

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*
Lesson 1 “The Influence of Materialism”

Read for this week’s study

1 John 2:16, 17; Luke 14:26–33; 12:15–21; Deuteronomy 8:10–14; 1 Timothy 6:10; John 15:5; Galatians 2:20.

Memory Text

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The God of This World
- III. Filling the Barns
- IV. The Allure of Materialism
- V. Love of Self
- VI. The Ultimate Futility of Materialism
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. How would you define the word “stewardship?” Since this word has fallen out of use in many circles, can you come up with a more up-to-date English word for that? How would you define the word “materialism?” (General Introduction)
2. Read Romans 12:2. Why does Paul use the word “conformed” in relation to the world and “transformed” for the work God is doing in our lives? (Sabbath afternoon)
3. Read 1 John 2:16-17. What are some different options for understanding the term “world” in the Bible? How is it used here? How does this passage describe what really matters in life as well as some of the other options that people choose? Read Luke 14:26-33. How does Jesus portray what really matters in life and how to achieve it? How can we know if the things we own, even if not many, own us as well? (Sunday’s lesson)
4. Read Luke 12:15-21. What is the primary principle Jesus is illustrating here? Could the same principle apply to someone who is not rich? Read Deuteronomy 8:10-14.

How does this description apply to the developed world today? How can one avoid this syndrome? (Monday's lesson)

5. Read Matthew 6:22-24. What does the eye represent? What does it mean by an unhealthy eye? How should Christians react when they see images that tempt them to buy things, use things or otherwise act out in ways that are not consistent with God's will or even their own best image of themselves? What strategies do advertisers use to get our attention and get us to act? Read Galatians 5:16. We tend to associate lust with sexuality. What other kinds of lusts are there? (Tuesday's lesson)
6. Read Romans 12:3. How is faith related to an accurate assessment of oneself? What is it that drives us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think? Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. What does Paul call the root of all evil? What is Paul's cure for the love of money? Read Philippians 2:3. How does this verse help us understand why materialism is so contrary to the Christian ideal? (Wednesday's lesson)
7. Read Deuteronomy 7:6, 1 Peter 2:9, John 15:5 and Galatians 2:20. What does it mean to be God's possession? Where do we find our true identity? If all our possessions were suddenly taken away, would we feel that we have lost our identity? (Thursday's lesson)
8. Is there any message in this lesson for the poor, or is it primarily directed toward those who have more than enough? (Friday's lesson)
9. Everyone needs some money in order to live. How can we keep money, and our need for money, in the right biblical perspective? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind," so look after it, please, "that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

What I like about this is, the kind of worship God desires is described as rational, intelligent, spiritual worship; not mechanical, not ritualistic, not ceremonial. But we worship an intelligent God. He wants us to worship him in spirit and in truth, Jesus said. So to do something mechanical, learned by rote, is a terrible misrepresentation of the truth about God. Remember Isaiah? "Your worship of me is but the commandments of men learned by rote." You come into the temple, but your hearts aren't in it. Remember the Sabbath-keepers in Amos? All that kind of unthinking obedience suggests an unthinking God.

So Romans 12: 1, 2 is a magnificent passage. The kind of worship God wants is worship that is appropriate to the kind of God that he is. And I think that really affects the way we worship.

You know when we go through an hour of worship—you remember the things we all do in the right and proper order.

We have a song service, and get the books out, and we sing, and have you ever sung a song through and hardly noticed the words? Have you ever repeated the Lord's Prayer and come to the Amen, and you can't remember saying anything in between? Well, you hope God enjoyed it, anyway. Or, you hold that last note long and high, which is fun at times, but why do we do it? Or if we repeat things over and over, and over and over and over, as some do, does God kind of like that? It may not make sense to us, he rather likes it? If you were God, how would you want to be worshipped? The way we worship God? If you were God, would you want people to meet for an hour and do the things we sometimes do for the hour? We sometimes worship God as if he were less intelligent than we are.

I love Paul's comment here. He wants intelligent, rational, spiritual worship. Or do you have "worship of heart and mind" in your version? Do you have that in yours? The worship of heart and mind? It's intelligent worship, because he's that kind of a God. I believe if God is the kind of a God we are convinced he is from going through the sixty-six, it will greatly affect the way we worship, the way we pray, certainly the way we treat each other. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans*, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:* [http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66)

Further Study with Ellen White

God's promise is, "Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13. {SC 43.1}

The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. By nature we are alienated from God. The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: "Dead in trespasses and sins;" "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" "no soundness in it." We are held fast in the snare of Satan, "taken captive by him at his will." Ephesians 2:1; Isaiah 1:5, 6; 2 Timothy 2:26. God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him. {SC 43.2}

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. "Come now, and let us reason together" is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He

desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. {SC 43.4}

Will men and women consider how God regards the creatures He has made? He formed man's mind. We do not think one noble thought that does not come from Him. He knows all the mysterious workings of human mind; for did He not make it? God sees that sin has debased and degraded man, but He looks upon him with pity and compassion; for He sees that Satan has him in his power. {SD 105.2}

So long as the people of God preserve their fidelity to Him, so long as they cling by living faith to Jesus, they are under the protection of heavenly angels, and Satan will not be permitted to exercise his hellish arts upon them to their destruction. {OHC 92.5}

It is the greatest joy of the angels of heaven to spread the shield of their tender love over souls who turn to God. {OHC 92.6}

A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is the development of character in this life. {COL 332.3}

As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings. {COL 333.1}

The entrance of God's word is the application of divine truth to the heart, purifying and refining the soul through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The faculties devoted unreservedly to God, under the guidance of the divine Spirit, develop steadily and harmoniously. Devotion and piety establish so close a relation between Jesus and His disciples that the Christian becomes like Him. Through the power of God, his weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. He becomes a person of sound principle, clear perception, and reliable, well-balanced judgment. Having a connection with God, the source of light and understanding, his views, unbiased by his own preconceived opinions, become broader, his discernment more penetrative and farseeing. The knowledge of God, the understanding of His revealed will, as far as human minds can grasp it, will, when received into the character, make efficient men. {CT 37.3}

By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened. God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word

destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude. This is what it means to live “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” This is eating the Bread that comes down from heaven. {DA 391.1}

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to choose another master; for we are always free to do this. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand. In constantly beholding Him, we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18. {SC 72.1}

God designed that those to whom He entrusted talents of means, ability, and gifts of grace, should be good stewards of His beneficence, and not seek to reap all the advantages for themselves. God does not estimate man by the amount of wealth, talent, or education that he may have. He values man in proportion as he becomes a good steward of His mercy and love. {SW 37.1}

It is the love of money that the word of God denounces as the root of all evil. Money itself is the gift of God to men, to be used with fidelity in His service. God blessed Abraham, and made him rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And the Bible states, as an evidence of divine favor, that God gave David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, very much riches and honor. {CS 139.1}

Satan has nets and snares, like the snares of the fowler, all prepared to entrap souls. It is his studied purpose that men shall employ their God-given powers for selfish ends rather than yield them to glorify God. God would have men engage in a work that will bring them peace and joy, and will render them eternal profit; but Satan wants us to concentrate our efforts for that which profiteth not, for the things that perish with the using. {OHC 200.2}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 2 “I See, I Want, I Take”

Read for this week’s study

2 Corinthians 8:1–7; Matthew 13:3–7, 22; Genesis 3:1–6; Isaiah 56:11; Matthew 26:14–16; 2 Peter 1:5–9.

Memory Text

“ ‘Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful’ ” (Matthew 13:22, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Prosperity Gospel
- III. Blurred Spiritual Eyesight
- IV. The Steps of Covetousness
- V. Greed—Having Things Your Way
- VI. Self-Control
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Matthew 13:3-7, 22. How does Jesus’ explanation of the seed that landed among thorns relate to our lives in today’s world? Does this truth apply only to the developed world or is it true also in places that don’t have all the amenities that people in the West are used to? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. In Proverbs it suggests that following God’s ways (the wise) leads to prosperity, but wickedness leads to ruin (Proverbs 3:33; 10:3; 13:25; 14:11; 15:6). Is that always true in this life? Does God truly prosper all who are faithful to Him? Is poverty ever a sign of unfaithfulness? Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. How does this passage help us answer the questions above? How should we read texts like the ones in Proverbs? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. In what ways have you seen the “deceitfulness of riches” in your own life? What practical choices can help people protect themselves from this deception? (Monday’s lesson)

4. Read Genesis 3:1-6. What did Satan do to lure Eve into sin? How has he used the same principles through the ages to deceive many others as well? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read Isaiah 56:11. What sin is this text warning about? How can we learn to recognize tendencies toward covetousness in ourselves? Read Matthew 26:14-16. What does the Judas story tell us about the power of greed? Who among us doesn't manifest some greed in our characters? What can we do to keep this natural tendency under control? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Acts 24:24-26 and Galatians 5:22-25. How do these texts help us understand how people, rich or poor, can protect themselves from the dangers that greed, covetousness, and the love of material things can present to the Christians? Read 2 Peter 1:5-9. What path is Peter pointing to and how does pursuing this path help us against greed and covetousness? Why do you think love is listed first in Galatians 5 and last in 1 Peter 1? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Can you think of any biblical examples that refute the idea of a "prosperity gospel?" (Friday's lesson)
8. Does your experience with small children suggest to you that they are born greedy or generous? How does one raise children that exhibit the fruits of the Spirit? (Friday's lesson)
9. How does greed damage the greedy person? How does it damage others? Can you give examples from your own experience? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Well, what was the theology prevailing at that time? When a man was poor, was he blessed? No, the reason he was poor was that he was not blessed. And why was he not blessed? Because he was not good. Do you remember in Job? So long as Job was prosperous, they knew he was a good man, but when he lost everything, the three theologians came and said, "You must have done something very bad, because if you are good, you are blessed. If you are bad, you are punished. And the greatest evidence of blessing is prosperity. "This is why Jesus stunned them when he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they said, "Well, if a rich man can't be saved, who can be?" Because if you are rich, you are blessed; and if you are blessed, you are good. So what Jesus said to them was, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a good man to be saved." That's the way they read it.

You see, that's why they were so puzzled by it. But of course their theology was wrong, and the Book of Job is to show it. Job was good, but he lost everything, and he remained good. But his friends had this system all neatly worked out, you see. The more virtuous you are, the more you are blessed. The more you're blessed, the more you'll prosper. So the richer you are, the "gooder" you are. Well, hasn't that prevailed through the years? "The rich are blessed." And

they have tyrannized the poor sometimes because of this. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Matthew, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

[http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66)

Well, supposing Jesus came to a group of our church, and said, “By the way, you have not been keeping the Sabbath correctly. You have been too strict.” How would we react? You know, we’d say, “Well, we’ve been warned that false prophets would come. ‘To the Law and to the Testimony’ and you’re not speaking in harmony.” We shouldn’t underestimate the devotion, the dedication of these Pharisees. And they were highly respected by the people. Jesus said, “I read the Old Testament differently.” You remember, in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the poor,” and they said, “That’s ridiculous! The poor aren’t blessed. They’re poor because they’re not blessed. If they were blessed they would be rich.” And then he says, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” If you’re rich, you’re blessed. Otherwise you wouldn’t be rich. And you wouldn’t be blessed if you weren’t good, so if you were rich, you were good. So Jesus was saying to those Bible students, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a good person to be saved.” That’s ridiculous! It’s just their basic understanding was wrong.

And Jesus said, “I say, blessed are you poor, because you’re more willing to accept what I have to offer than these rich people. Because the rich people know they’re in good standing.” You see, they had key texts for this. They would go back to Deuteronomy. “If you obey me, I’ll bless you and prosper you. If you disobey me, I’ll curse you and there will be punishments, and plagues, and all the rest. And your crops will not flourish.” The three friends of Job argued with him over that very point. And they were wrong. So Jesus was taking the same point of view against the Pharisees as Job was taking against the three theologians who came to him. Don’t oversimplify on this. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Mark, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

[http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66)

First of all, look in Jeremiah 9. Now, all the reading that we’ve done before is going to focus in on a book like Romans, and Galatians to come. Paul grew up reading Jeremiah. I wonder if he knew about Jeremiah 9:23. Of course he did!

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this [are you proud of something? Be proud of this], that he understands and knows

me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the LORD.”

Isn't that Romans 1:16, 17? “I am not ashamed of the gospel. I am proud of it, for in it God's righteousness is revealed. I'm proud of the fact that God delights in love, justice, and righteousness, and that knowledge has great power.”

Do you remember all the books, how many of them said, “My people perish for lack of knowledge? They do not know me.”

Think of all the way through Isaiah, where people were worshipping God in the wrong way because they did not know him. You remember in Isaiah 29, “Their worship of me is a commandment of men learned by rote;”

Why would you obey God mechanically, without thinking, if you didn't think that's the kind of God he was, and would accept this? The way we worship God, the way we treat each other, is determined by the kind of person we believe him to be. And all the prophets wrestled with this.

Jeremiah saw the truth. He says, “I'm proud of the truth about God. He delights in love, justice, and righteousness.” Remember Micah, and Amos. They all said this, didn't they? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

COMMENT: This is backing up just a little bit to your first question. What I see as the worst of the problem is what we refer to as original sin. They both chose to do something against God's advice. They began the habit or the inclination in mankind to open themselves to Satan's deceptions, and not to trust God supremely.

Yes, what do you think of that? And couldn't we be quite specific about that? Doesn't Satan make some specific points to Eve? First of all, he says, “Has God said you may not take this fruit?” She said, “Yes, we may not touch it or we die.” He said, “That's a lie.” Right? He said, “You will not die.” Would you have faith in a liar? It's not very wise. So immediately, he seeks to undermine confidence and trust in God, but then he also suggests that God has selfishly withheld something from them which would be very good. He says, “God knows if you take this you will become like him, and I don't know why he's holding that back from you,” he'd say in his deceitful manner. “You know, I don't know why God, being so good, would do this.” You know how you could say those things, seeming to be supportive, and yet actually undermining.

So the charges are right there. God is pictured as arbitrary, exacting, and the whole idea that God would say, “If you touch that tree I'll kill you,” sounds vengeful, unforgiving and severe. So

how are we to read those words? It would look, wouldn't it, if these are the charges in the great controversy, that God, though he did wonderfully during creation week, is not coming off so well in this conversation with Satan. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Genesis, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

[http://pkp.cc/1MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/1MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66)

What about the tenth Commandment, which prohibits any evil desire? Hasn't the tenth Commandment all along said that you haven't really got the Law written in your heart when you just don't break the rules? The Law is written in your heart when you don't even want to break the rules, you see. It prohibits evil desire. So the Ten Commandments have always taught this, that if you desire this, you're not really keeping the Commandment. So Jesus was only reiterating the Ten Commandments as originally given. These were not new ideas. And who said, "What God wants is truth in the inner being"? Didn't David understand this? How about the other writers, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, when they said, "Your obedience is just the commandments of men learned by rote. It's just external." Amos says, "You keep the Sabbath, but you can hardly wait for the sun to go down so you can cheat with biased scales, and so on." "Your hearts are not really in it." Remember, over and over we read this? Jesus is saying, "I am fully in harmony with the Old Testament. You, my friends, are not. I'm not teaching you anything new. This is as old as the Old Testament. There's no change here whatever." They were not living in harmony with the Scriptures. And of course this would be very hard to take. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Matthew, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

[http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66)

Has the law ever saved anybody? No, you see the law, by itself, just tells you what to do, and you remember in Romans 7 on the struggle, Paul says, "When I read the ten more and more carefully, and I came to that tenth one, and it said I not only should not sin, I should not even want to," he said, "that made me angry. I'd been good all these years, and a man of strong feeling. I had often wanted to do what was wrong, and I measured my virtue by the fact that though I wanted to do what was wrong so much, I didn't do it." Now there's a real saint! And Paul says, "I realize now that full salvation means that eventually I will even lose the desire to do what is wrong." That's real healing, you see. I'm not earning Brownie points by being good. I

want to be healed; that's all. What must I do to be saved? In Acts, "Trust God." And God says, "I will not just admit you to the kingdom, but I *will* heal and restore you, all the damage done."

And you remember the argument in that chapter where Paul finally realizes the law did him a service in revealing that inside himself, though he appeared to be good, that evil was still in there. He says, "I still want to do that thing. I've disciplined myself, and I haven't done it. I would really like to be delivered from this doomed body. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The good news has power to save and to heal."

And in heaven, is it not right, we will live with neighbors who not only do not hurt; they don't even want to. You don't have to lock your house, because everybody will obey the law in those days. Is it because they wouldn't dare disobey in heaven? No, there won't even need to be a law any more. Nobody even wants to steal. The law is written in the heart. That's the whole meaning of the law being written in the heart, instead of on the wall. We've come to the place where the tenth Commandment has been obeyed. We do not even want to do what is wrong. And God offers that healing. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans*, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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One last thing, though, here in Galatians. It talks about being led by the Spirit. How fully would one want to be led and influenced and instructed and corrected by the Holy Spirit? Fully?

Now, what happens when we are fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit? We have phrases that sometimes describe this, such as "Let go and let God". It all depends on what that means. That can mean all kinds of things! But do we eventually completely surrender our self-control to God's control, and now he runs us day by day? Is that what we desire? Well, it's so interesting in this list of the fruits of the Spirit. If one is led by the Spirit he will have all those good things mentioned until you come to the last one, translated in the *King James*, "temperance". Do you have temperance in your version? You know temperance is something the *Women's Christian Temperance Union* promoted through the years, and gave temperance a certain understanding. It's abstinence from liquor, tobacco, narcotics, and moderation in all other things. But is that what Paul has in mind? What do you have in your version for the last of the fruits of the Spirit?

Self-control? Anything else? Do they all agree, self-control? It might be self-discipline, self-mastery, self-control. And that's exactly what the Greek word is. If I were to put it on the board, it's, well it's hard to put it quite into the English letters. Maybe I'll just pronounce it:

"*enkrateia*." The "en" is "in"-inside, and "*krateia*" is the root for democrat; the rule of the people. Aristocrat; the rule of the few. Autocrat, and so on. So "*enkrateia*" means exercising power, or rule, inside. And that's the word for self-control.

Now, think what that says about God—that when we have come completely under his saving and healing power, we have not given up self-control; we have recovered it. Now, is that tyranny? God’s desire is not to run us all, like robots. God’s desire is to lead us to the place where we will responsibly and reliably and consistently exercise self-discipline, self-mastery, self-control. And hasn’t it cost God a great deal to give us back our self-control? If he hadn’t given us this power in the beginning there wouldn’t have been the revolt in his universe. So I think the fruits of the Spirit are so significant that it ends with God’s ultimate goal for us, that when we come into full harmony with his ideal for us, we have recovered the dignity of self-mastery and self-control. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

Further Study with Ellen White

He who called the fisherman of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God. {DA 297.1}

Every act of self-sacrifice for the good of others will strengthen the spirit of beneficence in the giver’s heart, allying him more closely to the Redeemer of the world, who “was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.” And it is only as we fulfill the divine purpose in our creation that life can be a blessing to us. All the good gifts of God to man will prove only a curse, unless he employs them to bless his fellow men, and for the advancement of God’s cause in the earth.—R. & H., Dec. 7, 1886. {CS 20.2}

And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator. {SC 79.1}

God might have committed the message of the gospel, and all the work of loving ministry, to the heavenly angels. He might have employed other means for accomplishing His purpose. But in His infinite love He chose to make us co-workers with Himself, with Christ and the angels,

that we might share the blessing, the joy, the spiritual uplifting, which results from this unselfish ministry. {SC 79.2}

Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity. {COL 355.1}

One of the divine plans for growth is impartation. The Christian is to gain strength by strengthening others. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." This is not merely a promise; it is a divine law, a law by which God designs that the streams of benevolence, like the waters of the great deep, shall be kept in constant circulation, continually flowing back to their source. In the fulfilling of this law is the secret of spiritual growth (ST June 12, 1901).

