

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*
Lesson 1 “Part of God’s Family”

Read for this week’s study

Galatians 3:26, 29; Psalm 50:10–12; 1 Chronicles 29:13, 14; Philippians 4:19; 1 John 5:3; Matthew 6:19–21.

Memory Text

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. We Are Part of God’s Family
- III. God Is the Owner of Everything
- IV. Resources Available for God’s Family
- V. Responsibilities of God’s Family Members
- VI. Treasure in Heaven
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. This lesson considers the privileges and responsibilities associated with being part of the family of God. Read Ephesians 3:14-15. What kind of imagery is used in this passage? While there are religious differences among us, we are all members of God’s family. It is the rare parent that rejoices when their children move away, no matter how badly they have behaved. Similarly, God is not willing to lose any member of the family, but prefers that all will come to repentance. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read Exodus 3:10; 5:1; and Galatians 3:26, 29. What picture of God do you draw from these texts? What do they say about how God relates to us? Imagine a world in which we treated everyone as family. What impact would that have on our relationships? What responsibilities do members of a family have toward each other? (Sunday’s Lesson)

3. Read Psalm 50:10-12, Psalm 24:10, 1 Chronicles 29:14, and Haggai 2:8. What is money? What implications does God's ownership of everything have for the way we handle money? (Monday's Lesson)
4. Read Genesis 1:26-28. When God gave Adam and Eve dominion over the earth, what did that include (Gen 2:15, 19, 22)? How would you define "dominion"? There are two basic styles of governance. Leadership-based governance tells those below them that they don't have decision-making authority and there are many things about the operation they are not allowed to know. Shared governance includes the workplace in management decisions, valuing the opinions of all who are part of the operation. What does it tell us about God that He was willing to share governance of this earth with His newly created creatures? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
5. If God has invited us to share governance of this earth with Him (what we traditionally called stewardship) what resources has He provided for us to use in His service? For some answers, see texts like John 3:16, John 1:12, 1 Corinthians 2:2, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 37:25, Galatians 5:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. (Tuesday's Lesson)
6. In response to all that God has provided us, what does He desire from us in return? Or, in other words, what are the responsibilities of the steward? Read Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Deuteronomy 10:12-13. According to Matthew 7:24-27, what is the difference between the wise and foolish disciple (steward) of Jesus? (Wednesday's Lesson)
7. Read Matthew 6:19-21. What does Jesus mean by "treasure" in this context? Is Jesus saying that it is wrong to be rich? Why or why not? What do the stories of Abraham and Job tell us about this? What does this saying of Jesus tell us about the relationship between our use of money and the inner motivations that drive us? (Thursday's Lesson)
8. Make a list of the blessings from God that you can see in your spiritual and temporal life. What kind of response does this list evoke in you? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But whatever you are able to read into the details, the picture remains the same. Jesus did not expose them before the crowd. That's clear. He didn't expose them, until they were all gone. And he could have readily done so. Now, why didn't he? Well, why didn't he expose Simon in that other story? Why didn't he expose Judas? Well, if we're his children, what father enjoys humiliating his children? You see, unfortunately, we so often make just the good people his children. The others are not, you see. So he could expose them; they're not his children. Is not God the Father of bad children as well as good children? And I think it's so crucial to realize that.

When Jesus watches the wicked die, he is watching members of his family die. When we say, “Have you joined the family of God?” we mean, “Have you joined the saints?” Well, that’s not really true. We are all members of the family. He’s going to lose part of his family. When you count your own children, from day to day, say you have six, how many do you have tonight? Three perhaps? The good ones. You don’t have the others. Hopefully tomorrow you’ll have four, maybe five. Have you ever had a day when you’d own up to all six of your children? I’m glad my folks didn’t do this. And some day my father might say, “I don’t have any children tonight. They all were bad.” That would make no sense. You know Lucifer is a child of God? The worst one he’s got. And some day he’ll watch him die. And isn’t it safe to say that that brilliant child of his will leave an eternal void in the infinite memory of God. He’ll always remember his most brilliant son, and he lost him. And he’ll miss us if we’re lost. That pain will last forever. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66* – John, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/57MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/58MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Do you know the word “obedience” in the Greek, and one can’t press the etymological meaning of the word too far, means literally “listening under, a humble willingness to listen”?

A doorkeeper is called by this word. Now if you had a doorkeeper who said, “I’m listening, but I don’t intend to carry through with what I hear.” This isn’t just an idle, rude willingness to listen; it’s a *humble* willingness to listen. So when the doorkeeper listens, he hears his master knock, and he proceeds to open the door. Hence the word came to mean “obedience”, but the essence of the word is “a willingness to listen.”

Now does God expect of us perfect performance? He knows better. Can he expect of us perfect willingness to listen? What if we have a twenty-five percent reservation here? Then we’re not safe to save. I mean we’ve got a lot of listening to do in the hereafter. So God can demand obedience in this sense, a willingness to listen. And without it he can’t help us.

