Christmas as has never yet been seen because of the donations which shall be given for the sustaining of the work of God and the upbuilding of His kingdom."—*The Adventist Home*, page 483.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*The Desire of Ages*, pages 43-49.

**Part 2**  
**GIFT AT THE CROSS**  
**Rom. 5:7, 8**

**"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."**

"How full the atonement of the Saviour for our guilt! The Redeemer, with a heart of unalterable love, still pleads His sacred blood in the sinner's behalf. The wounded hands, the pierced side, the marred feet, plead eloquently for fallen man, whose redemption is purchased at such an infinite cost. Oh, matchless condescension! Neither time nor events can lessen the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice. As the fragrant cloud of incense rose acceptably to heaven, and Aaron sprinkled the blood upon the mercy seat of ancient Israel and cleansed the people from guilt, so the merits of the slain Lamb are accepted by God today as a purifier from the defilement of sin."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 124.

**Who does Paul declare to be an object of Christ's atonement? Gal. 2:20. What truth is taught by the phrase "gave himself for me"?**

"The acceptance of Christ gives value to the human being. His sacrifice carries life and light to all who take Christ as their personal Saviour. The love of God through Jesus Christ is shed abroad in the heart of every member of His body, carrying with it the vitality of the law of God the Father. Thus God may dwell with man, and man may dwell with God. . . .

"If through faith man becomes one with Christ, he can win life everlasting. God loves those who are redeemed through Christ, even as He loves His Son. What a thought! Can God love the sinner as He loves His own Son?—Yes; Christ has said it, and He means just what He says. He will honor all our drafts if we will grasp His promise by living faith, and put our trust in Him. Look to Him, and live."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, pp. 299, 300.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What does the cross mean?**

"Under the mighty impulse of His love, He took our place in the universe, and invited the Ruler of all things to treat Him as a representative of the human family. He identified Himself with our interests, bared His breast for the stroke of death, took man's guilt and its penalty, and offered in man's behalf a complete sacrifice to God. By virtue of this atonement, He has power to offer to man perfect righteousness and full salvation. Whosoever shall believe on Him as a personal Saviour shall not perish, but have everlasting life."—Ellen G. White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, pp. 924, 925.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, pp. 253-255.

Part 3  
GIFT OF THE SPIRIT  
John 14:16, 26

What provision did Jesus make to fill the vacancy left by His departure?

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

"Christ determined that when He ascended from this earth, He would bestow a gift on those who had believed on Him, and those who should believe on Him. What gift could He bestow rich enough to signalize and grace His ascension to the mediatorial throne? It must be worthy of His greatness and His royalty. He determined to give His representative, the third person of the Godhead. This gift could not be excelled. He would give all gifts in one, and therefore the divine Spirit, that converting, enlightening, and sanctifying power, would be His donation. . . .

"Christ is represented by the Holy Spirit; and when this Spirit is appreciated, when those controlled by the Spirit communicate to others the energy with which they are imbued, an invisible chord is touched which electrifies the whole. Would that we could all understand how boundless are the divine resources."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, pp. 1052, 1053.

What are the results of receiving Christ's gift of the Spirit?  
John 16:8-11; Gal. 5:22, 23.

"If the sinner responds to the quickening influence of the Spirit, he will be brought to repentance, and aroused to the importance of obeying the divine requirements. . . .

"It is through the mighty agency of the Holy Spirit that the government of Satan is to be subdued and subjected. It is the Holy Spirit that convinces of sin and expels it from the soul by the consent of the human agent. . . . Through the merits of Christ man may be able to exercise the noblest powers of his being and expel sin from his soul."—*My Life Today*, page 43.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is my relationship with the Holy Spirit?

"If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 50.

FURTHER STUDY

*The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 47-50.