{7BC 947.3}

Do not become overwhelmed with the great amount of work you must do in your lifetime, for you are not required to do it all at once. Let every power of your being go to each day's work, improve each precious opportunity, appreciate the helps that God gives you, and make advancement up the ladder of progress step by step. Remember that you are to live but one day at a time, that God has given you one day, and heavenly records will show how you have valued its privileges and opportunities. May you so improve every day given you of God, that at last you may hear the Master say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." {Mar 84.5}

Thus it is with the truly righteous man. He is unconscious of his goodness and piety. Religious principle has become the spring of his life and conduct, and it is just as natural for him to bear the fruits of the Spirit as for the fig tree to bear figs or for the rosebush to yield roses. His nature is so thoroughly imbued with love for God and his fellow men that he works the works of Christ with a willing heart. {SL 13.1}

All who come within the sphere of his influence perceive the beauty and fragrance of his Christian life, while he himself is unconscious of it, for it is in harmony with his habits and inclinations. He prays for divine light, and loves to walk in that light. It is his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. His life is hid with Christ in God; yet he does not boast of this, nor seem conscious of it. God smiles upon the humble and lowly ones who follow closely in the footsteps of the Master. Angels are attracted to them, and love to linger about their path. They may be passed by as unworthy of notice by those who claim exalted attainments and who delight in making prominent their good works, but heavenly angels bend lovingly over them and are as a wall of fire round about them. {SL 13.2}

When, as erring, sinful beings, we come to Christ and become partakers of His pardoning grace, love springs up in the heart. Every burden is light, for the yoke that Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness, becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness. {SC 59.2}

The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers. It was His delight to do the will of God. Love to God, zeal for His glory, was the controlling power in our Saviour's life. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions. Love is of God. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. It is found only in the heart where Jesus reigns. "We love, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19, R.V. In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around. {SC 59.3}

The refreshing water, welling up in a parched and barren land, causing the desert place to blossom, and flowing out to give life to the perishing, is an emblem of the divine grace which Christ alone can bestow, and which is as the living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul. He in whom Christ is abiding has within him a never-failing fountain of grace and strength. Jesus cheers the life and brightens the path of all who truly seek Him. His love, received into the heart, will spring up in good works unto eternal life. And not only does it bless the soul in which it springs, but the living stream will flow out in words and deeds of righteousness, to refresh the thirsting around him. {PP 412.2}

Christ came to this world for no other purpose than to manifest the glory of God, that man might be uplifted by its restoring power. All power and grace were given to Him. His heart was a wellspring of living water, a never-failing fountain, ever ready to flow forth in a rich, clear stream to those around Him. His whole life was spent in pure disinterested benevolence. His purposes were full of love and sympathy. He rejoiced that He could do more for His followers than they could ask or think. His constant prayer for them was that they might be sanctified through the truth, and He prayed with assurance, knowing that an almighty decree had been given before the world was made. {TMK 37.2}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 3 “God or Mammon?”

Read for this week’s study

Psalm 33:6–9; Matthew 19:16–22; 1 Peter 1:18; Hebrews 2:14, 15; Exodus 9:14; Psalm 50:10.

Memory Text

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Christ, the Creator
- III. Son of God/Son of Man
- IV. Christ, the Redeemer
- V. A Jealous God
- VI. True Ownership
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. According to this week’s lesson: “Serving God and serving money are mutually exclusive actions. It’s one or the other, God or mammon.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What does “money” actually represent, and what can we learn from that? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Genesis 1:1, Psalm 33:6-9, Isaiah 45:11-12, Jeremiah 51:15, and John 1:3. What do these texts tell us about God’s relation to the material world? What does the created world tell us about the Creator? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Matthew 19:16-22. What do you think the man in the story was sad about? What does this story tell us about how Satan uses our love of material things to keep us distant from God? Whether we are rich or poor, how can we make sure we keep the right relationship to the things of this world? (Monday’s lesson)
4. The lesson uses a banking model to describe the human condition and what God does to remedy that condition. The human condition is described as a debt that we

owe that we cannot repay. The solution is forgiveness of that debt or the payment of a ransom. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of such a model? Notice how the following texts describe the human condition (Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Peter 1:18; Hebrews 2:14-15; Galatians 3:13; Revelation 1:5). (Tuesday's lesson)

5. Read Exodus 9:14. What does God mean when He says, "There is none like me in all the earth?" What do the following texts tell us about how different God is from His creation (1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 86:8; Isaiah 55:8-9; Jeremiah 10:10; Titus 1:2)? What does the concept of a "jealous God" (Exodus 34:14) tell us about our relationship with God? Are there any positive aspects to the concept of jealousy? Can we apply such a concept to God without any of the negative baggage the word usually carries? What, if anything, is competing with God for your affections? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. According to the following verses, what does God own (Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 50:10; 104:16; Ezekiel 18:4; Haggai 2:8; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)? What do these same texts tell us about how we should view the material things that we have in our possession? If it is true that we don't really own anything, what difference should that knowledge make in our attitude toward the things of this world? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Read Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15. What does it mean that human beings were given "dominion" over the earth? How does Genesis 2:15 help to explain that? What should our attitude as Christians be toward taking care of the environment? Why take care of a world that will be destroyed in the end anyway? (Friday's lesson)
8. How can we learn to distinguish between the proper use and enjoyment of the physical things God has created and the abuse of those things? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Remember the charges developed through Scripture are that God is arbitrary; he is not respectful of the freedom of his children. He is vengeful, exacting, unforgiving, and severe; he cannot even be depended upon to tell the truth. Is that answered during creation week? What could you point to as answers? You are watching. Day one, two. Sometimes we wonder why he took so long. He could have created the world with a snap of his fingers, couldn't he? Has he always taken that long to create each of the billions and billions of worlds? Or because the controversy has begun, the charges have been laid, and a third of the angels have accepted them as true, might this be the background for God doing what he did? No one was hurrying him during creation week. With great majesty and unhurried drama, God unfolded his plan for our world. Day one: "Let there be light." Day two, three, four, five; the world is a beautiful place. God doesn't look very selfish by Thursday evening. What a beautiful place he's planned

for the people that he will permit to dwell there. And then on Friday he creates the first man and the first woman. Why do you think he made us male and female? It's caused all kinds of complications ever since, hasn't it? Why do you think he did this? It seems to me one of the most wonderful things God ever did, was to share as much of his creative power with us mere humans as he possibly could. A selfish God? Abusing his divine power and selfishly using it?

See, Satan wants to be like God, to be a creator-god. What better way could there be, than for God to create us male and female, with the amazing arrangement, that when a man and a woman come together in love, they have the power to create little people in their own image. Now, we're only creatures, we're not God, so we don't quite know how we do this, but we've been given this amazing ability. If all goes well, and wouldn't it be just like God to have it happen in an atmosphere of love? Wouldn't it be just like the devil to pervert this as much as he could? But under ideal circumstances, out of that relationship, we have the power to create little people, and they surely are in our own image unto the third and fourth generation. It's interesting to me to watch grandchildren coming along. And I see those things still there. Good ones and some other kinds too; they're still there. How amazing, that God would share his creative power with us to that extent, and the angels looking on must have been stunned. Or maybe this wasn't new. Is that the way it is everywhere? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Genesis*, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/1MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: It's part of our problem, then, that we are taking models from our legal system here and trying to apply them to God. The "substitutionary," that comes in, say more about that. The "vicarious."

Graham: Ah. He died in our stead. He died as the substitution. In a way, it's very true. I mean, either he dies or we die. However that's where the comparison ends, because if God has let you and me and all other sinners die, all it would have done is prove the truthfulness of his warning, "If you sin, you will die." And God could say to the universe, "Was I right? I said sinners would die, and look, they're dead."

But the universe would not have had answers to questions two and three that I just mentioned. When Jesus died, there was no doubt in the minds of the universe that God was not killing his Son. They were clear about that. And the death of Christ answers all those three questions. So it's not either us or him. His death was infinitely more significant than ours. But had he not died, then what else could God do but leave us to reap the consequences and we all would have died. So in a sense, yes. He died in our stead, but beyond that there's no comparison.

Lou: But not as a payoff. It's not one or the other.

Graham: It's not his death is equal to all of ours. His death is infinitely more significant than the death of every sinful man or angel who has ever lived. The death of angels and men would not have answered the questions.

Lou: What you're saying then, is that just a simple satisfaction idea doesn't encompass what's involved at all, does it?

Graham: Oh, it makes it much too small. I think it puts God in a very bad light, and it doesn't answer the questions of the great controversy.

Many folk who prefer those understandings of the plan of salvation do not understand there has been a universe-wide great controversy over the character and government of God. And do you remember at our first meeting, I brought along the evidence that even Luther, hero of the Christian world that he is, could not conceive of these larger issues because he couldn't include the book of Revelation—let alone Hebrews, James and Jude. And this has been the pattern through the years. Not many have seen the sixty-sixth book picture of a universe-wide controversy over the character and government of God. And so they have seen the death of Christ as primarily a plan just to save you and me, for which we are very grateful. It's just that the larger view makes the cross much more significant. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #8 with Lou Venden, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence" recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

One view sees the plan of salvation and God's gracious provisions, such as the death of Christ on the cross, as being primarily offered to adjust our legal standing in the sight of God, because as sinners, we are guilty. And guilty as we are, justice and law demand that we be executed. And the only way to avoid being executed—and there are many, various explanations of execution; these are the various views of hell. We all have views of hell, the longer view, the medium view and the shorter view; there are many views of hell. But if God is the executioner, then we do well to be preoccupied with our legal standing. And unless we be forgiven, he will go ahead and do this to us; he must. Law and justice require it. And if he doesn't go through with this, the universe will conclude he is unjust. And if he's unjust, you wouldn't trust him, and now you're getting over into the other view, which always amuses me, that if you pursue even the legal view logically to its conclusions you wind up with the other one.

But now in the larger view, which uses all sixty-six books and has no problems with Ellen White at all, it sees sin not as a legal problem. It sees sin as a very real problem, that has had devastating consequences on us physically, mentally, spiritually, socially. Sin is a breach of trust, as Romans 14 says. Sin is treachery. Sin is what Lucifer did in the beginning, for which you could

not have called him in before church counsel. I mean, what had he done? Nothing! Except the most devastating thing that can ever be done. Nearly destroyed the universe, that's what he did. That's how bad it was. And because of this distrust, and the consequential unwillingness to listen and allow God to look after us and heal the damage done, enormous damage has been done to sinners. **We're not in legal trouble, we're in trouble. We're not in danger of being executed, we're dying. That's the difference.** And I believe it makes all the difference in the world. I would not go to a doctor who would kill his patients for not cooperating. But if I'm dying, I need a doctor. And if I go and don't cooperate, I still may die. But my understanding is, that in this larger view, this great controversy view, this sixty-six book view, we're all dying. And if God were to leave us alone, that's it.

But he hasn't. He's pursued us through the years, trying to win us back to trust. And of course, you don't expect people to trust without evidence. You don't make claims; you offer demonstrations; that's the content of the sixty-six books, God's demonstration of the kind of person he is. And the way he's handled this emergency is the greatest demonstration of all. As to, not how he treats his friends, but how he treats his enemies. How he treats the sick and the dying; how does he seek to win them back to trust? And some of us find that very wonderful.

So the purpose of the plan of salvation is not to adjust our legal standing, but the purpose of the plan of salvation is to win us back to trust so he can heal us, which he can readily do, and it is to confirm the trust of the onlooking universe. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions People Are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, recorded April, 1983, Redlands, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMQUESTP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMQUESTP> (Part 2)

But now in 1 Kings 19:9:

He came to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he [that is, God] said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

You remember, God had to tell him that he wasn't the only one; there were others. But how do you think God feels about a person who's jealous for God? Isn't God jealous for our reputations? And his friends are jealous for his. Didn't Abraham show jealousy for God's reputation. And Moses? And the whole book of Job. Job's defending God, not himself, all through that book.

As witness, look at God's comment at the end, "Job has said of me what is right." He was jealous for God's reputation. This is where Elijah really was a friend, you see. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – 1&2 Kings, recorded November, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/17MMPOGIA66> (Part 1- 1 Kings)

<http://pkp.cc/18MMPOGIA66> (Part 2- 1 Kings)

<http://pkp.cc/19MMPOGIA66> (Part 1- 2 Kings)

<http://pkp.cc/20MMPOGIA66> (Part 2- 2 Kings)

Further Study with Ellen White

Infinite love—how great it is! God made the world to enlarge heaven. He desires a larger family of created intelligences (MS 78, 1901). {1BC 1081.2}

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made "in the image of God," and it was the Creator's design that they should populate the earth (RH Feb. 11, 1902). {1BC 1081.3}

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power. {MH 415.1}

He who causes the seed to spring up, who tends it day and night, who gives it power to develop, is the Author of our being, the King of heaven, and He exercises still greater care and interest in behalf of His children. While the human sower is planting the seed to sustain our earthly life, the Divine Sower will plant in the soul the seed that will bring forth fruit unto life everlasting. {COL 89.1}

Christ had been sent to earth to represent God in character. Jesus was the Life giver, the Teacher sent of God to provide salvation for a lost world, and to save men in spite of all Satan's temptations and lying deceptions. He himself was the gospel. In his teachings he clearly presented the great plan devised for the redemption of the race. Divinity had united with humanity for the purpose of uniting humanity with divinity, that through Christ man might become a partaker of the divine nature. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
{RH, July 7, 1896 par. 5}

Christ’s favorite theme was the paternal character and abundant love of God. This knowledge of God was Christ’s own gift to men, and this gift He has committed to His people to be communicated by them to the world. {6T 55.1}

The fall of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent. Redemption was not an after thought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam, but an eternal purpose, suffered to be wrought out for the blessing, not only of this atom of a world, but for the good of all the worlds that God had created. {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 3}

Through creation and redemption, through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character are revealed. By the marvelous display of his love in giving “his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” the character of God is revealed to the intelligences of the universe. Through Christ our Heavenly Father is made known as the God of love. {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 5}

Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men.—SC 11 (1892). {1MCP 250.1}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world’s Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

There was but one hope for the human race—that into this mass of discordant and corrupting elements might be cast a new leaven; that there might be brought to mankind the power of a new life; that the knowledge of God might be restored to the world. {Ed 76.1}

Christ came to restore this knowledge. He came to set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. He came to manifest the nature of His law, to reveal in His own character the beauty of holiness. {Ed 76.2}

Christ came to the world with the accumulated love of eternity. Sweeping away the exactions which had encumbered the law of God, He showed that the law is a law of love, an expression of the Divine Goodness. He showed that in obedience to its principles is involved the happiness of mankind, and with it the stability, the very foundation and framework, of human society. {Ed 76.3}

So far from making arbitrary requirements, God's law is given to men as a hedge, a shield. Whoever accepts its principles is preserved from evil. Fidelity to God involves fidelity to man. Thus the law guards the rights, the individuality, of every human being. It restrains the superior from oppression, and the subordinate from disobedience. It ensures man's well-being, both for this world and for the world to come. To the obedient it is the pledge of eternal life, for it expresses the principles that endure forever. {Ed 76.4}

Christ came to demonstrate the value of the divine principles by revealing their power for the regeneration of humanity. He came to teach how these principles are to be developed and applied. {Ed 77.1}

Christ came to this world as the expression of the very heart and mind and nature and character of God. He was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person. But He laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and stepped down from His high command to take the place of a servant. He was rich, but for our sake, that we might have eternal riches, He became poor. He made the world, but so completely did He empty Himself that during His ministry He declared, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." {MM 19.1}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {MH 419.4}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {MH 422.2}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}

Christ came to reveal to a fallen race the love of God. He, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of the brightness of His divinity, and came to live on this earth as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. No man has seen God at any time, except as He is revealed through Christ. {UL 334.5}

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of

God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, "I have manifested thy name." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 9}

But the work of human redemption is not all that is accomplished by the cross. The love of God is manifested to the universe. The prince of this world is cast out. The accusations which Satan has brought against God are refuted. The reproach which he has cast upon heaven is forever removed. Angels as well as men are drawn to the Redeemer. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," He said, "will draw all unto Me." {DA 626.1}

The meekness and humility that characterized the life of Christ will be made manifest in the life and character of those who "walk even as he walked." {SD 81.5}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. {DA 758.3}

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. {DA 759.1}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. Then the prevarications and accusations of him who had once been an exalted angel were seen in their true light. It was seen that his professedly spotless character was deceptive. His deeply laid scheme to exalt himself to supremacy was fully discerned. His falsehoods were apparent to all. God's authority was forever established. Truth triumphed over falsehood. {RC 60.3}

The heavenly universe had witnessed the weapons that were chosen by the Prince of life—the words of Scripture, "It is written"; and the weapons used by the prince of the world—falsehood and deception. They had seen the Prince of life deal in straightforward lines of truth, honesty, and integrity, while the prince of the world exercised his power of cunning, artful secrecy, intrigue, enmity, and revenge. They had seen the One who bore the banner of truth sacrifice everything, even His life, to maintain truth, while the one who bore the banner of rebellion continued to strengthen his accusations against the God of truth. {RC 60.5}

The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. {TA 205.2}

Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener. Had God thought us in need of revelations other than those made through Christ and in His written word, He would have given them. {8T 266.1}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*
Lesson 4 “Escape From *the World’s Ways*”

Read for this week’s study

Psalm 119:11; Ephesians 6:18; Romans 8:5, 6; Hebrews 11:1–6; 1 Kings 3:14; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

Memory Text

“Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. . . . He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage” (Proverbs 11:4, 28, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A Relationship With Christ
- III. In the Word
- IV. The Life of Prayer
- V. The Life of Wisdom
- VI. The Holy Spirit
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. This week’s lesson asserts that “Our only hope to escape the allure of the world is a vital and successful relationship with Jesus.” Do you agree with this statement? If so, what exactly does a “vital and successful relationship with Jesus” mean and how does one reach that goal? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Colossians 3:2. How do we set our minds on things above? What do Psalm 119:11 and Philippians 4:8 say that can help answer this? Does the Bible itself always focus on the things that are true, pure and lovely? How would these principles affect our choices in entertainment? Read Ephesians 6:18. What does it mean to “pray at all times in the Spirit? Should the text read “in spirit” or “in the Spirit?” (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read John 5:39, 14:6 and 20:31. What do these texts tell us about how important Jesus is to our spiritual experience and what we believe? In the gospel of John faith is always a verb, never a noun (like Paul). What difference does that make? Read John 8:36. What is it that Jesus frees us from? Read Romans 8:5-6. How do we “set our minds? How can Bible study help us in the struggle to control our thoughts? (Monday’s lesson)

4. Read John 17:3. How do you “get to know” Jesus? Read Hebrews 11:1-6. What is the crucial component that needs to be mingled with all our prayers? What does it mean to come to God in faith and to pray in faith? What do your own prayers tell you about your personal priorities in life? (Tuesday’s lesson)
5. What did God say to Solomon that, had he heeded it, would have spared him the ruin that his possessions brought upon him (1 Kings 3:14)? How do 1 John 5:3 and 1 Peter 4:17 help to clarify this advice? What is the difference between knowledge, wisdom and understanding? Contrast the two kinds of wisdom in 1 Corinthians 3:19 and Proverbs 24:13-14. (Wednesday’s lesson)
6. What is the relationship of money to the cosmic conflict? How is that conflict played out in our personal financial decisions? How can we be successful the financial side of the conflict as it applies to us? Read Ezekiel 36:26-27, John 14:26 and Ephesians 3:16-17. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the victory over greed and selfishness? (Thursday’s lesson)
7. Ellen White comments: “Remember that duty has a twin sister, Love; these united can accomplish almost everything, but separated, neither is capable of good” (4 *Testimonies*, 62). How do you understand the relationship of duty and love? What does duty look like without love and what does love look like without duty? (Friday’s lesson)
8. Remember a time when you acquired something you had really longed for. How long did the joy and fulfillment last before it faded away and you were back where you started emotionally? What implications does this have for spiritual life? (Friday’s lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I would say that sin has not been dealt with until our lawlessness has either been changed or eliminated. And that’s why I chose the translation I did for this Bible Reference Sheet. You notice the first verse there; it’s the familiar verse, 1 John 3:4. But I’m using Williams’ version, which I like very much: “Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”

That’s precisely the word. *Sin is lawlessness*. Now the hazard of regarding sin as primarily breaking of the rules is that it tends to encourage an impersonal, even fearful relationship with our God. This is what he wishes to eliminate. If we regard sin as primarily a breaking of the rules, God’s commandments may be regrettably misunderstood as arbitrary regulations designed to show his authority and test our willingness to obey. If we obey, we’re rewarded. If we disobey, we’re destroyed. Do you want to live under those circumstances?