And he says, “All the good things that have come to you have come by hearing; by a willingness to listen, in a mood of trust.” That’s all that is asked. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, *Galatians, #3*, recorded February 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/3MMGALATIANS66>

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, NSRV) 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? Another Look at God*, 103-104. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

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

Further Study with Ellen White

There we shall know even as also we are known. There the loves and sympathies that God has planted in the soul will find truest and sweetest exercise. The pure communion with holy beings, the harmonious social life with the blessed angels and with the faithful ones of all ages, the sacred fellowship that binds together “the whole family in heaven and earth”—all are among the experiences of the hereafter. {Ed 306.2}

We are all a part of the great web of humanity, all members of one family. {FLB 65.2}

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ

came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. {FLB 65.3}

He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. {FLB 65.4}

The plan of redemption is not merely a way of escape from the penalty of transgression, but through it the sinner is forgiven his sins, and will be finally received into heaven—not as a forgiven culprit pardoned and released from captivity, yet looked upon with suspicion and not admitted to friendship and trust; but welcomed as a child, and taken back into fullest confidence. {7BC 950.6}

But adoption into the family of God makes us children, not slaves. When the love of Christ enters the heart we strive to imitate the character of Christ. . . . The more we study the life of Christ with a heart to learn, the more Christlike we become. Into the heart of every true doer of the Word the Holy Spirit infuses clear understanding. {TMK 118.5}

Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts. {AG 54.6}

The enemy can never take out of the hand of Christ the one who is simply trusting in His promises. If the soul is trusting and working obediently, the mind is susceptible to divine impressions, and the light of God shines in, enlightening the understanding. What privileges we have in Christ Jesus! {SD 351.4}

Whatever the position in which God has placed us, whatever our responsibilities or our dangers, we should remember that He has pledged Himself to impart needed grace to the earnest seeker. Those who feel insufficient for their position, and yet accept it because God bids them, relying upon His power and wisdom, will go on from strength to strength. When they enter upon their work, they may have almost everything to learn; but with Christ as a teacher they will become efficient laborers. God does not intrust His work to the worldly wise; for they are too proud to learn. He chooses those who, feeling their deficiencies, seek to be guided by unerring wisdom (ST Sept. 7, 1882). {2BC 1017.2}

God has given us these precious things as an expression of His love. The Lord is a lover of the beautiful, and to please and gratify us He has spread before us the beauties of nature, even as an earthly parent seeks to place beautiful things before the children that He loves. The Lord is always pleased to see us happy. Sinful as it is with all its imperfections, the Lord has lavished upon this earth the useful and the beautiful. The beautiful, tinted flowers tell of His tenderness and love. They have a language of their own, reminding us of the Giver. {UL 327.3}

The great plan of mercy from the beginning of time is to have every afflicted soul trust in His love. Your safety at the present time, when your mind is tortured with doubt, is not to trust in feeling, but in the living God. All He asks of you is to put your trust in Him, acknowledging Him as your faithful Saviour, who loves you, and has forgiven you all your mistakes and errors. . . . {TDG 313.4}

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. . . . He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the sermon on the mount. . . . The Teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. {AG 130.4}

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}

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}

In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun. {GC 468.1}

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. {ML 250.6}

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of

love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience. {SC 60.2}

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}

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure. {COL 363.1}

If the human agent consents, God can and will so identify His will with all our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His Word, that when obeying His will, we are only carrying out the impulses of our minds. {UL 187.5}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {PP 34.3}

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}

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}

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}

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}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*

Lesson 2 “God’s Covenants With Us”

Read for this week’s study

Matthew 10:22; John 6:29; Deuteronomy 28:1–14; Proverbs 3:1–10; Malachi 3:7–11; Matthew 6:25–33.

Memory Text

“ ‘Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God’ ” (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Salvation Covenant
- III. To Harken Diligently
- IV. Honor the Lord
- V. The Tithe Contract
- VI. Seek Ye First
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. What does the metaphor of “covenant” tell us about God? What implications does Deuteronomy 7:7-9 have on this question? Read Matthew 5:45, Genesis 8:22, and 9:9-16. What type of covenant is implied by these two verses? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. According to the lesson the “salvation covenant” is an example of a bilateral covenant that is conditional upon the responses of the parties named in the covenant. Read 1 John 5:13 in light of 1:9 and Matthew 10:22. What do these texts say about how people receive the gift of salvation? Read John 6:29. What does Jesus mean by the word “believe”? 2 Peter 1:10-11. How does one confirm their calling and election? What do those terms mean? Since salvation is an unmerited gift, what

- is the difference between those who are saved and those who are not? (Sunday's Lesson)
3. Deuteronomy is the written version of Moses' farewell speeches to the second generation of Israelites after the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14. Who is it that is called to obey in this passage? What kinds of blessings does God promise them? What were the conditions for receiving these promises? According to Deuteronomy 28:15-68, what consequences would follow for Israel if they did not obey God? (Monday's Lesson)
 4. Read Proverbs 3:1-10. Notice the connection in these verses between particular behaviors and the various outcomes that result. What is the fundamental principle behind all these behaviors? To what degree are these outcomes miraculous interventions of God? What's wrong with leaning on your own understanding? What place, then, is there in Christian faith for the use of reason? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 5. Read Malachi 3:7-11. What are the promises and obligations found in these verses? What is the meaning of the storehouse in this passage? What would be a contemporary equivalent of Israel's "storehouse"? What purpose can you think of for God providing more than a person has room to receive? Share an experience of your own that proved for you the principle stated in this passage? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 6. Read Matthew 6:25-33. What do birds and lilies have to do with our own attitude toward food and fashion? What is promised in this passage and what are the conditions for receiving these promises? What aspects of the following passages read like a bilateral covenant (Isaiah 26:3; 1 John 1:9; 2 Chronicles 7:14)? What part do these passages imply that God's followers on earth will play in the cosmic conflict? (Thursday's Lesson)
 7. How can one focus on things like obedience and tithe paying without falling into the trap of legalism? (Friday's Lesson)
 8. How does one keep from getting discouraged when hard times come in spite of the fact that we have kept God first in our lives? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I will treat them as though they had always been my loyal children. That's all God has ever wanted. But he's had to add a lot of things, hasn't he? And that's Galatians 3. The law was added because of transgression, to be our guardian, our custodian, to bring us to Christ, to bring us back to the place where we say, "You be our God; and we'll be your people. We're willing to listen. We trust you." And God can save and heal all who trust him. If only we could understand that we wouldn't need so many other aids. But God's a good teacher. If we don't trust him, he'll lay hands on us; he'll discipline us; he'll raise his voice; he'll give us a thousand