**Part 4**  
**GIFT OF FAITH**  
**Rom. 12:3**

**Does man's faith originate with man or with God?**

**"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."**

"The Spirit operating upon and enlightening the human mind, creates faith in God. In the Scriptures faith is stated to be the gift of God, powerful unto salvation, enlightening the hearts of those who search for truth as for hidden treasure. The Spirit of God impresses the truth on the heart. The gospel is called the power of God unto salvation because God alone can make the truth a power which sanctifies the soul. He alone can render the cross of Christ triumphant."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 940.

**What is the kind of faith that avails for righteousness? Gal. 5:6.**

"Genuine faith always works by love. When you look to Calvary it is not to quiet your soul in the nonperformance of duty, not to compose yourself to sleep, but to create faith in Jesus, faith that will work, purifying the soul from the slime of selfishness. When we lay hold of Christ by faith, our work has just begun. . . .

"The labor of love springs from the work of faith. Bible religion means constant work. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' We are to be zealous of good works; be careful to maintain good works. And the true Witness says, 'I know thy works.'

"While it is true that our busy activities will not in themselves ensure salvation, it is also true that faith which unites us to Christ will stir the soul to activity."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1111.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is the evidence that my faith is genuine?**

"It is not enough to believe *about* Christ; we must believe *in* Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. But saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life."—*Gospel Workers*, page 261.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Gospel Workers*, pages 259, 260.

**Part 5**  
**GIFT OF**  
**ETERNAL LIFE**  
**Rom. 6:23**

**"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."**

"Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. 'I lay it down of myself' (John 10:18), He said. In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as his personal Saviour. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent' (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, pp. 296, 297.

**What two elements combine to procure for man the gift of salvation? Eph. 2:8.**

"Only the believer in Christ can receive life everlasting. Only by continually feeding on Christ's flesh and blood can we have the assurance that we are partakers of the divine nature. No one should be indifferent on this subject, saying, If we are honest, it is no matter what we believe. You cannot with safety surrender any seed of vital truth in order to please yourself or anybody else. Do not seek to avoid the cross. If we receive no light from the Sun of Righteousness, we have no connection with the Source of all light; and if this life and light do not abide in us, we can never be saved.

"God has made every provision that His purpose in the creation of man shall not be frustrated by Satan. After Adam and Eve brought death into the world by their disobedience, a costly sacrifice was provided for the human race. A higher value than that they originally possessed was placed upon them. By giving Christ, His only-begotten Son, as a ransom for the world, God gave all heaven."—*Selected Messages*, Bk. 1, p.299.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

**What is my personal relationship to Jesus and His gift of eternal life?**

"We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him. Put away all doubt; dismiss your fears. . . . [Galatians 2:20 quoted.] If you will leave yourself in His hands, He will bring you off more than conqueror through Him that has loved you."—*Steps to Christ*, page 72.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Steps to Christ*, "Growing Up Into Christ," pages 69-72.

Part 6  
GRATITUDE  
Col. 1:12-14

What response to salvation does Paul counsel the Colossians to make?

**"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: . . . in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."**

All that God has given us is by grace—undeserved. Christ's incarnation and sacrifice, the Holy Spirit, our faith in Jesus, and eternal life are all gifts of grace. The only reasonable attitude toward God for His gifts of grace is humility by which one recognizes his unworthiness and responds with gratitude.

"He who feels his own weakness will look higher than himself and will feel the need of constant strength from above. The grace of God will lead him to exercise and cherish a spirit of constant gratitude. He who is best acquainted with his own weakness will know that it is the matchless grace of God alone that will triumph over the rebellion of the heart."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, pp. 321, 322.

"The mercies of God surround you every moment; and it would be profitable for you to consider how and whence your blessings come every day. Let the precious blessings of God awaken gratitude in you. You cannot number the blessings of God, the constant loving-kindness expressed to you, for they are as numerous as the refreshing drops of rain. Clouds of mercy are hanging over you, and ready to drop upon you. If you will appreciate the valuable gift of salvation, you will be sensible of daily refreshment, of the protection and love of Jesus; you will be guided in the way of peace."—*Messages to Young People*, pages 409, 410.