Since we all have sinned, should we be fearfully awaiting the execution of the sentence? Unless perchance God should find some legal way to give us yet another chance? And if we turn down that second chance, oh will he punish us with even greater severity for our ingratitude! Would

this understanding help produce the peace and the freedom, and the freedom from fear that God desires so much in his universal family?

Actually though, I believe if rightly understood you *can say* that sin is a breaking of the rules. But look again at the rules. Look at God's commandments, the ten in particular—The Decalogue. All those Ten Commandments require is that we love God, and we love each other. And if we really did that we would have peace and freedom. In fact in the tenth of the Ten Commandments it says that we should not even *want* to sin. If we lived in that state of mind, not even wanting to do anything unloving, we would have freedom to be sure, and all kinds of peace and good will.

But can love be commanded? Can love be produced by force or fear? To put it vividly, has God said to us children, "You either love me, and love each other, or I'll have to kill you. Do I make myself clear?" {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe?" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

How much faith do we have to have? I mean, must we trust completely, even perfectly? Is that required? Couldn't we get away with a little cheating?

Have you husbands ever said to your wives, "Wife, how much could I cheat and this marriage still survive?" Would that make any sense?

If a friend should say to you, "How much could I lie, and fail to tell you the truth—and this friendship still last?" It makes no sense.

Then for us to suggest that God needs to leave a little room for cheating in this relationship, that a perfect relationship is surely asking too much; does it make sense to even raise the question? When we cheat, and cheat we have, God remains our constant friend. But we may be destroying our side of the friendship. You see, when what God wants is seen as friendship, a loving, trusting relationship; then what he wants is obviously not a requirement demanded, but it is an absolutely voluntary experience. This long debate between faith, works and obedience has troubled saints through the years, but it could be so readily resolved if we looked at the Biblical word for obedience. This word obedience is *hupakoe*. The first part "*hupa*" means under. And the second part "*akoe*" means hearing. The word means literally, "listening under." *A humble willingness to listen*, and of course if we love and trust God we'll be willing to listen. It wouldn't make sense for us to *not* listen to one we love, trust and admire. Now could God's expectation of our willingness to listen be one hundred percent? Our performance may be weak. We may stumble as we leave our doctor's office. But a willingness to listen? Is it too much to say, "Don't cheat there. Let that be one hundred percent!" If it should seem that God

is too demanding in asking for such a relationship, that he expects too much of us, it surely is encouraging to read about the heroes and heroines of faith celebrated in the same chapter of the same book that tells us what faith is. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, "All God Asks is Trust" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>

The great purpose of the Bible is to reveal the truth about our heavenly Father that we may be won back to him in love and trust. This truth, this everlasting good news, is to be found in every one of the sixty-six books. But to discover this truth we must learn more than just what happened to Samson and Delilah, to David and Bathsheba, to Gideon and his fleece. The all-important question is, what do these stories tell us about God?

If one does not ask this question, much of the content of Scripture may seem unrelated to the plan of salvation, even perplexing, sometimes even contradictory. But when one learns to view the Bible as a whole, there emerges a consistent picture of an all-wise and gracious God who seems willing to go to any length to keep in touch with his people, to stoop and reach them where they are, to speak a language they can understand. And the further one reads on book by book, the more one is moved with love and admiration for a God who would be willing to run such risk, to pay such a price, in order to keep open the lines of communication between himself and his wayward children. God will save all who trust him. But he has not asked us to trust him as a stranger. The Bible—all of it—is a record of God's revelation and demonstration of infinite trustworthiness. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6, "Evaluating the Evidence" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>

But since the truth is with our Heavenly Father, he never has to stoop to use such methods. That is one reason, I believe, that he is not visibly here. Because if he were to be here, even in humble form as his Son was when he came, our tendency would be to say, "God, if you've said it, we believe it, and that is all there is to it!" recognizing who he is. And so even Jesus said, after just three and a half years the gentle one says, "It's better that I go now." Especially since they now recognized that he was God; and now the disciples would stop thinking things through. They would simply run to him and ask him their questions; they would accept his answers on the authority of who he was. It seems like the right thing to do.

Yet in the great controversy God does not ask for that. So even gentle Jesus said, "It is better that I go, and I'll send the Holy Spirit who will come as a still small voice. He'll come to be a

Teacher and a Guide to lead you into the truth. You won't see him. He won't intimidate you. He only works with evidence. Most particularly he'll help you understand the Bible." For God does speak to us. He does answer our questions. But he does it through what we call his Word. We talk to God, and he talks to us as we study the scriptures. That's why I believe that really thoughtful study of the scriptures is a form of prayer. That's conversing with God as with a friend. Now some people pray a great deal, but never hear God speak back because they never spend much time reading the Bible. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4, "God's Way of Restoring Trust" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

Do God's gifts and blessings keep us from misbehaving? If God gives us something generously, can we abuse the gift? When he gives us gifts, he does not control our use of them, and this becomes a little terrifying. Do you want to be that free? I've had people say, "I love your message of freedom, but I sometimes wish I were not that free."

I'd be willing to give God back about one third of my freedom if that would get me into the kingdom." And God says, "I don't like people in my kingdom who don't value freedom as highly as I do." If God has paid such a price to keep us free, how can we give any of it back? But if we are this free, it means that God could bless you for 50 years with a magnificent life, and wisdom and insight, and influence, and you could win many, many people. But you're still free to blow it all, and waste it. And look how Solomon; he was given wisdom, and yet he made a fool of himself. Samson was given great strength, which of course increased his ability to indulge himself. And he did. You remember, he could carouse all night long, and still cart the gates off in the morning, and dump them on the hillside.

It was dangerous for Solomon to have so much wisdom. You could become rather self-dependent, you know. And he did. He forgot God. And when he wrote his final book, he said, "I wish I had remembered God when I was young. Remember your creator when you're young, and don't wait to remember him when you get as old and tired as I am."

But now, taking Solomon first, and then Samson. In the end of his life, when Solomon had wasted everything, and he was a tired and foolish old king, and had just ruined his son Rehoboam, look what followed. He came to his senses, and he remembered God. He said, "God, I'm sorry. Can I come back? And I'd be willing just to sweep floors." Does God take people back that way? Or does he take them completely back? How about the Prodigal Son? Did he come back as a servant, or did he come back fully reinstated? So God took Solomon back. How fully did he take him back? Well, Solomon said, "Can I do anything to help others not do what I've done?"

And God said, "Yes. You can write me a book." And Solomon said, "But only holy men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, write books in the Bible." And God said, "That's right. I want you to write a book." And Solomon said, "I can't understand this. Me? A holy man of God?"

"Yes. Please write Ecclesiastes for me."

Isn't it stunning that a man who wasted so much is listed among the holy men of God, who wrote yet another book in the Bible? Once again, I'm glad God is in charge, because when somebody disgraces himself in our church, from then on, he's a back pew man, isn't he? We don't let him up front very much. God puts them up front, and even asks them to write more of the Bible. Now, what about that? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 2 Samuel*, recorded November, 1983, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/15MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

The words of truth will grow in importance, and assume a breadth and fullness of meaning of which we have never dreamed. The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character. The light of heavenly love will fall upon the heart as an inspiration. {COL 132.4}

In the Bible the will of God is revealed. The truths of the Word of God are the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin has clouded the understanding, is removed. The words, "A new heart also will I give you," mean, "A new mind will I give you." A change of heart is always attended by a clear conviction of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. He who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher plane of intelligence. {RH, December 18, 1913 par. 8}

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light, and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help, we are to form our opinions for ourselves, as we are to answer for ourselves before God. {RH, June 28, 1906 par. 7}

The Bible contains a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. It is the book that makes us wise unto salvation. It tells us how to reach the abode of eternal happiness. It tells us of the love of God as shown in the plan of redemption, imparting the knowledge essential for

all,—the knowledge of Christ. He is the Sent of God; he is the Author of our salvation. But apart from the Word of God, we could have no knowledge that such a person as the Lord Jesus ever visited our world, nor any knowledge of his divinity, as indicated by his previous existence with the Father. {RH, June 11, 1908 par. 4}

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus. The great truths necessary for salvation are made clear as the noonday, and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God. {5T 331.2}

The Comforter is called “the Spirit of truth.” His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself. {DA 671.1}

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God’s can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. {Pr 182.6}

We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart’s desire, inaudible to any human ear; but that word cannot die away into silence, nor can it be lost. Nothing can drown the soul’s desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. {Pr 188.1}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {Pr 8.4}

When Jesus was upon the earth, He taught His disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon Him. And the assurance He gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us.—(*Steps to Christ*, 93.) {Pr 8.5}

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent

to the wants of His children. “The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son. {SC 100.1}

Jesus said, “Ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you.” “I have chosen you: . . . that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.” John 16:26, 27; 15:16. But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works. {SC 100.2}

Every earnest petition for grace and strength will be answered. . . . Ask God to do for you those things that you cannot do for yourselves. Tell Jesus everything. Lay open before Him the secrets of your heart; for His eye searches the inmost recesses of the soul, and He reads your thoughts as an open book. When you have asked for the things that are necessary for your soul’s good, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them. Accept His gifts with your whole heart; for Jesus has died that you might have the precious things of heaven as your own, and at last find a home with the heavenly angels in the kingdom of God. {ML 16.4}

The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you.—(*Counsels on Health*, 362.) {Pr 179.4}

Living amid these opposing forces, we may through the exercise of faith and prayer, call to our side a retinue of heavenly angels, who will guard us from every corrupting influence.—(*Our High Calling*, 23.) {Pr 256.2}

Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, “Ye shall receive.” {AA 564.1}

In all ages, through the medium of communion with heaven, God has worked out His purpose for His children, by unfolding gradually to their minds the doctrines of grace. His manner of imparting truth is illustrated in the words, “His going forth is prepared as the morning.” Hosea 6:3. He who places himself where God can enlighten him, advances, as it were, from the partial obscurity of dawn to the full radiance of noonday. {AA 564.2}

What higher power can man require than this—to be linked with the infinite God? Feeble, sinful man has the privilege of speaking to his Maker. We utter words that reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. We pour out our heart’s desire in our closets. Then we go forth to walk with God as did Enoch. {HP 81.6}

There is a mighty power in prayer. Our great adversary is constantly seeking to keep the troubled soul away from God. An appeal to Heaven by the humblest saint is more to be dreaded by Satan than the decrees of cabinets or the mandates of kings. {HP 82.5}

It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask. {ML 15.5}

Jesus declares that the Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. The Holy Spirit understands man’s every necessity. He will bestow upon the earnest seeker that for which he hungers and thirsts. The blessings that God has to bestow are unlimited. We cannot comprehend their height and depth and breadth. All heaven is at the command of those who, realizing their lack of wisdom, come directly to the source of wisdom. To such ones God gives liberally and upbraids not. {HP 294.4}

How much better and safer it is to draw nigh to God, that the pure light shining from His Word may heal the wounds that sin has made in the soul. The closer we are to God, the safer we are, for Satan hates and fears the presence of God. {FLB 312.5}

The subtlety of Satan will not decrease, but the wisdom given to men through a living connection with the Source of all light and divine knowledge will be proportionate to his arts and wiles. {FLB 312.6}

God is our Father, and He will teach all who come to Him, realizing that their human wisdom is foolishness. As they take hold of His strength, and make peace with Him, living by His Word, He will unite His strength with their weakness, His knowledge with their ignorance, making them strong in Him. He will give them the care adapted to their necessities. Those who trust in Him as their Teacher will not stumble or fall.—Manuscript 88, June 18, 1902, “A Worldwide Work.” {UL 183.6}

God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need and to give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand. He will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. {AA 242.1}

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer's love and of His saving grace. The men and women who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives, have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love. {AA 49.2}

Under the Holy Spirit's working even the weakest, by exercising faith in God, learned to improve their entrusted powers and to become sanctified, refined, and ennobled. As in humility they submitted to the molding influence of the Holy Spirit, they received of the fullness of the Godhead and were fashioned in the likeness of the divine. {AA 49.3}

When Christ ascended to the Father, He did not leave His followers without help. The Holy Spirit, as His representative, and the heavenly angels, as ministering spirits, are sent forth to aid those who against great odds are fighting the good fight of faith. Ever remember that Jesus is your helper. No one understands as well as He your peculiarities of character. He is watching over you, and if you are willing to be guided by Him, He will throw around you influences for good that will enable you to accomplish all His will for you. {MYP 17.1}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, quickens all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God, develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfil the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciples that the Christian becomes like his Master in character. He has clearer, broader views. His discernment is more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. So quickened is he by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness, that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {GW 285.3}

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. Christ said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been

renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts. {SC 57.2}

Gospel religion is Christ in the life—a living, active principle. It is the grace of Christ revealed in character and wrought out in good works. The principles of the gospel cannot be disconnected from any department of practical life. Every line of Christian experience and labor is to be a representation of the life of Christ. {COL 384.1}

The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.” {DA 302.1}

God has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. He provides opportunities and opens channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to cooperate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty, it is left with us to decide our course. {FE 124.1}

Provision is made by God Himself for every soul that turns to the Lord, to receive His immediate cooperation. The Holy Spirit becomes His efficiency. {ML 47.4}

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. The mind is then brought under a new law, and that law is the royal law of liberty. Jesus came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from the soul; for sin can triumph only when the liberty of the soul is extinguished. Jesus reached to the very depth of human woe and misery, and His love attracts man to Himself. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, He lifts the mind up from its degradation, and fastens it upon the eternal reality. {TDG 124.2}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 5 “Stewards After Eden”

Read for this week’s study

Isaiah 22:14–18; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; Colossians 2:2, 3; Ephesians 6:13–17; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Memory Text

“On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Stewards in the Old Testament
- III. Stewards in the New Testament
- IV. Stewards of the Mysteries of God
- V. Stewards of Spiritual Truth
- VI. Our Responsibility as Stewards
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Adam and Eve’s first job involved stewardship (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15). How does the concept of stewardship help shift our focus from the world and its materialistic values to a focus on the Creator and His mission for us? What do you think the lesson means when it talks about being good stewards of spiritual truths? How DO you manage spiritual things? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. One of the best ways to understand the biblical concept of stewardship is to study the example of biblical stewards like Eliezer and Joseph. What kind of relationship did Eliezer and Joseph have with their employers (Genesis 24:34-38; 39:4)? What can we learn from the relationship between Joseph and his steward (Genesis 43:19; 44:1)? Read Isaiah 22:14-18. How did Shebna abuse his position as steward to the king of Judah? How do these OT stories illustrate the relationship we can and should have with God? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Luke 12:45-48; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; Titus 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 4:10. How do these New Testament texts describe the role of a steward? Read Luke 16:1-15. What does this parable teach us about faithfulness and loyalty in a steward? How does the

delay in the master's return affect the work of his steward (Luke 12:45)? How should it affect ours? (Monday's lesson)

4. According to Colossians 2:2-3 and 1 Timothy 3:16, we are stewards of the "mystery" of God. What is that mystery and what does it tell us about God? What does it tell us about ourselves that aspects of God are a "mystery"? What are the implications of Deuteronomy 29:29? If we are stewards of the gospel, what does that imply about our responsibilities? What does it tell us about God that He would allow us to safeguard things we only partly understand? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read Ephesians 6:13-17. What do these texts say that God has given to us and we are to be stewards of? How do we put on the armor of God and what does that have to do with stewardship? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. According to the lesson, one of the key traits of stewards is the willingness to accept responsibility. What does that mean? What are the implications of 2 Corinthians 5:10 for the concept of stewardship? (Thursday's lesson)
7. The lesson for this week makes the primary point that we are stewards, not only of material resources, but also of spiritual resources. A major spiritual resource is the picture of God that many Seventh-day Adventists have developed in light of the cosmic conflict theme in the Bible. Based on your own experience and the statements that follow in the handout, how can we as individuals or as a group be better stewards of the truth about God? (Friday's lesson)
8. How did Adam's statement in Genesis 3:12 undermine the stewardship role God has given to him (Genesis 1:16-18)? How can we learn to avoid blaming others when we make a mistake? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

That is why many Christians still symbolize the newness of this experience, the beginning of the healing, by baptism by immersion. Of course, at this stage, the Christian is just a beginner. Paul calls him a babe in the truth who needs a great deal of protection. Yet even at that beginning stage, God treats us as if we had never sinned, as if we had always been his loyal children.

Does that mean that since he is so generous, we are supposed to remain babes in the truth? Does God want us to grow up to perfection and maturity? You know from the biblical record, it disturbed Paul a great deal when even after a few months, he found that the Christian converts were staying as babes in the truth. When a person is physically retarded, we become very worried, don't we? When a person is mentally retarded, we are even more concerned. But when a person is spiritually retarded, we say, "Isn't that precious? Isn't that sweet? He still has the faith of a little child." The most serious of all conditions is to be spiritually retarded.

How the Bible comments about this! Look at Hebrews 5, the next on the sheet. 5:11-6:12, where the apostle says to new converts a few months later:

Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truth of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature [or perfect], who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity. (NIV)

It is time to grow up. And put right with that Paul's advice to the believers in Ephesus. Ephesians 4:11, 13-15:

His gifts were made that Christians might arrive at real maturity. . . . We are not meant to remain as children, at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching, and of the jockeying of men who are expert in the crafty presentation of lies. But we are meant to speak the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ. (Phillips)

In fact, Ephesians says the whole purpose of the church is to help people grow up to perfection and maturity. The Bible explains why. Daniel 12, Revelation, the warnings of Christ, and of Paul, tell us that we face a time of confusion and deception such as the world has never seen. If we are still babes in the truth, we will never survive. And so God in mercy waits for us to grow up, and to be as settled into the truth as Job was. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>*

The apostles were all dead, save one. And he was the elderly John, now a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos. What good news was there, to encourage the early Christians?