rules to protect us in our ignorance and immaturity. But all he wants in the end is that we trust him. The whole plan of salvation, the cross, everything, if it does not lead us back to trust him, it will do us no good whatsoever. God can only save those who trust him. The only people who are safe to save are those whom he can trust, and who will behave as described earlier in Jeremiah and all the other prophets. There's nothing legalistic about that. It isn't even a legal problem. It's a problem of trust, of honesty, integrity, humility, willingness to listen. And God, the Infinite One, has all the power needed to heal the damage done. He's not so concerned with forgiveness as with healing the damage done and restoring us to the condition we were in before sin ever came into the universe, when there was no need to mention law. It was written on the hearts of the angels. There's a magnificent description here of what God really wants. Are we emphasizing this at this present time? Are we known for this? Well, here's a way to test it. Look at Jeremiah 9:23 in the light of all this. {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)

The purpose of the plan of salvation is to restore that trust, to bring the rebellion to an end, and thus to establish at-one-ment once again in the whole universe. All of God's children are unavoidably involved.

Some seem to find it disappointing, even offensive, to learn that Christ did not die primarily for them. But unless God wins this war and reestablishes peace in his family, our salvation is meaningless. Who would want to live for eternity in a warring universe?

Without this larger understanding of a conflict that has involved the universe, it's hard to understand Paul's explanation that Jesus shed his blood to bring peace, reconciliation, and unity to God's children in heaven as well as on earth. But recognition of the war and its issues helps one to take a larger view of the cross and of the plan of salvation and atonement.

The kind of unity God desires cannot be commanded or produced by force or fear. In the course of human history, many tyrants have tried to maintain unity by terror and brutality. But that kind of at-one-ment does not last. Look at what has happened in a number of countries just in recent years.

The kind of at-one-ment God desires is described in the New Testament as a unity that is "inherent in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God." (Ephesians 4:13, REB) People who love and trust the same Jesus and the same God are naturally attracted to each other. The

same truth about God that sets them free from tyranny and fear binds them together in the firmest kind of unity. Friends of a friendly God enjoy at-one-ment with each other.

This is where the meaning of the cross is so important. There can be no friendship and at-one-ment where there is fear. Calvary says there is no need to be afraid of God. When God says, “Be my friend,” he’s not saying, “Be my friend or I’ll punish you severely; I’ll even put you to death.” You don’t talk that way to friends—especially if you want to keep their friendship. And friendship is the whole purpose and meaning of atonement. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*, 164-165. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter12.html>

It is most significant to know that the word “salvation” means, essentially, healing. To be saved is to be healed. In one very legal understanding of the plan of salvation, to be saved is more to be forgiven; almost to have your fire insurance paid up, so you can be admitted. In the trust-healing model, salvation means healing the damage done. This is made plain in many places in Scripture.

Look at the next two examples on the list, of Luke 18:42, in two different versions. Jesus said to the blind man: “Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.” That’s the *King James Version*. But the *New International Version*, right underneath: “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” {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>

Once again they saw him dying. And he died so quickly! He didn’t die of crucifixion. The soldiers were surprised to find he was already dead. They thrust the spear in for confirmation. He was dead!

You don’t die that quickly. That’s why they come and break legs. They didn’t need to break his. He was already dead. And the universe watched him go through it twice. Once again he was given up by the Father. And he knew he was. What did he cry as he died? “Why are you torturing me to death?” “Why have you given me up?” “Why have You forsaken me?” And he died of a broken heart, apparently separated from his Father.

But he also was tortured. Who tortured him to death? The most devout group of seventh-day Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting Adventists the world has ever known. They did not know God. Remember Amos, and Hosea, and Micah, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah? They all talked about this, obeying God without knowing him can actually turn us

into his enemies. And it had to be underscored that they were absolutely dedicated to obedience. Jesus kept commenting on it. “You tithe mint, anise, and cumin. You strain out gnats from your goat’s milk. You search the scriptures,” he kept telling them.