## THINK IT THROUGH

**Does my gratitude equal my blessings? How do I express my gratitude?**

"All our blessings come from His bountiful hand. In turn He would have men and women show their gratitude by returning Him a portion in tithes and offerings—in thank offerings, in freewill offerings, in trespass offerings."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 150.

"Shall not the recipients of His blessings show their gratitude by giving of their means to help suffering humanity?"—*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 50.

"God permits us to show our appreciation of His mercies by self-sacrificing efforts to extend the same to others. This is the only way in which it is possible for us to manifest our gratitude and love to God. He has provided no other."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 18, 19.

## FURTHER STUDY

*The Desire of Ages*, page 348.

## LESSONS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1974

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the *Adult Lessons* for the first quarter of 1974 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is "Christ Our Righteousness."

The title of the first lesson is "Righteousness." The memory verse is 1 Cor. 1:30. The outline is as follows: (1) Meaning of Righteousness. Gen. 7:1. (2) Description of Righteousness. Ps. 119:172. (3) Source of Righteousness. 1 John 4:8. (4) Jesus and Righteousness. John 14:9. (5) Relationship with God. Isa. 59:2. (6) Corrected Conduct. Rom. 6:13.

The title of the second lesson is "The Call to Righteousness." The memory verse is Isa. 45:24. The outline is as follows: (1) Man's Inadequacy. Dan. 9:7, 8, 10. (2) First Things First. Matt. 6:33; 1 Tim. 6:11. (3) Blessed Are They. Matt. 5:6. (4) Our Righteousness Is of God. Isa. 54:17. (5) Christ, Our Righteousness. Jer. 23:5, 6. (6) Accepting the Invitation. Ps. 5:8; 23:3; 4:1.



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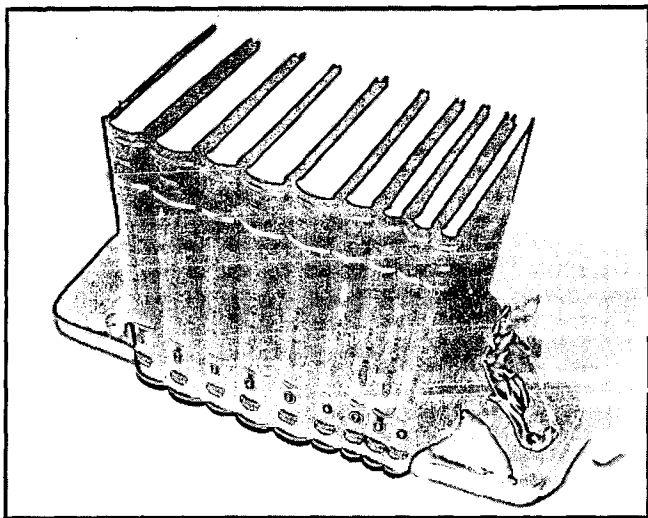
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# How much do I owe?



Who is a steward of God? Is a man's stewardship dependent on the quantity or the quality of his possessions? Does stewardship involve more than money and material possessions? All life is stewardship. God loans people everything, but requires something in return.

The subject of stewardship, focus of this quarter's lessons, is discussed in depth in the new book *Managing God's Goods*, by Paul Smith, associate secretary of the Stewardship and Development Department of the General Conference. Elder Smith,

who also authored the Sabbath School lessons, has prepared this book as an additional source of study help. *Managing God's Goods* is keyed to the Sabbath School lessons. The different subjects and points discussed have the same topic headings as those used in the lessons.

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South-East Africa	4,037,361	171	30,937	48,033
Southern	15,200,000	173	11,267	28,554
Zaire	20,705,834	182	26,654	67,924
Zambesi	5,986,800	512	33,927	58,368
Zambia	4,000,000	147	23,555	48,801
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>82,680,098</b>	<b>1,854</b>	<b>238,240</b>	<b>462,837</b>

(Figures as of 3rd quarter 1972)