And you could count on God when things were that bleak, to send a message of encouragement and enlightenment and explanation to his people. He surely wouldn't send a book of mysteries and dates and schedules of events that they could not possibly understand. Rather, that sixty-sixth book that he did send, the book of Revelation (which means clarification, not mystification), is an invitation to discouraged early Christians to look a little higher—to take the *larger view* of things. To see how they've all been caught up in a vast great controversy that affects the whole universe! And that it's a controversy over God's own character and government. And then to read on and see that God has already won this war, and the angels all agree with him. To see that this is the good news. And then to read on and realize that God is inviting *us* to join in the celebration; and then to go out to the world and invite all others who are willing to listen, to join in God's victory in the war. And then we Christians might not seem so much on the defensive all the time; we have good news to tell. There's no way God

and his side can lose. And should we not *join the winning side?* is the invitation in that sixty-sixth book.

And the book also says that you can count on God to wait until this truth about him—this good news about his character and government—has been spread all over the world. Because God is the kind of person who will wait until his children have had an opportunity to understand the issues in the war; and to be ready for the awesome events the Bible describes as taking place before Jesus' return. To see and to present the plan of salvation in the larger setting of the great controversy over the character and government of God is, I believe, the highest privilege of God's friends on this planet today. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1, "The Conflict In God's Family" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>*

When God lived among us in human form, he was God, and he didn't say, "Give me your questions, here are the answers and I expect you to believe it" because it could have been the devil masquerading as Christ. God himself led them through the evidence and when they had come to an intelligent confidence based upon unquestionable evidence he was satisfied, then he revealed who he was. Now think what that says about our God and the way he runs his universe. He does not ask us to believe without evidence and I'd like to go into that a little later on. But think what it says about our methods.

If Adventists are going to finish the work, they will become the best explainers of the evidence. In other words, we won't just leave the details of Bible instruction to the folk we call the Bible workers or the Bible instructors. Every loyal member of the family worth his salt will be a Bible instructor and able to explain the Scriptures as Philip in the chariot. That's our mission. We should be the best Bible teaching explainers in the whole world. If we want to be known for anything other than the picture of God, our highest calling would be to be very careful, accurate, and interesting explainers of the content of the sixty-six books. That would be, I think, the highest thing we could aspire to. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Understanding the Mission of the Church, #1, recorded September, 1983, Camp AuSable, Michigan} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMUTMOTC>*

Read the gospels, how simple they are. In fact, Jesus has been somewhat despised because of the simplicity of his theology. I can quote you publications which say if you want to understand righteousness by faith don't read Christ, read Paul. He was the theologian, Christ was not. Christ came to offer the atonement; Paul is the one who explains. Have you not read this? Start

with Paul, then Christ, then the Old Testament, a hierarchy of values like that. So in righteousness by faith I deliberately start with the gospels now. If you want to know how to be saved consult God himself, God the Son, and then work out to those who sought to understand and with inspiration they explained beautifully.

And the reason why Paul sounds so legal in his explanation is, as he explains in Romans, I'm taking this same message that I admire so much that Jesus spoke and used many agricultural illustrations to explain it, I'm speaking to you who know law, remember in Romans? And so he uses legal pictures. And we've made the legal picture the only picture. There are many, many pictures in the Bible. Jesus preferred the Prodigal Son but some of us who are preoccupied with our legal understanding because of the traditional belief in the tortures of hell prefer the legal illustrations of the Plan of Salvation, and see those standing out superior to all the others. If I'm going to take illustrations as of prime importance I'm going to take the ones the Lord used and work out from there. That's what Paul did and we can do it too. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Understanding the Mission of the Church*, #1, recorded September, 1983, Camp AuSable, Michigan} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMUTMOTC>*

Why are we Adventists so concerned about what the world thinks about Adventists? And not concerned about what the world thinks about God?

When we had a chance to advertise in the *Reader's Digest*, it was well done, but it was all about us. I'd love to see an article that we Adventists deem it as our highest of all privileges to bear witness to the truth about God. If you look closely at us you'll find lots of things that aren't worth looking at. We're all his patients, He's the doctor. But look at *him*. And I wish we were known for our picture of God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, *We've Camped Around This Mountain Long Enough*, #2, recorded July, 1989, South Dakota Conference Ministers Meeting} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAMPED>*

What if Jesus would say when you get to the kingdom, "Would you like now to come and see the Father?" What would you say? Would you say, "Well, if you'll go with me." Will he say, "Shame on you, how did you get in in the first place? You haven't accepted my testimony." No, he would meet us where we are and say, "I know you're scared of the Father. I'll go with you." And so with Jesus there to protect us, Jesus our friend, we go where the Father is. And as you come into his glorious presence you stand there looking at your feet, be appropriate wouldn't it, and there comes a terrifying voice? No there comes a voice as musical as the voice of Jesus. And the kind voice says, "You can look at me now." And you look up and lo the face is just as

kind as the face of Jesus. And you say, "Oh I'm so sorry, God. I'm so sorry I didn't picture you that way. I know Jesus said you were that way, said if we've seen him we've seen you and you love us just as much as he does." And God says, "Doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Now you know the truth. Now can we be friends?" And I think many of us will go to Heaven from the foot of Sinai.

Now if we've been at Sinai because we're stubborn, stubbornness will keep us out of Heaven. But if we've stayed at Sinai because the local minister, maybe, hasn't helped us see it more clearly, I mean the Lord knows our sincerity. And some will arrive in the kingdom saying, "Jesus, if you'll go with me and be my friend to protect me I'm willing to go see the Father" he won't hold that against us. He's willing to wait. And there will be some happy moments in the hereafter when we hear God say, "Now can we be friends?"

But why should we wait? And I think that's the significant thing about Adventism in the last days that we will give that final message of friendship. Will that make God seem weak? God is infinitely powerful but an equally gracious person who would rather treat us not as servants but as friends. That is the testimony of Jesus and how dare we go around saying, "We are the remnant church because we have the testimony of Jesus" if we don't accept John 15:15 and 16:26. And this is exciting because I believe this is what we have to offer the millions of Christians the world around who've come part way but still worship a God who says, "Love and obey me or I'll burn you in hell forever." And in England it has turned most of the people against God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, *We've Camped Around This Mountain Long Enough*, #5, recorded July, 1989, South Dakota Conference Ministers Meeting} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/5MMCAMPED>

Lou: That's fascinating. Now, you used the word "mystery religion," and I've come across that in historical references, but it reminds me; didn't Paul himself speak of Christianity as, "Great is the mystery of godliness"?

Graham: Yes. That's right. I think he was using it on purpose. It's not that God has kept it a secret. It's true, he hasn't been able to reveal it all. But one of the major differences between a mystery religion and Christianity was this: When you were initiated into one of the mysteries, you were sworn never to tell anybody. Whereas, the Christian "mystery" was to be told to everybody. So he loved calling Christianity a mystery and then telling everybody everything about it. So we have a "revealed" mystery. And his hearers would probably understand that and would be rather struck with the contrast. We have the most important information in the universe, and you might think we would want to keep it secret. No, we want to tell everybody. Go and tell this mystery to the whole world.

Lou: But was the actual Greek word that was used, the same word?

Graham: Yes. *Musterion*. "Mystery" comes from it.

Lou: Paul is referring to it as something that we wouldn't have figured out on our own, but God gave it to us and we want to tell it to everyone.

Graham: The thing that would strike them the most is that it is not a secret.

Lou: Whereas the others . . .

Graham: They would not be allowed to tell; it's amazing we know anything about them.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #17 with Lou Venden, "Satan's Final Effort to Deceive" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/17MMCAG>

Sometimes, this patience of God that's mentioned so many, many times in the sixty-six books, has been misunderstood to mean that we can go on sinning with impunity because our God is simply too kind and too patient to discipline us or to turn us over to destructive consequences. You remember Paul warned how serious an error that can be, this error of presuming on the kindness of God. Look at Romans 2:4: "Are you, perhaps, misinterpreting God's generosity and patient mercy toward you as weakness on his part? Don't you realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Phillips) An excellent translation of that famous verse.

Now sometimes God's patience has even puzzled his trusting children. You recall that in the days of Habakkuk, they cried out to God, "Why don't you do something? Why don't you come and rescue us and help us in our predicament?" They even were in despair that God seemed to be doing nothing. And so the prophet Habakkuk was sent to urge them not to give up their faith, but to trust God enough to be willing to wait and let God work out his plans in his own good time. Micah said the problem often is that we simply don't understand God's plan. Let us trust him as we seek to understand it more and give him time to do it in his own time and in his own way. I wish we could have included all of Habakkuk in our Bible Reference Sheet, but just looking at Habakkuk 2:3.

The prophet sums up his message by saying: "It may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place." (GNB) In fact, God's first message to Habakkuk was, "I am doing something, but you wouldn't believe it if I told you." Habakkuk said, "Try me, Lord. Tell me." And the Lord did. And Habakkuk indicated that he was willing to wait. That's the source of that great verse, "The just, the righteous, God's friends, will live in faith, in trust." That verse was not written about forgiveness. It was written about trusting God enough to be willing to wait. That

great verse that Paul picked up in Romans is a most appropriate one for those who wonder why the Lord still waits.

In these last days, God's patience even gives his enemies an opportunity to misinterpret his graciousness as weakness, even to scoff at God's apparent inability to bring the conflict to a successful conclusion. And here I wish we could have included the whole of 2 Peter 3. But look first at 2 Peter 3:3, 4, where Peter warns that:

In the last days there will come men who scoff at religion and live self-indulgent lives, and they will say: "Where now is the promise of his coming? Our fathers have been laid to their rest, but still everything continues as it has always been since the world began." (NEB)

Doesn't that sound like the familiar doctrine of uniformitarianism? Nothing has ever changed and nothing ever will. But Peter goes on to explain the real reason for the delay. In 2 Peter 3:9, the next verse on the list:

It is not that the Lord is slow in fulfilling his promise as some suppose, but that he is very patient with you, because it is not his will for any to be lost, but for all to come to repentance. (NEB)

Then Peter, if you could read on in the chapter, refers to Paul's earlier advice in Romans 2:4, higher on our Bible Reference Sheet for today. He writes in his letter, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience with us, is our salvation." Our beloved Paul wrote this in his letter, I'm sure referring to Romans 2:4. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #19, "How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?" recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/19MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

When we are faithful in making God known, our impulses will be under divine supervision, and we shall make steady growth, spiritually and intellectually. {UL 81.4}

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed. . . . In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. {TMK 338.4}

Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life. The first and great commandment is, "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.” Luke 10:27. To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient One, with the whole strength, and mind, and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored. {Ed 16.1}

Like the first is the second commandment—“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Matthew 22:39. 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. {Ed 16.2}

Salt is valued for its preservative properties; and when God calls His children salt, He would teach them that His purpose in making them the subjects of His grace is that they may become agents in saving others. The object of God in choosing a people before all the world was not only that He might adopt them as His sons and daughters, but that through them the world might receive the grace that bringeth salvation. Titus 2:11. When the Lord chose Abraham, it was not simply to be the special friend of God, but to be a medium of the peculiar privileges the Lord desired to bestow upon the nations. Jesus, in that last prayer with His disciples before His crucifixion, said, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” John 17:19. In like manner Christians who are purified through the truth will possess saving qualities that preserve the world from utter moral corruption. {MB 35.2}

Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate and infuse in order to preserve. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved in masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. We must come close to those whom we desire to benefit. {MB 36.1}

The savor of the salt represents the vital power of the Christian—the love of Jesus in the heart, the righteousness of Christ pervading the life. The love of Christ is diffusive and aggressive. If it is dwelling in us, it will flow out to others. We shall come close to them till their hearts are warmed by our unselfish interest and love. The sincere believers diffuse vital energy, which is penetrating and imparts new moral power to the souls for whom they labor. It is not the power of the man himself, but the power of the Holy Spirit that does the transforming work. {MB 36.2}

Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from

all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls. {DA 347.3}

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory. {DA 758.2}

Through the plan of salvation a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and results of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 12}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. {PP 68.2}

Satan has ascribed to God all the evils to which the flesh is heir. He has represented him as a God who delights in the sufferings of his creatures, who is revengeful and implacable. It was Satan who originated the doctrine of eternal torment as a punishment for sin, because in this way he could lead men into infidelity and rebellion, distract souls, and dethrone the human reason. {RH, November 17, 1891 par. 5}

Heaven, looking down, and seeing the delusions into which men were led, knew that a divine Instructor must come to earth. Men in ignorance and moral darkness must have light, spiritual light; for the world knew not God, and he must be revealed to their understanding. Truth looked down from heaven, and saw not the reflection of her image; for dense clouds of moral darkness and gloom enveloped the world, and the Lord Jesus alone was able to roll back the clouds; for he was the light of the world. By his presence he could dissipate the gloomy shadow that Satan had cast between man and God. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Through the accumulated misrepresentations of the enemy, many were so deceived

that they worshiped a false god, clothed with the attributes of the satanic character. {RH, November 17, 1891 par. 6}

We are not to think of God only as a judge, and to forget him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this; for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character. {RH, April 5, 1887 par. 10}

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. . . Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions. {Ed 17.2}

The means by which we can overcome the wicked one is that by which Christ overcame,—the power of the word. God does not control our minds without our consent; but if we desire to know and to do His will, His promises are ours: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." John 8:32; 7:17, R. V. Through faith in these promises, every man may be delivered from the snares of error and the control of sin. {DA 258.5}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. "The truth shall make you free;" and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is "the law of liberty." James 2:12. {DA 466.5}

It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, who seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederated with evil angels sometimes bring suffering upon their fellow men in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial

service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. {AA 541.1}

God does not employ compulsory measures; love is the agent which He uses to expel sin from the heart. By it He changes pride into humility, and enmity and unbelief into love and faith. {MB 76.3}

Through the ministry of the angels the Holy Spirit is enabled to work upon the mind and heart of the human agent and draw him to Christ. . . . But the Spirit of God does not interfere with the freedom of the human agent. The Holy Spirit is given to be a helper, so that man may cooperate with the Divine, and it is given to Him to draw the soul but never to force obedience. {TMK 57.2}

Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. {MB 142.1}

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. {GC 541.3}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 6 “The Marks of a Steward”

Read for this week’s study

Hebrews 11:8–12; Romans 4:13, 18–21; Matthew 6:24; Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 5:2, 3; Luke 16:10–12.

Memory Text

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Faithfulness
- III. Loyalty
- IV. A Clear Conscience
- V. Obedience
- VI. Trustworthy
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. What is a “brand” as in the phrase “brand name”? How does that concept relate to Christian life? What is the Christian “brand” (1 Corinthians 6:17; John 13:34-35)? More narrowly, what is the Loma Linda brand? What is the Seventh-day Adventist brand? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. What does it mean to be a “faithful steward”? Read Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19, and Romans 4:13, 18-21. What do these verses teach us about being faithful? Read Revelation 2:10. What should the words about being “faithful unto death” mean to us in our everyday walk with the Lord? What relevance does this concept have in a secular world with religious liberty? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Matthew 6:24 and 1 Chronicles 28:9. What do these texts teach us about the supreme importance of loyalty to God? What about those who don’t experience a whole heart and a willing mind? What are some ways that you reveal loyalty to God in daily life? (Monday’s lesson)
4. What does it mean to have a clear conscience? What is the opposite of that? Read Hebrews 10:19-22 and 1 Timothy 4:1-2. What does it mean to have an “evil conscience”? How does one get that? What does it mean to have a “conscience

seared with a hot iron”? How does that happen? What does Paul say is the only solution to a bad conscience? How does that happen in everyday terms? If you have ever struggled with a guilty conscience, how did you become free from that condition? (Tuesday’s lesson)

5. Read Genesis 4:1-16. Notice the progression from thought to reaction to action in the story of Cain. Notice how God responds to Cain at each stage. What does this story tell us about God? Read 1 John 5:2-3 and Romans 1:5 and 10:16-17. What do these texts tell us about the relationship between obedience and faith/trust? Read 1 Samuel 15:22. What are the similarities and differences between Saul and Cain? (Wednesday’s lesson)
6. Read Luke 16:10-12. What does this passage teach us about being trustworthy? Why is this trait so important for a faithful steward? What characteristic of a steward is highlighted in 1 Chronicles 9:26-27? Describe someone you consider trustworthy? What is the characteristic of that person that you would most like to emulate? (Thursday’s lesson)
7. The lesson for this week lists the qualities of a steward as faith, loyalty, obedience, a clear conscience, trustworthiness and individual accountability. Do you agree with this list? What would you add or subtract from it? (Friday’s lesson)
8. In what ways would it be possible to be loyal to someone or something that is not Good? (Friday’s lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But going back to the beginning, sin entered our universe when angels ceased to trust. And as a consequence they themselves became untrustworthy. Hence all the other passages in the first half of our Bible Reference Sheet. See James 4:17. That’s a familiar definition: “Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (RSV)

It is rebellious to act that way. It’s lawless to act that way. A man who behaves like that is a cheat. He’s certainly not trustworthy to have around in a free universe. Look at the next verse in Romans 14:23, these different versions:

Any action that is not based on faith is a sin. (Moffat)

Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (RSV)

When we act apart from our faith we sin. (Phillips)

And in the text from Ezra, the Jews are confessing (when they came back from Babylonian captivity) that they have done several things that they should not have done. But they describe their misbehaviors in these words:

We have broken faith with our God. (RSV)

We have been unfaithful to our God. (NIV)

See, that again suggests that the essence of sin is a breach of faith; it's a breakdown of trust and trustworthiness. One of the most impressive illustrations of sin as a violation of trust involves so great a saint as Moses. I don't know of a greater illustration in the whole Bible. You remember when the people were complaining about the lack of water, and they came to Moses and they grumbled. They even said they wished they had died in the wilderness. "Why did you bring us here from Egypt? We have no water!"

And they behaved so badly that Moses ran to God and prayed, "God, what shall I do?"

And God said, "Give them water. Take your rod and go to the rock and speak this time; don't hit it, don't make a scene, don't be angry with the people. Don't even condemn them. Just speak to the rock, and they'll have all the water they want."

And Moses went back to the rock and stood there, and striking it smartly he said, "You ungrateful rebels! Must we bring forth water from this rock?"

And God said what you see in Numbers 20:12:

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them." (NIV)

Now, isn't that being a bit arbitrary and severe? All the old man had done was to get irritated and impatient. And he disobeyed God, and he hit the rock with his rod. Is that enough to keep him out of the Promised Land? For forty years he had led the people. And think what he had put up with all those years. But God says, "Because of what you did at the rock you may not take this people in." Does that seem severe to you, for God to treat his old friend like this? How could what Moses did be serious enough to call for such (in his eyes) a terrible consequence and penalty?

He begged God, "Please. Please may I take the people in?"

And finally God said, "Speak to Me no more on this matter." Now how could it be that serious? Or is the answer in the text that we read? It doesn't say in Numbers 20:12, "because you disobeyed me, you cannot take the people in." The Lord said, "Because you did not trust in me, and you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you may not bring the people in."