And then, after they had tortured him to death, what was their next concern? To get home in time for sundown worship! For you see, it was the Sabbath, and we are God’s true people! And what’s the mark that we are God’s true people? The keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath. But they kept it as an arbitrary requirement. And I would warn us, that if we keep the Sabbath just because we’re told to, just as a sign, instead of protecting us in the time of trouble, it could leave us vulnerable because it says the wrong thing about God. And our very Sabbath-keeping, if it’s for the wrong reason, could leave us open to the deceptions of the adversary, and we prefer the wrong Christ when he comes. Merely to keep the seventh day does not mean we’ll accept Christ when he comes, because the folk who rejected him were the most devout Sabbath-keepers you ever saw. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke*, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

That’s all! All they argued about was God and his government, and what he wanted of his children. I believe the Great Controversy will end just as it began. The good news is the truth in the Great Controversy. The truth is the truth that needed to be known in the Great Controversy, and that is the truth about God. The errors, the opposition, they are all about God. And all the details are just reflections about this basic position that we take. Are we on God’s side, or not, in the Great Controversy? Are we so settled into the truth about God “both intellectually and spiritually” that we could not be moved? Could you name anybody in the Bible other than the Lord himself, who was so settled into the truth about God, both intellectually he could talk about it, and spiritually he would stake his life on it, that he could not be moved? Could you name anybody? That’s Job? That’s what the whole book is about. And the three theologians came and said, “God is like this.” He said, “He is not. He is like this. I can’t make sense out of what is happening to me, but he could slay me and I’d still trust him.” I believe Job was fully sealed and settled. If we were as settled as Job was, we’d be ready to pass through the time of trouble and the Lord could come.

But, you see, so often we are trying to settle people on all the other matters. If you settle people on the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the state of the dead, tithe, and health, without settling them on the truth about God they might keep the Sabbath as Jesus’ enemies did. They might pay tithe as his enemies did. They might read the Bible as his enemies did. We could be developing in this campaign to win a million Adventists, we could, forbid the thought, we could

develop a million enemies who faithfully keep the Sabbath, practice health reform, pay tithe, and read their Bibles. Now that is a horrible thought. But if we are not clear on the picture of God we might do well not to be in such a hurry. Have you read Ellen White's comment?

"The Lord is not now working to bring many into the truth, because there are so many unconverted in the church." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Revelation*, recorded August 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/79MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/80MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Now when we read this passage about the war in heaven, it's good to reflect that before there was war, there was peace. And there was peace throughout the whole universe. There was peace because all the members of God's vast family trusted each other. And all of them trusted their heavenly Father. And He in turn could safely trust in them. Where there is such mutual trust and trustworthiness, there is perfect freedom, perfect peace, perfect security. And that's the way it's going to be in the hereafter. You notice the Bible never talks about prisons in the Promised Land. There will be no police on every corner. And our wives and daughters will safely walk the streets alone at any hour. {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>

It certainly helps to understand "salvation by faith" and "righteousness by faith," to understand faith as trust in this way. We're not saved by faith; that is, faith does not save us. God saves us. But God can only save those who trust Him. Like a physician, God stands ready to heal all the damage done. But He cannot force us to be well. If we don't trust Him enough to listen, and to cooperate, and let Him heal the damage done, there's no way He can heal us. Physicians cannot heal rebellious patients who stay away because they think the doctor is a quack. Only if there is trust there—mutual trust—can healing really take place.

But now, doesn't it seem too little that God would only ask for trust? Isn't it also necessary to know Him? And to love Him? And to obey Him? Not to mention the need to repent. And to be reborn. And to be converted. And to be justified. And to be sanctified. And even to be perfect. And the list gets so long that it's no wonder that it discourages many people from really wanting to have a right relationship with our God. But don't be scared by that list. Taken in the larger view of what went wrong, and what needs to be set right, every one of those items I have mentioned is an integral part of a single, wonderful, reassuring, transforming experience

that is made available to us all. And it was never supposed to be so complicated, or to be divided into so many different parts. {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>

Further Study with Ellen White

The Redeemer of the world clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might reach humanity; for it took the divine and the human to bring into the world the salvation that was needed by fallen man. Divinity needed humanity that humanity might afford a channel of communication between God and man. Man needs a power out of and above himself to restore him to the likeness of God; but because he needs divine aid, it does not make human activity unessential. Faith on the part of man is required; for faith works by love and purifies the soul. Faith lays hold upon the virtue of Christ. The Lord does not design that human power should be paralyzed; but by cooperating with God, the power of man may be efficient for good. God does not design that our will should be destroyed; for it is through this very attribute that we are to accomplish the work He would have us to do both at home and abroad. {1SM 375.2}

Christ has promised that if we yoke up with Him we shall find peace and comfort and hope, and we [shall] know by experience [that] His words are true. He wants everyone to be saved. {UL 307.5}

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 work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to cooperate 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. {RC 315.2}

Many hold faith as an opinion. But saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means

an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power. {GW 261.1}

Genuine faith will be manifested in good works; for good works are the fruits of faith. As God works in the heart, and man surrenders his will to God, and cooperates with God, he works out in the life what God works in by the Holy Spirit, and there is harmony between the purpose of the heart and the practice of the life. {1SM 397.1}

There is a belief that is not a saving faith. The Word declares that the devils believe and tremble. The so-called faith that does not work by love and purify the soul will not justify any man. . . . Abraham believed God. How do we know that he believed? His works testified to the character of his faith, and his faith was accounted to him for righteousness. {7BC 936.4}

All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {DA 827.3}

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. {SD 23.2}

In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God. {COL 38.1}

His word is pledged. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but His kindness shall not depart from His people, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed. His voice is heard, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:8). How amazing is this love, that God condescends to remove all cause for doubt and questioning from human fears and weakness and takes hold of the trembling hand reached up to Him in faith; and He helps us to trust Him by multiplied assurances and securities. He has made us a binding agreement upon condition of our obedience, and He comes to meet us in our own understanding of things. We think that a pledge or promise from our fellow men, if recorded, still needs a guarantee. Jesus has met all these peculiar fears, and He has confirmed His promise with an oath: "Wherein God, willing

more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: . . .” What more could our Lord do to strengthen our faith in His promises? {TMK 262.4}