You see, Moses had been maybe the best friend God ever had. God even talked to him face to face—even differently than the way God talks to a prophet with visions and dreams. He says, "I talk to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friends." And the people knew Moses had a special relationship with God, and they revered him—at least when they were behaving. They had seen him go up on Mt. Sinai and come down carrying the Ten Commandments. If your pastor came down some mountain nearby, carrying the Ten Commandments and his face

shining so brightly that you couldn't look at him, wouldn't he have increased influence among the congregation? Moses had enormous influence. And that's what made his behavior at the rock so serious. Moses had pictured God as angry when he was not. God wished by his kindness to lead some of those Israelites to repentance. Romans 2:4. And Moses deprived God of that opportunity. Standing as they were on the verge of going into Canaan to meet those well-armed tribes there, they needed to trust God very closely. And God purposed to win them, with all their complaining and grumbling. He was not going to condemn them or criticize them; just give them abundant water. "Moses," he said, "don't even strike the rock."

But Moses pictured God as angry.

What a contrast to the way Moses had behaved once earlier when God said, "I'm tired of these people. Step aside. Let me destroy them and I'll make a great nation out of you."

And Moses said, "God, you couldn't do that. Think what it would do to your reputation. What would the Egyptians think? They would assume that you couldn't take your people to the Promised Land!"

And God said, "I love that, Moses. Who knows me as well as you do? You really are my friend."

But now under pressure, Moses let God down. He misrepresented God as vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. And that was precisely Satan's sin in the beginning, the sin that is the most devastating of all.

God has honored his friend Moses ever since. He even personally buried him and resurrected him, and later sent him down to comfort his Son on the Mount of Transfiguration. But God had to go on record before the eyes of the onlooking universe as to the terrible seriousness of Moses' sin. It wasn't just that he disobeyed, or by smiting the rock he had "spoiled a symbol." He had, to be sure. But Moses had broken faith with God. He hadn't shown himself to be God's trusted, trusting friend. And that's the essence of sin.

How many of us have committed the same sin? How many of us have hurt our own children, and others who trust us to tell the truth about our God? Have you apologized lately to God for ever putting him in a bad light and suggesting that he's not the kind of person we know him to be?

Moses repented (as we know) and became a better friend of God than ever before. But so many people have continued to mistrust. What happens—what are the results?

Not "what are the penalties?"

What are the results of centuries of rebellion and mistrust? Well, look at Romans 3 in the collection. Romans 3:10-18. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1, "The Conflict In God's Family" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California}

To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:
<http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>

Look at Psalm 51. Here is what God wants, to have peace once again in the family:

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being: therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. . . . For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (RSV)

Because that means we're willing to stand humbly in the presence of our God and ask, "What must I do to be well, to be saved?" And he says, "You need a new heart and a right spirit." And then we say, "Well then I'd be very happy to have one. Please give me one soon." Hosea understood what God wanted: to have peace in the universe once again. And his whole book is so magnificent. I think we'll find we've quoted it many times these many Friday evenings. Look at Hosea 6:6, 7:

It is true love that I have wanted, not sacrifice; the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings [and as you know about Hebrew parallelism, the second line simply reaffirms or enlarges the point in the first line. That shows that true knowledge of God, and love for God mean the same thing. That's what he wants]. But they, like Adam have broken their agreement; again and again they have played me false. (Phillips)

They cheated. How much security can you have in the family when some of the children are playing false? Then you remember what Jesus said had to happen to Nicodemus before he would be safe to save. John 3:3: "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (RSV)

"Born again" means a new heart and a right spirit. It's exactly what David said in the fifty-first Psalm. Do you notice that Jesus didn't say, "Unless you be forgiven"? "Except you be justified"? "Unless you have your legal standing adjusted, you cannot enter the kingdom"? He said, "Unless you be changed and become a trustworthy person, a teachable member of my family, you will not be safe to admit to the hereafter." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, "All God Asks is Trust" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
<http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>

In the introduction to his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul states his conviction that he had been specially commissioned to bring about a new kind of obedience. It was to be different

from the kind of obedience he himself had offered before he met Jesus on the Damascus road. It was to be what he calls literally “obedience of faith,” “obedience of trust.”

“Law-obedience” is what Paul used to practice with such zeal, and he was not at all pleased with the results. It had made him intolerant toward other people, even cruel. “Law-obedience” had actually led him to violate the whole spirit of God’s law, the law of love.

By now urging “faith-obedience” or “trust-obedience,” is Paul doing away with the law? “By no means!” Paul exclaims. “On the contrary, we uphold the law.” (Romans 3:31, NRSV.) Phillips interprets, “We put the Law in its proper place.”

One proper place for the law has been to serve as “our attendant on the way to Christ.” But the ultimate place is the one Jeremiah described. Paul agrees with the prophet. What the law requires may be written on the heart—the place, Paul explains to the Romans, where the conscience is active and people do their thinking. (See Romans 2:15)

“Trust-obedience” is the kind that results from “knowing” God, in the full meaning of that word. It comes from learning the truth about him and his use of law. It is the result of being won back to trust him as a Friend, to admire him for his wise and gracious ways.

This means that the Spirit of Truth has succeeded in writing the law “on our hearts.” Now we freely do what the law requires, not because we’ve been ordered to, but because we’re convinced in our own minds that what the law requires is right. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 103-104. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter8.html>

Further Study with Ellen White

He who knows the end from the beginning has provided for the attack of satanic agencies. And He will fulfill His word to the faithful in every age. That word is sure and steadfast; not one jot or tittle of it can fail. If men will keep under the protection of God, His banner will be over them as an impregnable fortress. He will give evidence that His word can never fail. He will prove a light which shineth in a dark place until the day dawn. He, the Sun of Righteousness, will arise with healing in His beams. . . . {RC 129.5}

He has assured you that the Holy Spirit was given to abide with you forever, to be your pleader and your guide. He asks you to trust in Him, and commit yourself into His keeping. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work, teaching, reminding, testifying, coming to the soul as a divine comforter, and convincing of sin as an appointed judge and guide. . . . {RC 129.6}

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart’s unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a

soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who will consent to enter into covenant relation with the God of heaven are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. They are invited by the Saviour, “Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.” Isaiah 27:5. The spirits of darkness will battle for the soul once under their dominion, but angels of God will contend for that soul with prevailing power. The Lord says, “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? . . . Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.” Isaiah 49:24, 25. {DA 258.6}

As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan’s temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus. . . . In Him there is inexhaustible fullness. . . . {AG 235.5}

God has given us every facility, every grace. He has provided the riches of heaven’s treasure, and it is our privilege to draw continually from this capital. {AG 235.6}

When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man’s best service and he makes up for the deficiency with his own divine merit; for he is the source of every right impulse. {OW, December 1, 1909 par. 10}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

In calling them to His service, God offers them freedom. Obedience to God is liberty from the thralldom of sin, deliverance from human passion and impulse. {TM 247.1}

“The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ, and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . {6BC 1110.3}

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As

received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {6BC 1110.4}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {6BC 1110.5}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. {MB 109.2}

A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. {ST, July 22, 1897 par. 11}

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. {DA 668.3}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 7 “Honesty With God”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 16:10; Leviticus 27:30; Genesis 22:1–12; Hebrews 12:2; Luke 11:42; Hebrews 7:2–10, Nehemiah 13.

Memory Text

“ ‘But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience’ ” (Luke 8:15).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A Matter of Simple Honesty
- III. The Life of Faith
- IV. A Statement of Faith
- V. Honest Tithe: Holy to the Lord
- VI. Revival, Reformation, and Tithing
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “In this week’s lesson we will study the spiritual concept of honesty through the practice of tithing and see why tithing is vitally important to the steward and stewardship.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “One thing most of us have in common is that we do not like dishonesty. We especially do not like it when we see it manifested in others. It’s not easy, though, to see it in ourselves, and when we do, we tend to rationalize our actions, to justify them, to downplay their significance.” (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Why is honesty so important? What role does it play in our spiritual formation? How does God help us to be honest? What does it mean that we can never fool God?
4. “The religious world still after thousands of years remains astonished at the act of faith displayed by Abraham with Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22). Yet, this act of faith wasn’t something that Abraham just conjured up when he needed it. His life of faithfulness and obedience beforehand was what enabled him to do as he did. Had he often been unfaithful before this event, he never would have passed the test as

he did. There is no question, either, that a man with that kind of faith surely lived it out after the event as well.” (Monday’s lesson)

5. Is this conclusion based on reading the Bible story, or is this a pietistic wish based on “legends from the lives of saints”? Why do people feel compelled to represent the Bible characters in this way? The Bible is very honest in its ‘warts and all’ portrayal of even heroes of faith.
6. There are different ways we can speak about tithing. Often those who see law and grace as sharp contradictions, relegate tithing to the realm of law from which we have been thankfully freed as a relic of legalism. Those who know there is grace in law and law in grace, realize that tithing is actually a vehicle of grace.
7. Tithing is to our possessions what the Sabbath is to our time—a concrete guideline that points beyond itself to the truth that every moment and every part of our lives comes from the hand of God, and will be returned to God. Tithing has always been a training exercise that cultivates a generous and God-centered heart.
8. There were two ways Israel was most obviously distinct in the ancient Mediterranean world: The first would be monotheism. They worshiped one God. The other was their practice of putting voluntary limits on their wealth. They lived in deliberate generosity.
9. Stanford researcher Leon Festinger developed a line of research in social comparison theory. He noted that in different situations we will tend to compare ourselves with people either above or below us, depending on which ladder we’re talking about.
10. For instance, on morality, we tend to compare ourselves with people we think are below us: mass murderers, drug dealers. On the topic of money, we compare ourselves to people above us, those who have more than we do. Research shows that a tendency for upward financial comparisons generates increasing amounts of greed and decreasing amounts of compassion.
11. But ancient financial practices in Israel discouraged upward financial comparisons. Tithing was a reminder that all human beings were created with a need to give. Tithing is in fact God’s great tool to create generous people.
12. God’s grace and generosity so overwhelmed the early church, at least for a time, that people often went far beyond tithe. The privilege of stewardship took precedence over the right of ownership. Therefore the strong were helping the weak.
13. We live in a world where community is often destroyed by creating and emphasizing differences and inequalities. The strong oppress the weak. Power is misused to harass and abuse. God’s church can be one of God’s answers to the community-shattering forces at work in the world. God invites his church family to establish community and to model it with His kind of love, minimizing differences and striving for equality among its participants (2 Corinthians 8:13-15).

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But when Jesus came, he found a group of people who were totally preoccupied with God's laws and with obedience to their every detail. He never had to tell them not to make a graven image. They had learned their lesson in the discipline of Babylonian captivity, and they never sank into ordinary idolatry again. He never had to tell them which day was the Sabbath. They regarded it as their highest duty to obey all ten of the Ten Commandments. He never had to urge them to pay tithe. Matthew records they used to tithe even the tiniest things: the seeds of the mint, anise, and cumin. Nor did Jesus have to tell them they should obey the laws of hygiene. He commented on the fact that they would even strain gnats out of their goat's milk lest they should eat a forbidden insect. Nor did he ever have to tell them to search the Scriptures. He said they did it all the time—though they did it for the wrong reason (John 5:39). Nor did he ever have to tell them to be careful in their association with unbelievers. In fact, when they came in from the market place, they used to wash themselves in certain special, ceremonial ways, lest they be contaminated by association with the Gentiles. You see, they all could say, like the rich young ruler, "All these things we have obeyed from our youth up."

You would think that in the face of such rigorous obedience and willingness to do precisely what they were told—you would think Jesus would be pleased, and they would recognize and welcome him when he came. But all heaven watched the incredible scene of those who claimed to love God's law, denouncing the Lawgiver as a lawbreaker. It must have puzzled the angels a great deal. So Jesus ventured to suggest that while they were working so hard to obey, that actually they were obeying for the wrong reason. Because they were obeying for the wrong reason, they really were not obeying at all. You can imagine how offensive this was to them. In fact, he went further and suggested that if only they knew the God who had given the law, they would keep the law for an entirely different reason: a reason that would make it possible for them to be obedient and free at the same time. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #12, "God's Law is No Threat to Our Freedom" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/12MMCAG>*

What is this truth in which we simply must be settled and sealed, so that despite the devil's most convincing efforts to the contrary, we cannot be moved? What would you suggest for the list of truths? Is it the truth that God exists and that he is infinitely powerful? Well, the devils believe that and it scares them. Is it the truth that the end is coming soon? Satan agrees that it is coming soon and he works all the harder. He is settled into those two things. Is it the truth that the seventh-day is the Sabbath? Is it the truth that we should keep all ten of the Ten Commandments, that we should read our Bibles faithfully as God's word? Is it the truth that we

should pay a careful tithe and be very careful about what we eat and be very careful how we associate with sinners who might lead us astray? Not to minimize those matters.

Should we not recall, as a warning, the very pious beliefs and practices of those who nailed Jesus to the cross and then rushed home to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy, with their tithe paid up and no forbidden food in their stomachs? Evidently the truth into which we must be sealed is far more than just the list of beliefs I mentioned, important as they are.

Throughout the Bible, the all-important truth, the saving truth, is above all else the truth about our God. Jesus came to bring us this truth about his Father, so that we might be won back to God in love and trust. God can heal and save all who trust him. You remember all that Jesus said in the verses from John 14, above. When the Spirit comes, he will bring to our remembrance the things that Jesus has said about the Father. Remember in Ephesians 1:17 above, the Holy Spirit will come so that we may know God better. That's the consistent picture of the truth, the subject of the truth, the essence of the truth that runs all through Scripture. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from series, "Conversations About God", #18 - God Waits For His Children To Grow Up, recorded June 1984} {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #18, "God Waits for His Children to Grow Up" recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/18MMCG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Truthfulness and integrity are attributes of God, and he who possesses these qualities possesses a power that is invincible. {ML 331.2}

Christ's followers have no need to try to shine. If they will behold constantly the life of Christ they will be changed in mind and heart into the same image. Then they will shine without any superficial attempt. The Lord asks for no display of goodness. In the gift of His Son He has made provision that our inward lives may be imbued with the principles of heaven. It is the appropriation of this provision that will lead to a manifestation of Christ to the world. When the people of God experience the new birth, their honesty, their uprightness, their fidelity, their steadfast principles, will unfailingly reveal it. {CT 251.3}

The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ. {7T 143.2}

The faith that works by love and purifies the soul produces the fruit of humility, patience, forbearance, long-suffering, peace, joy, and willing obedience. {HP 109.6}

True faith and true prayer—how strong they are! They are as two arms by which the human suppliant lays hold upon the power of Infinite Love. Faith is trusting in God,—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessings. Truth, uprightness, purity, are pointed out as secrets of life’s success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these. Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency. {GW 259.2}

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” [John 14:6.] “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.” [Psalm 72:12.] {GW 263.1}

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.” [Isaiah 26:3.] The arm of Omnipotence is outstretched to lead us onward and still onward. Go forward, the Lord says; I will send you help. It is for My name’s glory that you ask; and you shall receive. Those who are watching for your failure shall yet see My word triumph gloriously. “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” [Matthew 21:22.] {GW 263.2}

It is contrition and faith and love that enable the soul to receive wisdom from heaven. Faith working by love is the key of knowledge, and everyone that loveth “knoweth God.” 1 John 4:7. {DA 139.3}

Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, “I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Psalm 16:8. {SC 69.1}

When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact. The spirit of Christ in the heart is like a spring in the desert, flowing to refresh all and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the water of life. {SC 77.3}

Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father's care. {SC 77.4}

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we may go on from strength to strength, from victory to victory; for through Christ the grace of God has worked out our complete salvation. {1SM 364.1}

The only-begotten Son of God came to this world to redeem the fallen race. He has given us evidence of His great power. He will enable those who receive Him to build up characters free from all the tendencies that Satan reveals. We can resist the enemy and all his forces. The battle will be won, the victory gained, by him who chooses Christ as his leader, determined to do right because it is right. {HP 17.2}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 8 “The Impact of Tithing”

Read for this week’s study

Mark 16:15; 1 Peter 3:8, 9; 1 Corinthians 9:14; Romans 3:19–24.

Memory Text

“Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:13, 14, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Together We Fund the Mission
- III. The Blessings of God
- IV. Purpose of the Tithe
- V. The Storehouse
- VI. Tithe and Salvation by Faith
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we will continue our look at tithing: its distribution, what it means to others, and what its impact has on our spiritual lives.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Today the tithe is for the support of the gospel. When rightly understood, it serves as a spiritual measurement of our relationship with God.” (Sabbath afternoon)
3. What happens when the tithe is *not* rightly understood? Can and does that happen even today? In what ways can a distorted understanding influence our picture of who God is and what he is like?
4. “Spirituality wrongly understood or pursued, is a major source of human misery and rebellion against God.” (Dallas Willard) Jesus devoted a significant portion of his ministry to correcting spirituality wrongly understood or pursued. See Matthew 6:1-18, where Jesus addresses a distortion regarding alms, prayer and fasting. When discussing the issue of tithing, what precautions can we take to ensure we don’t end up with a distorted picture of God and “spirituality wrongly understood and/or pursued”?

5. “In Malachi 3:10, God promised a great blessing to those faithful in their tithe. Yet God’s blessing is not one-dimensional. To emphasize, for instance, the accumulation of material assets as a blessing, at the expense of everything else, is a very narrow view of what God’s blessing really is.” (Monday’s lesson)
6. There is a caricature of the gospel sometimes called the “prosperity gospel”. Some people seize on Malachi’s promise as a way to use giving or prayer as a self-centered scheme to get rich. But the blessing mentioned in Malachi is instead about learning to experience the joy, taking the steps to be generous in the ways God is generous. Such a life is an expression of overflowing principles of how God’s kingdom works.
7. “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.” (Malachi 3:10)
8. Elsewhere in the Bible we are told, “You shall not test the Lord your God.” (Deuteronomy 6:16) Jesus quotes that in the New Testament: “Don’t test God.” (Matthew 4:7) Testing means, “I am not sure I can trust you, therefore, I’m putting you on probation. You need to prove yourself.” It is presumptuous and we are not encouraged to do that.
9. But here God says, “You have a surprise you won’t want to miss! Go ahead, test me on this, take my hand, follow my footsteps, and discover that a generous spirit, a generous life, has meaning and joy and consequences beyond your wildest dreams.
10. Stewardship includes cultivating wisdom, addressing decisions in all areas of our life with careful thought, an eye on the big picture, and thorough assessment of evidence. In what ways does this principle affect our practices of giving and our stewardship of the blessings that come our way?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

See material provided for lesson 7.

Further Study with Ellen White

We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world. With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our co-operation; for man must be the channel to communicate with man. And when we give ourselves to Christ in wholehearted devotion, angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God’s love. {DA 297.3}

All heaven is interested in the work going on in this world, which is to prepare men and women for the future, immortal life. It is God's plan that human agencies shall have the high honor of acting as co-workers with Jesus Christ in the salvation of souls. {5T 573.3}

Angelic agencies, though invisible, are cooperating with visible human agencies, forming a relief association with men. Is there not something stimulating and inspiring in this thought that the human agent stands as the visible instrument to confer the blessings of angelic agencies? As we are thus laborers together with God, the work bears the inscription of the divine. With what joy and delight all heaven looks upon these blended influences, influences which are acknowledged in the heavenly courts! Human agencies are the hands of heavenly instrumentalities, for heavenly angels employ human hands in practical ministry. Their acts of unselfish ministry make them partakers in the success which is a result of the relief offered. This is Heaven's way of administering saving power. The knowledge and actions of the heavenly order of workers, united with the knowledge and power which are imparted to human agencies, relieve the oppressed and distressed. {ML 305.2}

"We have this treasure," the apostle continued, "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." God could have proclaimed His truth through sinless angels, but this is not His plan. He chooses human beings, men compassed with infirmity, as instruments in the working out of His designs. The priceless treasure is placed in earthen vessels. Through men His blessings are to be conveyed to the world. Through them His glory is to shine forth into the darkness of sin. In loving ministry they are to meet the sinful and the needy, and lead them to the cross. And in all their work they are to ascribe glory, honor, and praise to Him who is above all and over all. {AA 330.2}

Through the ministration of angels, God sends light to His people, and through His people the light is to be given to the world. {ML 304.6}

The work of beneficence is twice blessed. While he that gives to the needy blesses others, he himself is blessed in a still greater degree. The grace of Christ in the soul is developing traits of character that are the opposite of selfishness,—traits that will refine, ennoble, and enrich the life. Acts of kindness performed in secret will bind hearts together, and will draw them closer to the heart of Him from whom every generous impulse springs. The little attentions, the small acts of love and self-sacrifice, that flow out from the life as quietly as the fragrance from a flower—these constitute no small share of the blessings and happiness of life. And it will be found at last that the denial of self for the good and happiness of others, however humble and uncommended here, is recognized in heaven as the token of our union with Him, the King of glory, who was rich, yet for our sake became poor. {MB 82.2}

The blessing of God is a healing power, and those who are abundant in benefiting others will realize that wondrous blessing in both heart and life. {CH 28.2}

The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. When God blesses His children, it is not alone for their own sake, but for the world's sake. As He bestows His gifts on us, it is that we may multiply them by imparting. {MH 102.1}

The Samaritan woman who talked with Jesus at Jacob's well had no sooner found the Saviour than she brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman whom they despised a whole cityful were brought to hear Jesus. She carried the light at once to her countrymen. {MH 102.2}

This woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ. Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. No sooner does he come to know the Saviour than he desires to make others acquainted with Him. The saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life. In doing this work a greater blessing is received than if we work merely to benefit ourselves. It is in working to spread the good news of salvation that we are brought near to the Saviour. {MH 102.3}

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. "Give, and it shall be given unto you," God has promised; "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." Luke 6:38. {AA 345.1}

He has placed means in the hands of men, that His divine gifts may flow through human channels in doing the work appointed us in saving our fellow men. This is one of God's ways of exalting man. It is just the work that man needs, for it will stir the deepest sympathies of his heart and call into exercise the highest capabilities of the mind. {9T 255.1}

Every good thing of earth was placed here by the bountiful hand of God as an expression of His love to man. The poor are His, and the cause of religion is His. The gold and the silver are the Lord's, and He could rain them from heaven if He chose. But instead of this He has made man His steward, entrusting him with means, not to be hoarded, but to be used in benefiting others. He thus makes man the medium through which to distribute His blessings on earth. 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 of the eternal, glorious reward. {9T 255.2}

God is not dependent upon man for the support of His cause. He could have sent means direct from heaven to supply His treasury, if His providence had seen that this was best for man. He might have devised means whereby angels would have been sent to publish the truth to the world without the agency of men. He might have written the truth upon the heavens, and let that declare to the world His requirements in living characters. God is not dependent upon any man's gold or silver. He says: "Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof." Whatever necessity there is for our agency in the advancement of the cause of God, He has purposely arranged for our good. He has honored us by making us co-workers with Him. {3T 390.2}

Wherever there is life, there is increase and growth; in God's kingdom there is a constant interchange—taking in, and giving out; receiving, and returning to the Lord His own. God works with every true believer, and the light and blessings received are given out again in the work which the believer does. Thus the capacity for receiving is increased. As one imparts of the heavenly gifts, he makes room for fresh currents of grace and truth to flow into the soul from the living fountain. Greater light, increased knowledge and blessing, are his. {6T 448.2}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 9 “Offerings of Gratitude”

Read for this week’s study

Matthew 6:19–21; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Peter 4:10; Luke 7:37–47; 2 Corinthians 8:8–15; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7.

Memory Text

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, 18 NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. “Where Your Treasure Is”
- III. Stewards of the Grace of God
- IV. Our Best Offering
- V. The Motives of the Heart
- VI. The Experience of Giving
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we will look at important aspects of offerings. Giving generously, whether from means, time, or talent, is a powerful means of living our faith and revealing the character of the God whom we serve.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Notice these texts: “Bring the best of the first-fruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.” (Exodus 23:19) – “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:20) Compare it with our memory text.
3. In these verses, Jesus is God’s first-fruits, God’s firstborn gift to us. Thus, God not only gave, he gave his very best. What are the implications of this for us and our giving?
4. Given our self-centered perspective, the invitation to tithe can be distorted as an arbitrary command or austere requirement, a religious duty. And that understanding can often result in reprimanding others and manipulating them into giving more.

5. In reality, the whole earth belongs to God. Everything we have is a gift from him. The invitation to tithe becomes a gracious “taste and see” introduction to his children about the way his kingdom works, the generosity upon which it operates.
6. The Bible talks about *bringing* the tithe, not about *giving* the tithe (2 Chronicles 31:6; Malachi 3:10). That is not by chance. I cannot give something that does not belong to me. By bringing the tithe to God, I acknowledge him as the owner of all and source of all the blessings I have received.
7. In the Bible, it speaks about people bringing their tithe into God’s house. Perhaps it is not surprising, knowing the joy of generosity in his kingdom, that the Bible also speaks of people *giving* offerings over and above the tithe, an overflow of generous and grateful hearts.
8. When Jesus rose from the dead, it created a community of irrational joy and irrepressible generosity. People said, “We’re in a new community now, characterized by the resurrection. We know who and what we trust!” Love and joy overflowed in generosity, reflecting the over-abundant God who deals with us in such an incredibly gracious way.
9. Read Matthew 6:19-21. The passage is about priorities and the safety of having God as our central priority. While there is no question that we want to put him first, it’s so easy to allow things to take over, especially when they bring us money or fame.
10. The “treasure in heaven” does not refer to getting ready for the next life. The Jews of the day did not refer to the future life as “in heaven”. ‘Heaven’ is where God is right now. When we learn to love and serve God in the present, we will have treasure now as well as in the future.
11. Jesus wanted his followers to establish a treasure right now, one they could enjoy in the present as well as the future. Such treasure would not be subject to depreciation or loss. How is this accomplished? The clue is given within the chapter: learn to live in the presence of the loving Father. Operating on the principles of his kingdom, following his lead, establishes our priorities and protects against the pitfalls of playing to how others may see or judge us.
12. We joke about money (‘The Almighty Dollar’) because we are all too aware of its power. Jesus is warning that if we are not careful, money can be what determines our actions or priorities. When we enter into God’s kingdom, and allow him to guide our thinking and our decisions, money can be a blessing in our lives and the lives of others in the community.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

See material provided for lesson 7.

Further Study with Ellen White

The Teacher from heaven, no less a personage than the Son of God, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship Him in spirit and in truth. Christ revealed to men the fact that the strictest adherence to ceremony and form would not save them; for the kingdom of God was spiritual in its nature. Christ came to the world to sow it with truth. He held the keys to all the treasures of wisdom, and was able to open doors to science, and to reveal undiscovered stores of knowledge, were it essential to salvation. He presented to men that which was exactly contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the paternal love of the Father, who “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them, who treated them despitefully. In this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. Those who accepted His teaching were under the guardian care of angels, who were commissioned to strengthen, to enlighten, that the truth might renew and sanctify the soul. {FE 177.1}

When Adam’s sin plunged the race into hopeless misery, God might have cut Himself loose from fallen beings. He might have treated them as sinners deserved to be treated. He might have commanded the angels of heaven to pour out upon our world the vials of His wrath. He might have removed this dark blot from His universe. But He did not do this. Instead of banishing them from His presence, He came still nearer to the fallen race. He gave His Son to become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, . . . full of grace and truth.” Christ by His human relationship to men drew them close to God. He clothed His divine nature with the garb of humanity, and demonstrated before the heavenly universe, before the unfallen worlds, how much God loves the children of men. {SD 11.3}

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. {SD 11.4}

Jesus came into the world to illustrate the character of God in His own life, and He swept back the misrepresentations that Satan had originated, and revealed the glory of God. It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father; for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. The unbelief of men was deep seated, and yet they could not resist the testimony of His God-like example, and His deeds of love and truth. {SD 139.3}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. {FLB 45.2}

The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. . . . Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. . . . {AG 104.2}

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. {SC 68.1}

As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven's light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ. {SC 68.2}

The badge of Christianity is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with God. By the power of His grace manifested in the transformation of character the world is to be convinced that God has sent His Son as its Redeemer. No other influence that can surround the human soul has such power as the influence of an unselfish life. The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian. {MH 470.1}

It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God gave to human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. The gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that, having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. {9T 254.1}

Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life. . . . To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient one, with the whole strength and mind and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored. {RC 51.2}

Like the first is the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." 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. . . . {RC 51.3}

The souls of those who love Jesus will be surrounded with a pure, fragrant atmosphere. There are those who hide their soul hunger. These will be greatly helped by a tender word or a kind remembrance. The heavenly gifts, freely and richly bestowed by God, are in turn to be freely bestowed by us upon all who come within the sphere of our influence. Thus we reveal a love that is heaven-born, and which will increase as it is freely used in blessing others. Thus we glorify God. {OHC 231.5}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 10 “The Role of Stewardship”

Read for this week’s study

Colossians 1:16–18; Hebrews 4:14–16; 3 John 3; Genesis 6:13–18; Revelation 14:6–12; 1 Peter 1:15, 16.

Memory Text

“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Thessalonians 4:7, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Christ as the Center
- III. Sanctuary Doctrine
- IV. Christ-Centered Doctrinal Beliefs
- V. The Three Angels’ Messages
- VI. Stewardship
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “What are some of the core tenets of what it means to be a Christian steward? This week we will look more at the roles that stewardship plays in Christian life. We will do so, though, through an interesting analogy: a chariot wheel.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Because of the depth and breadth of stewardship, it is easy to get lost in the big picture, bogged down by tangents and overwhelmed by its enormity. Stewardship is simple yet also complex, and thus can be easily misunderstood. However, neither the Christian nor the church can exist or function without it. To be a Christian is to be a good steward as well.” (Sabbath afternoon)
3. There is no question that stewardship can be easily misunderstood. It has happened in the past, it still happens today. However, how easy is it to “get lost in the big picture”? Or is it by not seeing the ‘big picture’ Christians risk getting lost in details and complexity? Why is being a Christian synonymous to being a good steward?
4. “Just as the axle is the center of the wheel and thus carries the weight of a wagon, Christ is the center of the steward’s life. Just as a solid axle provides stability, allowing the wheels to rotate, Jesus is also the fixed and stable center of our

Christian existence (Hebrews 13:8). His influence should affect everything we think and do. All aspects of stewardship rotate around and find their center in Christ.” (Sunday’s lesson) What do we mean when we say that Christ is the center of stewardship?

5. “The sanctuary doctrine [is] the hub of the wheel. The hub attaches to the axle and provides more stability for the wheel when it turns. Having experienced death and a victorious resurrection (2 Timothy 1:10), Christ through His death is the foundation for His work in the sanctuary (Hebrews 6:19, 20) *and provides the stability for our faith*. And it is from the sanctuary that He ministers in our behalf here on earth (see Hebrews 8:1, 2).” (Monday’s lesson)
6. What is the connection between the sanctuary doctrine and stewardship? “In the sanctuary we see not only Christ’s death for us, but His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as well. We can see, too, in the Most Holy Place the importance of God’s law and the reality of final judgment. Central to it all is the promise of redemption made available to us by the shed blood of Jesus.” (Monday’s lesson)
7. What is the connection between stewardship and the three angels’ messages? The lesson states: “That rim of a wheel is near the point of contact with the ground and represents the mission of the three angels’ messages. Their mission is to protect against theological drift and identifies our responsibility in the last-day events.” (Wednesday’s lesson)
8. “The iron band on the rim can represent the concept of stewardship. This is the moment of truth, where our spiritual lives rub against our practical lives. [...] Stewardship is the outer wrapping of who we are and what we do.” (Thursday’s lesson)
9. The Jews of Jesus’ day put 23% of their income into the right ‘storehouse’, yet, Jesus showed that their spirituality did not bring them closer to God or make their religion attractive to outsiders (Matthew 23:15,23). What does it mean, to put God first in our lives? How do we know if we’re on the right track?
10. As we demonstrate grace-filled generosity how can we be good examples in all the areas of life it touches—talents, time, energy, attitude towards those who do not agree with us, etc.?
11. “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.” (Phil 4:12,13)
12. Often we hear the words “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength” taken out of context and applied to a variety of situations. The actual strength Paul is talking about is the strength to say, “I don’t have to have everything the world tells me I have to have in order to be content.” Can we admire and enjoy without having to acquire more things?
13. Paul says, “I have learned the secret of being content.” Contentment is actually something you learn, not something you buy. Stewardship is the art of learning to

live a content life, walking with a God we know we can trust.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

In the meantime, what is Christ doing in the human form, as he waits for that moment when he can say, “It is done. I have a people who are ready. All have made up their mind.” Daniel says that in this interval, as he waits for everything to be done, that God is involved in a court experience; the court is sitting in judgment, the books are open, and Christ is there at the center of this court scene. Why would God need to have a judgment? Doesn’t he know already who’s fit to be saved, and fit to be lost? Could he not have posted a list back in eternity? Not that he would do it, because the rest of us couldn’t bear that information in advance. Not even the angels are given that information in advance. Only the Infinite One can be trusted with that kind of foreknowledge.

Well, if God doesn’t need a judgment, then who does? Is not the 6000-year experiment of the plan of salvation for the instruction of the whole onlooking universe? You remember many statements from Ellen White to that effect. That the plan of salvation was not just for this one small world, it had a far larger purpose, for the whole onlooking universe. The questions about God were universe-wide. The accusations against God were given universal publicity by the enemy. And therefore the answers and the solutions must become well known to all. Well, the questions about God were answered 1900 years ago, and the loyal universe has been celebrating God’s victory in the great controversy ever since. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Faith, Righteousness and Salvation, #15 “What is Christ Doing in the Heavenly Sanctuary—Especially Since 1844?”, recorded April, 1975, Lynwood, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/15MMFRS> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMFRS> (Part 2)

But surely there is much fearsome wording in these three angels’ messages. If this is God’s last pleading with his children, would it be better perhaps to have just the first angel’s message, and then the last sentence of number three? If this is pleading with us to trust him, might it have been better to just have it say, “Honor God. Give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the seas, and the springs of water.” And then go straight to, “This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.” Why do we need all that fearsome wording in between? Wouldn’t that have seemed more like pleading?

Of course, we must note the sequence of what has gone before, particularly Revelation 12, 13, and then 14. You recall that chapter 12 describes the war, and all the efforts of Satan to deceive

both angels and men. Then chapter 13 describes Satan's final efforts to deceive, which is the subject for our conversation next time. This time, in his final effort, he is primarily seeking to deceive the people living on this planet. Chapter 13 describes Satan's almost complete success. The whole world worships him, except for a certain few. It even describes the powers and the organizations that Satan works through in order to accomplish his deceptive purposes. These powers and organizations are represented by certain symbols in the customary biblical way that we are familiar with. More than that, near the end of chapter 13 that describes his final campaign, his loyal followers are pictured as bearing a certain mark of their preference for him and their trust in him—that mark that is notoriously known as the "*mark of the beast.*"

Then comes chapter 14, God's last pleading with his children, the three final messages of warning and invitation that are the subject of our conversation this evening. Knowing what has gone before one is not so surprised to find the fearsome words of warning in the second and third angel's messages. But we should always note when we read these three, that the first angel comes with good news. He comes with the everlasting gospel. And as you know, gospel means good news. Notice that he doesn't come with new information. God's last appeal is not something new. It is not something additional. It is the everlasting good news. For this good news has always been the truth. It will always remain the truth. It will always remain the basis of our faith and trust, and freedom for eternity.

So the first angel comes with the everlasting gospel, the everlasting good news. What is it? Well, everyone ought, perhaps, to state his own version. I had the privilege of putting it on the back of the invitation to these conversations about God. Right on the back, I wrote:

The Good News is God is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be; arbitrary, unforgiving, and severe. Jesus said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." God is just as loving and trustworthy as His Son; just as willing to forgive and heal. Though infinite in majesty and power, our Creator is an equally gracious person who values nothing higher than the freedom, the dignity, and the individuality of his intelligent creatures, that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey may be freely given.

This is the truth revealed through all the books of Scripture. This is the everlasting good news that wins the trust and admiration of God's loyal children throughout the universe.

Could you be dogmatic about that? That's the only truth that is safe to be dogmatic about. To be like Paul and say, "Even if an angel came with a different picture of God, it is wrong, and I will not believe it." To me, this is not a negotiable position. You see one can be adamant, immovable, and dogmatic about freedom, because you never hurt anybody with that view. You are immovably committed to freedom, and to the picture of God as valuing nothing higher than

the freedom of his children. To me, that is the essence of the message of the first angel. So the second angel comes and simply says, "The opposition has collapsed in corruption and defeat." The third angel warns of the inevitable consequence of preferring Satan's lies to this magnificent truth.

Now it's true that the third angel's message has the most fearsome wording in the whole Bible. I'm sure the devil would have us misunderstand these words as the words of an angry God. But all the previous books of Scripture have prepared us to understand the terrible consequences of sin. We watched Jesus die. We have read the description. We know how God would do anything to spare his children. We have been prepared all through Scripture, story after story, to see our heavenly Father, the one who would so much prefer to speak gently to us of the truth. We could trust him to raise his voice one last time in these messages of warning and invitation. The God we worship would never allow us to pass through these closing events, unenlightened and unwarned. We've also been prepared to understand that behind the fearsome warning of the third angel's message, there stands the God of Hosea crying, "How can I give you up? Why will you die? How can I let you go?" Remember that the one who wrote the awesome words of the third angel, wrote the text that comes next on the sheet, 1 John 4:16, 18: "God is love . . . There is no fear in love" (Williams). Remember that the apostle John, the beloved disciple who knew all about love, and there is no need to be afraid, wrote the fearsome words of the third angel's message, because he understood. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16, "God's Last Pleading with His Children" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>*

Lou: I was thinking about the title for the evening, "God's Last Pleading With His Children," and as I looked down at those messages in Revelation 14, particularly the second and the third, I wonder if the title tonight might have been more appropriately, "God's Last Threatening." Isn't that what's happening here?

Graham: Well, it certainly is a warning. It's just that it's so serious. If we were more willing to listen, he wouldn't have to talk like this. Remember we just had the words of Hosea 14, "Come home, come home," but we're not listening. This is the God who sent she-bears and thundered on Sinai because he doesn't want to lose his children. I forget whether we used this illustration before, but if a father were walking in the mountains on a trail with his son, and his son got perilously near the precipice, to save his son, the father might first talk softly, "Son stop where you are." But the wind is blowing and the son doesn't hear. The father raises his voice, "Son, stop where you are!" He still doesn't hear. Then the father thunders to his son. The people following up the trail say, "Listen to that father bellowing to his poor little boy." Then they

come up the trail and learn why he raised his voice, and they might apologize. And I think we owe God an apology for misunderstanding the times that he's raised his voice.