Those who surrender their lives to His guidance and to His service will never be placed in a position for which He has not made provision. Whatever our situation, if we are doers of His word, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexity, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. {MH 248.2}

The Saviour ignores both rank and caste, worldly honor and riches. It is character and devotedness of purpose that are of high value with Him. He does not take sides with the strong and worldly favored. He, the Son of the living God, stoops to uplift the fallen. By pledges and words of assurance He seeks to win to Himself the lost, perishing soul. {6T 268.1}

Promises are estimated by the truth of the one who makes them. Many men make promises only to break them, to mock the heart that trusted in them. Those who lean upon such men lean upon broken reeds. But God is behind the promises He makes. He is ever mindful of His covenant, and His truth endureth to all generations (MS 23, 1899). {7BC 942.12}

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}

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}

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. {RH, July 17, 1888 par. 4}

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}

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}

God had power to hold Adam back from touching the forbidden fruit; but had He done this, Satan would have been sustained in his charge against God’s arbitrary rule. Man would not have been a free moral agent, but a mere machine (RH June 4, 1901). {1BC 1084.2}

Today the truths of Scripture are to be brought before the great men of the world in order that they may choose between obedience to God’s law and allegiance to the prince of evil. God sets everlasting truth before them—truth that will make them wise unto salvation, but He does not force them to accept it. If they turn from it, He leaves them to themselves, to be filled with the fruit of their own doings. {AA 241.2}

The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all waiting to do His will. Through these messengers He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. By His Spirit He is everywhere present. Through the agency of His Spirit and His angels He ministers to the children of men. {MH 417.2}

Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best. {MH 417.3}

God is ever seeking to instruct finite men that they may exercise faith in Him and trust themselves wholly in His hands. Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us, teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing too small for His attention (GCB Feb. 18, 1897). {3BC 1141.3}

The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord’s helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. {PK 576.1}

The Lord will not disappoint any who put their trust in Him. He will be first and last and best in everything to us. He will be a present help in every time of need. In these last days of service we shall ... be held, and led, and protected, by the power of Christ. {RY 112.1}

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}

Christ is our only hope. We may look to Him, for He is our Saviour. We may take Him at His word, and make Him our dependence. He knows just the help we need, and we can safely put our trust in Him. If we depend on merely human wisdom to guide us, we shall find ourselves on the losing side. But we may come direct to the Lord Jesus, for He has said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." {TM 486.3}

If you ask the help of God, you will not ask in vain. The Lord is at work in many ways to win your hearty confidence. In nothing does He take more delight than to have you unburden, come to Him for light and strength, and He has promised that you shall find rest to your soul. If you will find heart and voice to pray, He will be sure to hear, and an arm will be reached down to save you. There is a God that hears prayer, and when all other resources fail, He is your refuge, a very present help in time of trouble. . . . {TDG 184.4}

The character of God as revealed by Christ invites our faith and love, for we have a Father whose mercy and compassion fail not. At every step of our journey heavenward He will be with us to guide in every perplexity, to give us help in every temptation. {HP 16.4}

The Lord will recognize every effort you make to reach His ideal for you. When you make failures, when you are betrayed into sin, do not feel that you cannot pray, that you are not worthy to come before the Lord. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." With outstretched arms He waits to welcome the prodigal. Go to Him, and tell Him about your mistakes and failures. Ask Him to strengthen you for fresh endeavor. He will never disappoint you, never abuse your confidence. {LHU 299.5}

All who choose Christ's kingdom of love and righteousness and peace, making its interest paramount to all other, are linked to the world above, and every blessing needed for this life is theirs. In the book of God's providence, the volume of life, we are each given a page. That page contains every particular of our history; even the hairs of the head are numbered. God's children are never absent from His mind. {DA 313.3}

God has a care for us, even to bestow His temporal blessings upon us. Our earthly good is not beneath the notice of our heavenly Father. He knoweth that we have need of these things. . . . {OHC 196.4}

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. {COL 173.1}

Amid the anthems of the celestial choir, God hears the cries of the weakest human being. We pour out our heart's desire in our closets, we breathe a prayer as we walk by the way, and our words reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. They may be inaudible to any human ear, but they cannot die away into silence, nor can they be lost through the activities of business that are going on. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the confusion of the multitude, to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. {COL 174.1}

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}

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}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*

Lesson 3 “The Tithing Contract”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 14:18–20; Malachi 3:10; Deuteronomy 12:5–14; Leviticus 27:30; 1 Kings 17:9–16; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

Memory Text

“ ‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it’ ” (Malachi 3:10, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Tithe Equals a Tenth
- III. Where Is the Storehouse?
- IV. The Purpose of Tithing
- V. Tithing on the Gross or the Net Income?
- VI. An Honest or Faithful Tithe
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. There are three main ways that scholars approach the Bible. 1) I call the first approach Biblical Exegesis. That method seeks to answer the question, “What was the Bible writer trying to say?” It focuses on the text in its original context and the intention of the author in writing that text. 2) The second approach is Biblical Theology. That method seeks to answer the question, “What did the Bible writer believe?” It focuses on the larger understandings of the author that would cause him or her to write what they did. What did Paul, Moses or John believe? 3) The third approach is Systematic Theology. That method seeks to answer the question, “What should we believe? What should I believe?” It seeks to answer the questions of today by means of the Bible and any other sources of truth that may be available to human beings, including later inspiration, science, history, philosophy and psychology. Most authors of the Sabbath School Quarterly follow the third approach to the Bible. But without paying careful attention to biblical exegesis and theology,

systematic theology can misuse the Bible in a way that leads people astray. So careful attention to all three approaches can help to clarify both the Bible's original meaning and its application for today.