Lou: So what you're really saying is that it's not anger in the voice of God. It's the serious consequences that call forth such a serious warning.

Graham: He would spare us, that's the thing. It's like the tobacco problem, you know. People aren't believing the danger, and so they're printing it in red and underlining it, and they're trying to find more ways to warn people.

Lou: Trying to get the message through.

Graham: That this is serious. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16 with Lou Venden, "God's Last Pleading with His Children" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>*

I think that we could encourage people to believe they could grow up from rebirth to maturity much sooner; and it would be much more exciting. You know, when we're baptized, we think "I've launched myself on sixty-five years of slow sanctification." I think, "No, why not grow up without delay as quickly as possible and be settled into the truth?" But then when we have an absolutely out-of-sight, forbidding conception of perfection, we think, "well, I'm not going to make it anyway." The conception of perfection we find in the Bible is the conception of an individual who is so convinced of this truth about God, that if Satan should come as an angel of light—even as "Christ", and say God is arbitrary, vengeful, unforgiving and severe, a twelve year-old might be able to say, "That's not true and I will not believe it." So I think we have made the difference too extended in there—and God can, under the accelerating, energizing events of the close of time, he can produce a generation of grown-up Jobs of all ages. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4, "God's Way of Restoring Trust" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

Lou: I want to ask the same question but in another way: Isn't it enough to be justified? Do I also have to be sanctified? Are you saying here that the healing-trust model really challenges that kind of separation and that kind of thinking?

Graham: Very much so. Of course those two words do not occur in the Bible. They are English words of Latin derivation. Not to make light of them. But the Greek word could be more literally translated "set right, put right" for "justification." Now if a person has been really set right with

God and he now loves and trusts him and is willing to listen, don't you think he would say, "What else do you want me to do, Lord?"

"I want to heal you if you will cooperate."

"Absolutely! Just tell me, and I'll follow." There's no way to be justified without sanctification following. If you're not willing to be kept right, you obviously haven't been set right. So being set right and kept right are all part of the same package. They belong together. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14 with Lou Venden, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>

Recommended Listening:

Faith, Righteousness and Salvation, #15 "What is Christ Doing in the Heavenly Sanctuary—Especially Since 1844?" is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/15MMFRS> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMFRS> (Part 2)

Conversations About God #16 "God's Last Pleading With His Children" is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

Holiness is wholeness to God. The soul is surrendered to God. The will, and even the thoughts, are brought into subjection to the will of Christ. The love of Jesus fills the soul, and is constantly going out in a clear, refreshing stream, to make glad the hearts of others (MS 33, 1911). {6BC 1076.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual

and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

Sanctification means habitual communion with God. There is nothing so great and powerful as God's love for those who are His children. {HP 129.5}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. The living God has given in His holy law a transcript of His character. The greatest Teacher the world has ever known is Jesus Christ; and what is the standard He has given for all who believe in Him? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48. As God is perfect in His high sphere of action, so man may be perfect in his human sphere. {CT 365.2}

The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. There is opened before us a path of continual advancement. We have an object to reach, a standard to gain, which includes everything good and pure and noble and elevated. There should be continual striving and constant progress onward and upward toward perfection of character. . . . {CT 365.3}

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

Wherever the religion of Christ works, it will brighten and sweeten every detail of life with more than an earthly joy and a higher than earthly peace (Letter 2a, 1892). {6BC 1117.15}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience. {AA 560.3}

As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. . . . At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. As our

opportunities multiply . . . We shall become strong to bear responsibility, and our maturity will be in proportion to our privileges. {COL 65.2}

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, “Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.” This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ. {SC 70.1}

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the subject for the soul’s contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness. {SC 70.2}

None need fail of attaining, in his sphere, to perfection of Christian character. By the sacrifice of Christ, provision has been made for the believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ’s character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through co-operation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God’s assurance to us that we, too, may obtain complete victory. {AA 531.2}

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance. {COL 384.2}

There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God. {DA 311.3}

Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the

passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around. {AA 551.2}

As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus (RH April 24, 1900). {7BC 943.2}

In His Word God reveals what He can do for human beings. He molds and fashions after the divine similitude the characters of those who will wear His yoke. Through His grace they are made partakers of the divine nature, and are thus enabled to overcome the corruption that is in the world through lust. It is God who gives us power to overcome. Those who hear His voice and obey His commandments are enabled to form righteous characters (Letter 44, 1903). {7BC 943.3}

God fixes no limit to the advancement of those who desire to be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Through prayer, through watchfulness, through growth in knowledge and understanding, they are to be "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." Thus they are prepared to work for others. It is the Saviour's purpose that human beings, purified and sanctified, shall be His helping hand. For this great privilege let us give thanks to Him who "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." {AA 478.3}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 11 “Debt—A Daily Decision”

Read for this week’s study

Psalms 37:21; Matthew 4:3–10; Matthew 6:33; Deuteronomy 28:12; Proverbs 13:11; Proverbs 21:5; 2 Corinthians 4:18.

Memory Text

“Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law” (Romans 13:7, 8, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Borrowing and Spending
- III. Stewardship and Instant Gratification
- IV. Living Within Your Means
- V. Saying No to Debt
- VI. Saving and Investing
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we will look at what the Bible says concerning debt.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Reading the Bible is enlightening and helpful in many areas of our growth and understanding. Most of us do not read the Bible seeking only historical and descriptive information. If we are looking for prescriptive advice, the crucial question is: How do we cross the gap between there and then to here and now?
3. When talking about money and using the Bible, looking for direction, how do we apply a message expressed in the context of an agrarian society where business was often conducted by bartering, paying with goods? How do we transfer the wisdom of the message to a complex society of the 21st century, especially in the first world? If the **principles** of how we got to where we are now are not fully understood, there is a danger of making sweeping assertions which can do more harm than good, especially since they come from the “holy book” and may be

viewed as coming directly from God, even when the assertions we created may be flawed.

4. God created us with three basic needs: security, significance and self-worth. The original plan was that these needs would be met by and in God. But the Fall changed that and now human beings struggle with feelings of insecurity, insignificance and inferiority. While some are better at hiding it than others, the truth is we all struggle with these feelings. Money and possessions are only two of the various means people use in an attempt to fill those unmet needs.
5. “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33) Jesus uses these words in the Sermon on the Mount, pointing to a way of life that is crucial for us to thrive: the wisdom of entrusting ourselves to God with all the worries and stresses of our life.
6. To thrive, we must first commit and entrust ourselves (and our possessions) to God’s loving care. When we don’t, we risk wasting an extraordinary amount of time, energy, money, on things that we cannot control. Those who do not seek the kingdom first do not seek it at all. Being free from anxiety is one of the inward evidences that we are seeking first the kingdom of God.
7. Our memory text is in the context of respect for authority. Those who believed that Jesus was the one true Lord of the world might have easily used that to rationalize withholding taxes— which even many of their pagan contemporaries thought were unjust. Paul cautioned against that temptation. Perhaps he realized that Christians were likely to get into enough trouble with Rome for far more serious issues. He encouraged them to be good citizens, in every way possible.
8. “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.” (Romans 13:8) This is said in the context of love, law and the expected second coming. It was not meant to be advice regarding financial matters.
9. While the principles of delayed gratification and living within our means are very important in financial matters, we must also understand the role of finances in modern society to be able to practice a balanced approach to money and debt.
10. **Debt isn’t bad, It’s bad debt that is bad.** How do we develop and master responsible attitudes towards finances? And how can we help those who are unable to be responsible for themselves?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And hasn’t it cost God a great deal to give us back our self-control? If he hadn’t given us this power in the beginning there wouldn’t have been the revolt in his universe. So I think the fruits of the Spirit are so significant that it ends with God’s ultimate goal for us, that when we come into full harmony with his ideal for us, we have recovered the dignity of self-mastery and self-

control. And as you know Ellen White appreciated those thoughts so very much. That's why she wrote:

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do [and it is the work of true education, as it is of the whole plan of salvation, to restore this power]. To train [people] to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought."

God doesn't want us to say we love him because we're so completely under his control we can't say anything else. God doesn't want to be talking to himself, when we tell him that we admire him. He wants that to be our own conviction. And the Spirit, working through truth and evidence leads us to the place where some of us, in the highest sense of freedom, say, "Yes, we trust, love, and admire you." He doesn't want to hear the Spirit telling him that. He wants to hear his children saying it, and really meaning it themselves. So I think Galatians 5:22 is a most significant revelation of the truth about our God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>

Further Study with Ellen White

Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying swiftly to aid these tempted ones, who are standing as on the brink of a precipice. The angels from heaven force back the hosts of evil that encompass these souls, and guide them to plant their feet on the sure foundation. The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend. {MB 118.4}

To us, as to Peter, the word is spoken, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Luke 22:31, 32. Thank God, we are not left alone. He who "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16), will not desert us in the battle with the adversary of God and man. "Behold," He says, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Luke 10:19. {MB 119.1}

Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go. Know and believe the love that God has to us, and you are secure; that love is a fortress impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Proverbs 18:10. {MB 119.2}

But angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed. Thus “when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” {ML 28.4}

In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. “Be of good cheer,” He says; “I have overcome the world.” John 16:33. {DA 122.3}

The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast. {DA 480.5}

Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you.” {DA 483.1}

The world’s Redeemer would not have man in ignorance of Satan’s devices. The vast confederacy of evil is arrayed against those who would overcome; but Christ would have us look to the things that are not seen, to the armies of heaven that encamp round about those who love God, to deliver them. The angels of heaven are interested in behalf of man. The power of Omnipotence is at the service of those who trust in God. . . . The voice of the Captain of our salvation speaks to His followers, saying, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.’ I am your defense; advance to victory.” {FW 93.1}

Christ came to the earth and stood before the children of men with the hoarded love of eternity, and this is the treasure that, through our connection with Him, we are to receive, to reveal, and to impart. {MH 37.1}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 12 “The Habits of a Steward”

Read for this week’s study

Ephesians 5:15–17; Colossians 3:23; Luke 12:35–48; James 4:14; Acts 3:21; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27.

Memory Text

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:9–11, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Habit: Seek God First
- III. Habit: Look for the Return of Jesus
- IV. Habit: Use Time Wisely
- V. Habit: Keep a Healthy Mind, Body, and Soul
- VI. Habit: Self-discipline
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The pathway that a habit creates is the fastest way that you can take to get the reward you seek. A habit is an ingrained decision. In other words, you don’t even have to think about it; you just do it. That habit can be very good or very bad, depending upon what it is you do. This week we look at powerful habits that will help a steward conduct God’s business.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What role do habits play in religious life? How can they be a help or a hindrance to what God wants to accomplish?
3. What does it mean to seek God and his kingdom first?
4. Giving away all our money, preaching God’s truth in far-away lands, getting out of the rat race, redistribution of the world’s wealth or concern for ecology—none of these is the central goal of Christian living. Seeking God first is the goal of Christian living. When we do that, we realize that all we have is a gift, that God cares for us, and we are here to share God’s blessings with others. What are the practical implications of this for your life?

5. Classical Christianity during the Middle Ages lost the sight of the Second Coming. Why is looking for the return of Jesus so important? Since the 19th century, what kinds of excesses were brought in with Miller's and other apocalyptic movements?
6. What is the meaning of Christ's parable in Luke 12:35-48? Why is the sense of urgency so important for the disciples of Jesus? What happens when it is lost (Matthew 24:45-51)?
7. How can we use our time wisely? Why is balance such an important aspect of wisdom? Why does the wholistic approach offer an antidote that most religious approaches miss? What does it mean to be fully present? Why is worrying (being stuck either in the future or past) so lethal to the thriving that Jesus wants us to experience?
8. What is the role of self-discipline in the Christian life? Do all people have the same will? How do we deal with the reality that some people seem endowed with more self-discipline than others? In what ways can we work with God to create an inspiring, growing, everyday reality instead of experiencing guilty feelings about where we are in relation to others?
9. A popular approach in Adventism, perhaps from our Methodist roots, is that full surrender will deal with all the issues of struggling with sin. The New Testament presents a balanced understanding of the reality of God's Kingdom as the solution to the problem. Why? What aspects of God's kingdom are already here and which are not yet? Why does understanding the difference make such an impact on our Christian life?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When David was depressed, he said so. Look for example in Psalm 77:7-10. I could have chosen many other passages, as you know:

Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious?...And I say, "It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed." (RSV)

He said that to God in prayer. Of course, that is only the first half of the psalm. Reading on and reading it all, you will find in the end of the seventy-seventh Psalm how David resolved his depression.

If David wanted vengeance, he wouldn't say, "Lord, thou knowest how I love Brother Isaac and I hope his crops will flourish this year," when he really wished that the blood of Brother Isaac would flow down the street and would water the furrows of his field and the locusts would consume his crops.

David would kneel and say, "Lord, thou knowest my thoughts anyway, so why should I pretend?" Look at Psalm 139:19, 21-24:

O that thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God, do I not hate them that hate thee, O Lord? And do I not loathe them that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies [but without pausing, he goes right on]. Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (RSV)

You see, he invited healing and he knew he needed a new heart and a right spirit; truth in the inner man. So he first would present himself honestly to God. He said, “You know all my thoughts anyway. So, why should I hide? You know how I feel. So search me and may my thoughts and the meditations and the words of my mouth be acceptable to you.”

If you should watch a loved one die, and you should cry, “Why God? Why?” Would God be offended? Or would the God you know reach down and put an arm around your shoulder and say, “I understand how you feel. You wouldn’t be human if you didn’t feel that way. Someday I’ll make it plain to you. I wish I could right now. But please trust me, and trust me enough to be willing to wait.”

We have to know God well before those emergencies arise, so that we can trust him and pray to him like this. That’s why Paul said we need the Holy Spirit of truth to be able to trust and pray like this. In Romans 8:26, that familiar verse: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.” (RSV)

And so, the Holy Spirit brings the truth to us—the truth about God. He helps us to see that truth and to be convinced about it, and the truth about ourselves and learn how to tell the truth to our gracious heavenly Father. And then God can do good things for us. Paul even said we should pray without ceasing. You note that last familiar verse, 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Never stop praying.” (Norlie)

Or as Goodspeed translates it, “Never give up praying.” But if we should spend all our time on our knees, we would never get anything else done. So how can one pray without ceasing and still be effective in this life? But prayer, you see, in its very essence is thinking toward God. It means that God is at the very center of our thoughts. Eventually it becomes a habit that God should be at the very center of all our plans, always.

When we see him face-to-face, as we know we shall, will that be the end of prayer? Does that mean that prayer is yet another of the emergency measures God has used to keep open the channels of communication between himself and his children until the time comes when there will be no need to talk together anymore?

What do we mean when we sing, “Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer?” “Farewell, farewell, I will never talk to you, God, again.” No, if prayer is conversation with a friend, when we meet God, the hour of prayer will have barely just begun. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, “Talking to God as A Friend” recorded May,

1984, Loma Linda, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>

And the early Christians sorely needed the encouraging message of that sixty-sixth book, and the picture of the angels celebrating, because there was a serious crisis among God's people on this planet at that time.

For one thing, the Second Coming seemed to be indefinitely delayed. They thought he would come around 50 A.D., and Paul had to tell them, "No, not yet", in his letter to Thessalonica. There were still more things to happen. By the 90's—what had gone wrong that Jesus had not yet returned? And besides this, there were heresies in the church. Some were even teaching that Christ had not really come in human form. He had not really suffered and really died. He had faked it all. They're called the *Docetists*, who taught he just pretended to do it. And then there was great opposition, and serious persecution. The apostles were all dead, save one. And he was the elderly John, now a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos. What good news was there, to encourage the early Christians?

And you could count on God when things were that bleak, to send a message of encouragement and enlightenment and explanation to his people. He surely wouldn't send a book of mysteries and dates and schedules of events that they could not possibly understand. Rather, that sixty-sixth book that he did send, the book of Revelation (which means clarification, not mystification), is an invitation to discouraged early Christians to look a little higher—to take the larger view of things. To see how they've all been caught up in a vast great controversy that affects the whole universe! And that it's a controversy over God's own character and government. And then to read on and see that God has already won this war and the angels all agree with him. To see that this is the good news. And then to read on and realize that God is inviting us to join in the celebration; and then to go out to the world and invite all others who are willing to listen, to join in God's victory in the war. And then we Christians might not seem so much on the defensive all the time; we have good news to tell. There's no way God and his side can lose. And should we not *join the winning side*? is the invitation in that sixty-sixth book.

And the book also says that you can count on God to wait until this truth about him—this good news about his character and government—has been spread all over the world. Because God is the kind of person who will wait until his children have had an opportunity to understand the issues in the war; and to be ready for the awesome events the Bible describes as taking place before Jesus' return. To see and to present the plan of salvation in the larger setting of the great controversy over the character and government of God is, I believe, the highest privilege of God's friends on this planet today. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series,

Conversations About God, #1, “The Conflict in God’s Family” recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>*

Do you think the end will come, the conflict will be over, Christ will return—in our own lifetime? The disciples wondered about this, you remember, and they asked Jesus, as in the first of the texts on our Bible Reference Sheet, Matthew 24:3: “Tell us [they said], when will this be and how can we tell when you’re coming back and the world will come to an end?” (Beck)

And Jesus replied that even the angels do not know. In fact, he added, that while he was still in his humble, human form on this planet, that even he did not know himself, only the Father. Look again at Matthew 24:36, next on the sheet. Jesus’ own words: “But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, not even the Son; only the Father.” (NEB)

But Jesus went on to indicate that there was something much more important than knowing the exact time. He indicated that it was far more important to trust him enough to be willing to wait. You recall our conversation, “All God Asks of Us Is Trust?” For if only we trust him enough to be ready for his coming, whenever that should be, we really don’t need to know the exact time. If we trust him, all will be well. Jesus indicated this in the next verse, in John 14:1, 3: “Set your troubled hearts at rest [on the subject, he said]. Trust in God always; trust also in me . . . I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.” (NEB)

But he did give them some details by which they could tell the approximate time. As they sat together one day on the Mount of Olives, Jesus spoke of many signs by which the disciples could tell when the end was getting nearer. Very familiar passages to all those who believe in the advent; he spoke of alarming disturbances in earth and sky. He spoke of growing distrust between the nations. He spoke of the rise of false religious leaders; a subject we have discussed before. He particularly warned of those who would arise and teach that his second coming was to be in secret. “Don’t believe that,” Jesus said. As in the next passage, Matthew 24:26, 27, 30, and 31:

Don’t believe it. [That is, don’t believe that I will be coming in secret.] For the Son of Man will come like the lightning that flashes across the whole sky from the east to the west. . . .