2. In approaching the question of tithing, it is helpful, first, to understand each tithing text in the Bible in terms of the original author's intention (Biblical Exegesis), then its place in the larger canon of Scripture (Biblical Theology) and then how the biblical concept of tithing should apply in today's world (Systematic Theology). All three of these methods will prove helpful to our study of this week's topic.
3. In a full canon approach to the Bible (Biblical Theology), the first and last references to a particular theme in the Bible are often noteworthy. Interestingly, the first and last references to tithing in the Bible both concern the figure of Melchizedek. Please read the very first reference in Genesis 14:17-24. Why do you think the author of Genesis included this story (Biblical Exegesis)? Who is Melchizedek and what role did he play in the story (Biblical Exegesis)? What implications does this story have for how we approach the tithing question today (Systematic Theology)? What does this story tell us about God (Systematic Theology)? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
4. The last reference to tithing in the Bible is the retelling of the Melchizedek story in the book of Hebrews. Read Hebrews 7:1-10. How does the author of Hebrews build on Genesis and what does he add to the Melchizedek story (Biblical Exegesis of Hebrews)? What implications might both versions of the story have for the way we relate to non-Christians today (Systematic Theology)? What does this story tell us about tithing (Systematic Theology)? What does it tell us about God (Systematic Theology)? (Sunday's Lesson)
5. Read Malachi 3:10. What does this verse tell us about where the tithe was supposed to go in Malachi's day? What did "the storehouse" mean back then (Biblical Exegesis)? Read Deuteronomy 12:5-14. What was Deuteronomy's function for Israel at the time it was written? What was Moses telling Israel about tithing back then (Biblical Exegesis)? What was the New Testament equivalent of the temple (Biblical Theology)? What implications does the New Testament concept of temple have for the storehouse principle today (Systematic Theology)? (Monday's Lesson)
6. What further can we learn about tithing in ancient Israel from Leviticus 27:30 and Numbers 18:21-24 (Biblical Exegesis)? Who is the equivalent of the Levites in the church today? What reasons can you think of that the tithing system is still relevant today (Systematic Theology)? (Tuesday's Lesson)
7. People sometimes ask whether one should tithe on the gross income (before taxes) or the net income (after taxes)? The Bible does not seem to address that question, so the lesson author sees that as a personal decision. Surveys suggest that the majority of Seventh-day Adventists tithe on the gross rather than the net. What reasons can you think of that might support either approach (Systematic Theology)? (Wednesday's Lesson)

8. Read Matthew 25:19-21. What was Jesus' point in the context of Matthew 24 and 25 (Biblical Exegesis)? What encouragement does this passage have for faithfulness in financial affairs today (Systematic Theology)? (Thursday's Lesson)
9. Where does tithing fit in with our picture of God (Systematic Theology)? (Friday's Lesson)
10. Share your own experiences with tithing and what you have learned from this practice (Systematic Theology)? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But then everything depends upon what we understand by the word "faith". For faith has traditionally, and still is so often, been understood as a willingness to believe and obey, preferably the right and proper things. If that's the right understanding of faith, then of course, we want to teach our children to believe and do the right and proper things. We want them all to believe in God, and in the inspiration and authority of the scriptures. We want them to all believe in Christ and in the seventh-day Sabbath. In fact, all ten of the Ten Commandments. We want them to be persuaded that they should support the church with their tithes and their offerings. We want them to espouse and practice the principles of what we've come to call health reform. We want them all to be looking forward to the coming of Christ, the Messiah.

And so we work hard to be sure that they know these things and all the others that could be put on that list. And that they believe these things and practice them. It's possible, though, to have this as our goal and thus use the Bible primarily as a code book of these things to be believed, these deeds to be done, not to mention the sins to be shunned.

You recall, though, that about nineteen hundred years ago there was a group of very religious people on this planet who espoused everything I've mentioned on that list, and many more things beside. They believed in God. They looked forward to the coming of Christ. They called him the Messiah, it's just the Hebrew for the Greek Christ—same person. They kept all ten of the Ten Commandments. They especially emphasized the fourth. They paid a very careful tithe, in fact, a double tithe, and many more offerings besides. And how careful they were in their practice of the laws of health. They would even strain gnats out of their lemonade lest they violate the rules of good health.

But did this make them the kind of people God wanted them to be? They hated Christ and they worked to bring about his murder. It must not then be the right goal just to be sure that our children know and believe and do the things that might be on this list. And we shouldn't underestimate the faithfulness of those people who lived in the time of Christ, did all these things, and yet hated him.

Think, for example, of their great concern on crucifixion Friday to be ready for sundown. You recall that after they had crucified their creator and their redeemer they hurried home to get ready for another seventh-day Sabbath. And they cleaned their houses, and they took their baths, and they cleaned their sandals, and how they wished that Jesus would hurry up and die. Their great concern, you see, was to be ready for Sabbath. And finally, the good news surprisingly came that he was already dead. And they rushed to Pilate to get permission to bury him. And they succeeded in burying their Lord in time before the sun went down. And can't you see them gathering around singing their sundown hymns, and feeling so right about it? Obeying all ten and especially the Sabbath commandment.

Think, too, how in Old Testament times the prophets often mentioned how very religious these people were. Amos mentions how diligently they kept the Sabbath—though they didn't enjoy it. In fact, they would gather toward the gates as the sun would go down on Sabbath afternoon and they would cry—as he mentions in Amos 8: “Oh when will the Sabbath be passed that we may buy and sell and get gain?” Now mind you, they weren't going to buy and sell until the sun went down because they were agreed that God had a right to state his will. He had a perfect right to express his will in the Ten Commandments. And one of those ten was “Thou shalt not work from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.” They never argued with that. The sovereignty of God was acknowledged. But they could hardly wait for the end of those twenty-four hours.

How they would have appreciated the nice little calendar which indicates to the precise minute when you're free to buy and sell. They had to watch the sun go down and make allowances, maybe, for a little elevation on the horizon. And you know how carefully they worked out the details in those days. I mean, God only said twenty-four hours, no use giving him anymore.

And Isaiah mentions how they would gather together to worship but their hearts weren't in it. And God said of those reluctant worshipers, “Who requires of you this trampling of my courts?” And Amos mentions again their meeting for song services and God would say because their hearts were not in the singing, “I cannot stand the sound of your noisy hymns.” Could you imagine God ever saying that at the end of one of our Friday evening song services? “I cannot stand the sound of your noisy hymns.”

Because, as Isaiah says, it was not in their hearts—and the Bible describes the heart as the place where a man does his thinking. Now we stress the heart is the place of feeling. In the Bible it was the place of thinking—the whole inner man. And this led Isaiah to write in the twenty-ninth chapter, and the thirteenth verse: “This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote.” Their worship of God was mere mechanical conformity and repetition without earnest concern as to the sense and the meaning of what they were doing or saying or singing. And what an insult that was to our infinitely intelligent and gracious

God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, PUC Teacher’s Conference, #1 “The Purpose of Teaching Bible”, recorded April 1974, Angwin, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMPUCTEACH>

Further Study with Ellen White

God would not have His children, for whom so great salvation has been provided, act as if He were a hard, exacting taskmaster. He is their best friend; and when they worship Him, He expects to be with them, to bless and comfort them, filling their hearts with joy and love. The Lord desires His children to take comfort in His service and to find more pleasure than hardship in His work. He desires that those who come to worship Him shall carry away with them precious thoughts of His care and love, that they may be cheered in all the employments of daily life, that they may have grace to deal honestly and faithfully in all things. {SC 103.2}

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}

God is not dependent upon men for the advancement of His cause. He might have made angels the ambassadors of His truth. He might have made known His will, as He proclaimed the law from Sinai with His own voice. But in order to cultivate a spirit of benevolence in us, He has chosen to employ men to do this work. {CS 20.1}

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}

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}

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

Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. {DA 762.2}

The life of Christ in you produces the same fruits as in Him. Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ, you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ. {DA 677.1}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*
Lesson 4 “Offerings for Jesus”

Read for this week’s study

2 Corinthians 9:6, 7; Deuteronomy 16:17; Psalm 116:12–18; 1 Chronicles 16:29; Mark 12:41–44; Mark 14:3–9.

Memory Text

“What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people” (Psalm 116:12–14, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Motivation for Giving
- III. What Portion for Offerings?
- IV. Offerings and Worship
- V. God Takes Note of Our Offerings
- VI. Special Projects: Big Jar Giving
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The lesson brings out that tithe leaves us 90% of our income to use as we see fit. That is where generosity begins. Offerings beyond the tithe are a free-will choice to be generous, as God has been generous with us. A model for such offerings are the thank offerings, sin offerings, and fellowship offerings that people brought to the temple. When we consider the magnitude of what God has done for us, we respond in kind. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. According to the author of the lesson, one out of every six verses in Matthew, Mark and Luke is about money. How we use our money demonstrates our priorities in life. Read Matthew 6:31-34. How does Jesus encourage us to relate to matters of food, drink, and clothing? What does it mean, in practical terms, to put God’s kingdom first? Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-7. What practical situation is Paul dealing with in the