And all the peoples of earth will weep as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The great trumpet will sound, and he will send out his angels to the four corners of the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the world to the other. (GNB)

Now that is hardly the description of an invisible event. Quite on the contrary, John affirmed very clearly in the last book in the Bible, that every eye will see him come. And you remember that passage in Revelation 1:7: “Every eye will see him.” (RSV) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #19, “How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?” recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/19MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

When a soul receives Christ, he receives power to live the life of Christ. {SD 12.5}

He whose mind loves to dwell upon God has a strong defense. He will be quick to perceive the dangers that threaten his spiritual life, and a sense of danger will lead him to call upon God for help and protection. {TMK 240.4}

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. {MYP 72.1}

Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine. {COL 312.2}

The value of man is estimated in heaven according to the capacity of the heart to know God. This knowledge is the spring from which flows all power. God created man that every faculty might be the faculty of the divine mind; and He is ever seeking to bring the human mind into association with the divine. He offers us the privilege of co-operation with Christ in revealing His grace to the world, that we may receive increased knowledge of heavenly things. {COL 354.3}

But God is ever seeking to impress our hearts by His Holy Spirit, that we shall be convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. We may place our will on the side of God’s will, and in His strength and grace resist the temptations of the enemy. As we yield to the influence of the Spirit of God, our conscience becomes tender and sensitive, and sin that we have passed by with little thought, becomes exceeding sinful. {OHC 153.4}

To human beings striving for conformity to the divine image there is imparted an outlay of heaven’s treasure, an excellency of power, that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen. {COL 162.4}

The Spirit of Christ, working upon the heart conforms it to His image; for Christ is the model upon which the Spirit works. By the ministry of His Word, by His providences, by His inward working, God stamps the likeness of Christ upon the soul. {TDG 46.5}

Through the gospel, souls that are degraded and enslaved by Satan are to be redeemed to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. God's purpose is not merely to deliver from the suffering that is the inevitable result of sin, but to save from sin itself. The soul, corrupted and deformed, is to be purified, transformed, that it may be clothed in "the beauty of the Lord our God," "conformed to the image of His Son." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Psalm 90:17; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 2:9. Eternity alone can reveal the glorious destiny to which man, restored to God's image, may attain. {MB 60.3}

The coin, though lying among dust and rubbish, is a piece of silver still. Its owner seeks it because it is of value. So every soul, however degraded by sin, is in God's sight accounted precious. As the coin bears the image and superscription of the reigning power, so man at his creation bore the image and superscription of God; and though now marred and dim through the influence of sin, the traces of this inscription remain upon every soul. God desires to recover that soul and to retrace upon it His own image in righteousness and holiness. {COL 194.3}

The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ is the knowledge that all who are saved must have. It is the knowledge that works transformation of character. This knowledge, received, will recreate the soul in the image of God. It will impart to the whole being a spiritual power that is divine. {MH 425.2}

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." 2 Corinthians 3:18. {MH 425.3}

To the heart that has become purified, all is changed. Transformation of character is the testimony to the world of an indwelling Christ. The Spirit of God produces a new life in the soul, bringing the thoughts and desires into obedience to the will of Christ; and the inward man is renewed in the image of God. Weak and erring men and women show to the world that the redeeming power of grace can cause the faulty character to develop into symmetry and abundant fruitfulness. {PK 233.2}

The heart that receives the word of God is not as a pool that evaporates, not like a broken cistern that loses its treasure. It is like the mountain stream, fed by unfailing springs, whose cool, sparkling waters leap from rock to rock, refreshing the weary, the thirsty, the heavy-laden. It is like a river constantly flowing and, as it advances, becoming deeper and wider, until its life-giving waters are spread over all the earth. {PK 233.3}

So it is with the true child of God. The religion of Christ reveals itself as a vitalizing, pervading principle, a living, working, spiritual energy. When the heart is opened to the heavenly influence of truth and love, these principles will flow forth again like streams in the desert, causing fruitfulness to appear where now are barrenness and dearth. {PK 234.1}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 13 “The Results of Stewardship”

Read for this week’s study

2 Timothy 3:1–9; Ezekiel 14:14; Philippians 4:4–13; Proverbs 3:5; 1 Peter 2:11, 12; Matthew 7:23; 25:21.

Memory Text

“Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Stewardship and Godliness
- III. Contentment
- IV. Trust
- V. Our Influence
- VI. The Words We Want (and Don’t Want) to Hear
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This final lesson will look at the personal benefits, spiritual outcomes, successful results, our influence, and the key to contentment in the steward’s life, knowing that it is all about ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27, NKJV).” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Stewardship is the act of thriving while managing God’s call to live godly lives.” (Sabbath afternoon) Thriving is an important part of what Christ presents in the Sermon on the Mount as a characteristic of His new community. What do you think is behind God’s urgent desire for us to thrive even in these conditions of sin?
3. “God gives us the skill to live differently than any other lifestyle on earth (2 Corinthians 6:17), and it is something that others should notice and even ask about.” (Sabbath afternoon) While we should definitely be ready to give an answer to those who ask about our convictions (1 Peter 3:15), whether people ask or not, is not in our hands. What do you do in societies or circles where people do not ask? Does it automatically mean that they are wicked or uninterested?

4. Traditionally, we have a lot to say about God's work **in** us (=sanctification), and God's work **through** us (=mission), but we can be quite blind to God work **around** us. It is easy to forget that the Holy Spirit is not our private property and that he works on all minds (John 1:9). How can we learn from the best around us including in the area of stewardship? Are there lessons which are long overdue?
5. Who is 2 Timothy 3:1-9 talking about? It is easy to relate it to the world around us, but it actually speaks about people in the church! How is it possible that religion, which has been given the gift of sharing the most liberating story ever told, can also create people like that? What can be done to help free people from this enslaving type of religion?
6. How can we help people who rejected God and religion because they have been exposed to exactly this type of spirituality?
7. The strongest argument **in favor** of Christianity are Christians – their joy, their certainty, their completeness, their wholesomeness, their aliveness. The strongest argument **against** Christianity are Christians – when they are somber, joyless, self-righteous, smug, narrow-minded, judgmental and vindictive. Christianity dies a sad death. How many people are radically and permanently repelled from Christianity by Christians who are insensitive, rigid, unapproachable, boring, lifeless, obsessive and dissatisfied?
8. "Spirituality wrongly understood or pursued, is a major source of human misery and rebellion against God." (Dallas Willard) Why did Jesus devote a significant portion of his ministry to correcting spirituality wrongly understood or pursued?
9. What is biblical contentment? Will content people lose the drive to grow and move forward? What is God's will and goal for us? Is it possible that contentment looks different for different people? If yes, what does it look like in my own life?
10. First century Judaism was characterized by boundary markers, which were external, superficial signs or practices that set one group apart from another. The most notorious were Sabbath, circumcision and clean & unclean food laws. Is it possible that money and possessions can become just another boundary marker in 21st century Christianity, especially in the first world?
11. "The simple program of Christ for winning the whole world is to make each person he touches magnetic enough with love to draw others." (Frank Laubach) How can the picture of God we believe in transform the kind of people we are becoming?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Surely it's clear in the epistle to Rome that all that God asks of us is that we trust him, because if we trust him, without reservation, with no cheating, with a complete willingness to listen, he can heal and save and restore us. But if I'm forever violating that trust, that relationship with

him, if sometimes I'll listen and sometimes I don't, sometimes I'm honest with him and sometimes I'm not, will he condemn me? Do you doctors condemn your patients who are foolish enough not to take their medicine and so become more and more seriously ill? Now you might correct them; that's for sure. You might show great concern. You might if need be sound very stern and severe. You might read them the medical equivalent of the third angel's message, if you persist in this you're going to die. You might well do that. But you wouldn't condemn them, would you? What good would it do to send them home condemned and humiliated? Corrected to be sure.

Whenever we violate our relationship of trust in God he can't trust us. Sometimes we're with him, sometimes we're not, it's a very irregular relationship. Sometimes we're so honest and sometimes we cheat, we're looking for alibis, we're always rationalizing. He cannot heal us and we lose. This is a rebellious, untrusting, untrustworthy relationship. And that's why sin is so dangerous. That's why sin results in death, not because our heavenly Father and physician will kill us, but the man who doesn't trust God, the man who's cheating will reap the consequences. He will die, for God cannot heal this person who doesn't trust him. And I think this is such a correction to the definition so often used, sin is just breaking this or that rule and you know what God does to sinners. This suggests that breaking our trusting relationship with God is the most dangerous thing we can do. The consequences are very disastrous both in this life and in the end, but not at the hands of our gracious God. If we persist in cheating he will let us go and reap the consequences. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 14, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/27MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

As the Bible describes our beginning, this world was to be a place of perfect freedom and security. Trusting each other and trusting God, what would there be to fear? But the enemy of God is our enemy too. The one who would deceive us into distrusting God works also to destroy our trust in each other and our own trustworthiness. And where there is no mutual trust and love, there is no real freedom, no real security.

Yet these are the things in life we all desire the most. How good we feel when in times of emergency we show what friends we could always be! How pleased we are when countries work together to rush medicine and food to a neighbor struck by some natural disaster! The whole world applauds when the ship of one nation steams to the rescue of another—especially when it flies the flag of an old enemy.

If only universal trust could somehow be restored, then we could enjoy again that peaceful assurance that comes with faith in God and confidence in each other. Then we could feel once

more that vital sense of dignity and self-respect that come with knowing that God and our friends can safely place their confidence in us. . . .

The Bible points forward to a time of worldwide peace, a day when love and trust will fill God's whole universe. Then "no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord" {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations*, recorded February , 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

You see, Moses had been maybe the best friend God ever had. God even talked to him face to face—even differently than the way God talks to a prophet with visions and dreams. He says, "I talk to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friends." And the people knew Moses had a special relationship with God, and they revered him—at least when they were behaving. They had seen him go up on Mt. Sinai and come down carrying the Ten Commandments. If your pastor came down some mountain nearby, carrying the Ten Commandments and his face shining so brightly that you couldn't look at him, wouldn't he have increased influence among the congregation? Moses had enormous influence. And that's what made his behavior at the rock so serious. Moses had pictured God as angry when he was not. God wished by his kindness to lead some of those Israelites to repentance (Romans 2:4). And Moses deprived God of that opportunity. Standing as they were on the verge of going into Canaan to meet those well-armed tribes there, they needed to trust God very closely. And God purposed to win them, with all their complaining and grumbling. He was not going to condemn them or criticize them; just give them abundant water. "Moses," he said, "don't even strike the rock."

But Moses pictured God as angry.

What a contrast to the way Moses had behaved once earlier when God said, "I'm tired of these people. Step aside. Let me destroy them and I'll make a great nation out of you."

And Moses said, "God, you couldn't do that. Think what it would do to your reputation. What would the Egyptians think? They would assume that you couldn't take your people to the Promised Land!"

And God said, "I love that, Moses. Who knows me as well as you do? You really are my friend."

But now under pressure, Moses let God down. He misrepresented God as vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. And that was precisely Satan's sin in the beginning, the sin that is the most devastating of all.

God has honored his friend Moses ever since. He even personally buried him and resurrected him, and later sent him down to comfort his Son on the Mount of Transfiguration. But God had to go on record before the eyes of the onlooking universe as to the terrible seriousness of Moses' sin. It wasn't just that he disobeyed, or by smiting the rock he had "spoiled a symbol." He had, to be sure. But Moses had broken faith with God. He hadn't shown himself to be God's trusted, trusting friend. And that's the essence of sin.

How many of us have committed the same sin? How many of us have hurt our own children, and others who trust us to tell the truth about our God? Have you apologized lately to God for ever putting him in a bad light and suggesting that he's not the kind of person we know him to be?

Moses repented (as we know) and became a better friend of God than ever before. But so many people have continued to mistrust. What happens—what are the results?

Not "what are the penalties?" {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God, #2, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe?"* recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

Which one of us would have dared to approach God with the incredible idea of John 15:15? "We are no longer willing to be called your servants. We insist that from now on we be addressed as friends!"

Actually, it's an honor to be God's servant. And how wonderful it would be to hear God say in the end, "Well done, you good and faithful servant." But it's God himself who offers us something better, far better—to be his understanding friends.

Nor should we make light of that bumper sticker, "God said it! I believe it! That settles it!" God has said, "I call you no longer my servants, because servants just do what they're told. I call you rather my friends, for I want you to understand." A truly good and faithful servant will live up to the meaning of that bumper sticker and take very seriously what God has said about his preference for friends.

Do you consider yourself God's servant or God's friend?

"Oh," you might say, "I consider myself something even better. I consider myself God's child."

Why is it better to be God's child?

"Ah, because children have rights, and I prize the rights Jesus bought for me at such price."

As I heard a man say in the pulpit the other day, “When I get to heaven and meet God, and he should wonder how a person such as I could possibly be there, all I’ll have to do is show him my rights. He doesn’t have to like me. All he has to do is see my right to be there.”

To me, that’s servant talk. And it’s certainly not very friendly. Besides, I know many children who are not their father’s friends. Absalom was David’s son, and he was his father’s worst enemy. (The sad story is told in 2 Samuel 15-18.)

So I would have to say for myself, I would rather be God’s friend than just his child. But fortunately we can be all three. We don’t have to choose.

I believe it is a great honor to be God’s servant, and especially to be regarded as a faithful one. It is also a high privilege to be called God’s child.

But most of all, I’d rather be his friend. A trusting and trusted friend. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 23-24. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter2.html>

These are the consequences of not loving, trusting, and admiring our God enough to be willing to listen and to do things his way. Hosea 5:4: “For their spirit is steeped in unfaithfulness and they know nothing of the Lord.” (Phillips)

And then Hosea 4:1, and 5:6, 12: “There is no honesty nor compassion nor knowledge of God . . . My people! Asking advice from a piece of wood and consulting a staff for instructions!” (Phillips)

Now this raises the significant point, how could it be said that Israel does not know God? Who else knew God so well? Look at all the prophets, and all their marvelous pictures of God. Jeremiah said, “I’m glad to know God as I do.” But the way many people knew God those days was not knowing God in the special, biblical sense. That is, to know God as a friend; to even know God intimately as a husband and a wife know each other. The Bible says, “Adam knew Eve” his wife. And as a result, they didn’t learn each other’s names. They had a baby. Elsewhere, God says of Israel, “Thee only have I known.” He knew all the rest. But he knew *them* in a special way. And when those disappointed saints find that they are not acceptable in the kingdom, and they plead, “Lord, Lord. Open unto us.” He says, “Go away. I never knew you.” Why, he knew the hairs on their head, but he did not know them as friends. And friendship is the very essence of the relationship God wishes to have with his people. If Israel had really *known* God, they would have been better friends. They would have been jealous for his reputation. And they would have been better people themselves, as were the wonderful prophets in the Old Testament who wrote so well of God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #2, “What Went Wrong in God’s Universe?” recorded

January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ does not bid His followers strive to shine. He says, Let your light shine. If you have received the grace of God, the light is in you. Remove the obstructions, and the Lord's glory will be revealed. The light will shine forth to penetrate and dispel the darkness. You cannot help shining within the range of your influence. {COL 420.1}

God permits every person to exercise his individuality. No human mind should be submerged in another human mind. But the invitation has been given, "Let *this mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Each person is to stand before God with an individual faith, an individual experience, knowing for himself that Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. {OHC 108.3}

Men and women can reach God's ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can unite hearts in bonds that are of heavenly origin. Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet more firm, than can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial. Heart will be bound to heart in the golden bonds of a love that is enduring. {MH 362.3}

The work of Christ in the heart does not destroy man's powers. Christ directs, strengthens, ennobles, and sanctifies the faculties of the soul. It is through personal acquaintance with Him that we become qualified to represent His character to the world. John says, "As many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). And again, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (verse 16). {TDG 219.3}

It is when we come into difficult places that He reveals His power and wisdom in answer to humble prayer. Have confidence in Him as a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. He will reveal Himself to you as One who can help in every emergency. He who created man, who gave him his wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, will not withhold that which is necessary to sustain the life He has given. He who has given us His word—the leaves of the tree of life—will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children. {MH 199.4}

The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife. {HP 35.3}

Christ's followers are sent to the world with the message of peace. Whoever, by the quiet, unconscious influence of a holy life, shall reveal the love of Christ; whoever, by word or deed, shall lead another to renounce sin and yield his heart to God is a peacemaker. {HP 35.4}

And "blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). The spirit of peace is evidence of their connection with heaven. The sweet savor of Christ surrounds them. The fragrance of the life, the loveliness of the character, reveal to the world the fact that they are children of God. Men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. {HP 35.5}

But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace. Then let us not cast away our confidence, but have firm assurance, firmer than ever before. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," and He will help us to the end. 1 Samuel 7:12. Let us look to the monumental pillars, reminders of what the Lord has done to comfort us and to save us from the hand of the destroyer. Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us,—the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed,—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us through the remainder of our pilgrimage. {SC 125.1}

Christ is "the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), and it is His mission to restore to earth and heaven the peace that sin has broken. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1. Whoever consents to renounce sin and open his heart to the love of Christ, becomes a partaker of this heavenly peace. {MB 27.2}

There is no other ground of peace than this. The grace of Christ received into the heart, subdues enmity; it allays strife and fills the soul with love. He who is at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmisings will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife. {MB 27.3}

Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isaiah 26:3. Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory. And

that character which expresses the glory—character—of Christ will be received into the Paradise of God. A renovated race shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy. {DA 331.2}

As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more intense will be our happiness. As we walk with Jesus in this life, we may be filled with His love, satisfied with His presence. All that human nature can bear, we may receive here. {DA 331.3}

If happiness is drawn from outside sources and not from the Divine Fount, it will be as changeable as varying circumstances can make it; but the peace of Christ is a constant and abiding peace. It does not depend on any circumstance in life, on the amount of worldly goods, or the number of earthly friends. Christ is the fountain of living waters, and happiness and peace drawn from Him will never fail, for He is a well-spring of life. {FW 88.2}

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only One who can help us out of all our difficulties, and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear in mind that He is present, and is directing us to commune with Him. We are to keep our minds stayed upon God; and in our weakness, He will be our strength; in our ignorance, He will be our wisdom; in our frailty, He will be our enduring might. {SD 27.2}

Divine wisdom will order the steps of those who put their trust in the Lord. Divine love will encircle them, and they will realize the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. {OHC 324.6}

Righteous words and deeds have a more powerful influence for good than all the sermons that can be preached.—ML 114. {VSS 52.1}

The voice and tongue are gifts from God, and if rightly used, they are a power for God. Words mean very much. They may express love, devotion, praise, melody to God, or hatred and revenge. Words reveal the sentiments of the heart. They may be a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. The tongue is a world of blessing, or a world of iniquity. {SD 180.5}

Some are seen to come forth from their daily communion with God clothed with the meekness of Christ. Their words are not like a desolating hail, crushing everything before it; they come forth sweetly from their lips. They scatter seeds of love and kindness all along their path, and

that all unconsciously, because Christ lives in their heart. Their influence is felt more than it is seen. {SD 180.6}

Kind, tender, compassionate words will flow from sanctified hearts and lips. {SD 180.7}

The closer we keep to Christ, and the more meek and lowly and self-distrustful we are, the firmer will be our hold on Christ, and the greater will be our power, through Christ, to convert sinners; for it is not the human agent that moves the soul. Heavenly intelligences co-operate with the human agent and impress the truth upon the heart. Abiding in Christ we are able to exert an influence over others; but it is because of the presence of Him who says: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:20. The power we have to overcome Satan is the result of Christ working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. {6T 399.2}

Recommended Reading: *Steps to Christ* Chapter 8 – “Growing Up Into Christ”

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