- first five verses of this chapter? What lessons can and should we take from verses 6 and 7? How do we learn to give cheerfully? (Sunday's Lesson)
3. Read Deuteronomy 16:16-17 and Psalm 116:12-14. What criteria does God give as the basis for the amount of offerings? (Monday's Lesson)
 4. In ancient Israel the giving of tithes and offerings was a central part of their worship experience. Read 1 Chronicles 16:29, Psalm 96:8-9, and Psalm 116:16-19. What basic principles of giving and worship are laid out in these passages? How do you apply these principles in an age of online giving? Can you think of ways to express this connection when you are giving online? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 5. Read Mark 12:41-44. What message can we take from this passage regardless of our economic standing? Read Acts 10:1-4. Why did a Roman centurion receive a visit from a heavenly angel? What two of his actions were particularly noted in heaven? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 6. According to the lesson author, nine percent of the average person's assets are liquid and could be contributed as an offering on a moment's notice. The rest of the average person's assets are invested in real estate, land and livestock (rural people) and other non-liquid investments. The occasional gift of large, non-liquid assets is what the author calls "big-jar giving". There is one major example of this in the Bible, a story told in some form in all four Gospels. We will look at three versions of the story: Mark 14:3-9, Luke 7:36-47, and John 12:2-8. Are all these stories referring to the same dinner or did something like this happen more than once during Jesus' ministry? How do you suppose the Pharisee (Luke 7 version) knew that the woman was a sinner? What was the value of the woman's gift? (Thursday's Lesson)
 7. "The recording angel makes faithful record of every offering dedicated to God and put into the treasury, and also of the final result of the means thus bestowed." 2T 518. Few things are more satisfying in this life than knowing you made a difference. What do you think is the role of the final judgment in providing that kind of knowledge? (Friday's Lesson)
 8. Secular economists have noticed that the more super-wealthy families give, the more their family wealth tends to increase over the generations. The opposite is also true. The less super-wealthy families give, the faster the family wealth disappears. Why do you think that is the case? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

How about Ananias and Sapphira? They cheated with their offering and died on the church floor. Now, I'll venture offerings picked up marvelously in the church from then on. Well, if you knew that next week, if you were not paid up on tithe, offerings, and pledges, I mean, you wouldn't debate how much very long, would you? You'd want to put a little extra in as fire insurance, perhaps! Well, if that method worked so well, why doesn't God use it all the time? It says, "for God loves a happy giver." In fact, the Greek word is "*hilaros*," from which we get

hilarious; not giddy, but very happy. God does not like begrudging gifts. He doesn't like that at all. It's an insult to him to say, "Well, I guess I've got to give this to you, or the locusts will go through my fields next harvest time, and I don't want that." That relationship he doesn't like. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Exodus, 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/3MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/4MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet. {MH 481.2}

We are to keep close to the Source of our strength day by day, and when the enemy comes in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard for us against the enemy. The promise of God is sure, that strength shall be proportioned to our day. We may be confident for the future only in the strength that is given for the present necessities. The experience in God is daily becoming more precious. . . . Do not borrow anxiety for the future. It is today that we are in need. . . . The Lord is our helper, our God, and our strength in every time of need. {OHC 125.5}

God's everlasting arm encircles the soul that turns to Him for aid, however feeble that soul may be. {4T 328.1}

Our God has heaven and earth at His command, and He knows just what we need. We can see only a little way before us; "but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Hebrews 4:13. Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best. {8T 272.1}

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's notice. Satan's hatred against God leads him to delight in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God's protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Matthew 10:31. {8T 273.1}

Our Lord adapts Himself to our special needs. He is a shade on our right hand. He walks close by our side, ready to supply all our necessities. He comes very near to those who are engaged in

willing service for Him. He knows every one by name. O what assurances we have of the tender love of Christ (MS 51, 1903). {3BC 1153.8}

The soul that responds to the grace of God shall be like a watered garden. His health shall spring forth speedily; his light shall rise in obscurity, and the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon him. Let us then remember the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the multitude of His tender mercies. {DA 348.2}

From the story of Cornelius we learn that God will lead every one who is willing to be led. He led Cornelius. He drew out His servant's heart in prayer. He prepared him to receive the light of His truth, and he chose to enlighten the mind of Cornelius through the agency of one who had already received light from above. {CC 334.7}

Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life; and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God. {SC 97.2}

Those who seek God in secret telling the Lord their needs and pleading for help, will not plead in vain. "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom. The sure result of our intercourse and fellowship with our Lord will be to increase piety, purity, and fervor. There will be a growing intelligence in prayer. We are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of diligence and zeal. {Pr 183.2}

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}

Ministering angels are waiting about the throne to instantly obey the mandate of Jesus Christ to answer every prayer offered in earnest, living faith.—(*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, 377.) {Pr 255.2}

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}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*

Lesson 5 “Dealing With Debt”

Read for this week’s study

Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 12; Matthew 6:24; 1 John 2:15; Proverbs 22:7; Proverbs 6:1–5;
Deuteronomy 15:1–5.

Memory Text

“The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Debt Problems
- III. Following Godly Counsel
- IV. How to Get Out of Debt
- V. Surety and Get-Rich-Quick Schemes
- VI. Term Limits and Borrowing Points
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Debt is living today on what you expect to earn in the future. It is borrowing resources you haven’t earned yet. You are exchanging your future time and talent for the immediate use of someone else’s time and talent. Debt generally means you are living beyond your resources. Read Romans 13:7-8. What is Paul’s advice in regard to debt? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 12. What difference does it make that this text is national and political in focus? Can we apply a passage like this to individuals? (Sunday’s Lesson)
3. Why do people get into financial difficulties? The lesson offers three reasons. How many others can you come up with? How do you change bad financial habits and unfortunate circumstances? How do you get out of financial difficulties? (Sunday’s Lesson)

4. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-9. What is Paul saying in this passage that can help define the difference between a “want” and a “need”? What is the absolute minimum someone needs in order to be content? (Sunday’s Lesson)
5. Read Matthew 6:24 and 1 John 2:15. Though these texts express things differently, what is the common theme in both of them? Read Psalm 50:14. What is the role of thankfulness to financial responsibility? What do you think the psalmist means by “pay your vows”? Why is working hard to earn a good living not necessarily the same things as making an idol of wealth or money? What is the difference? (Monday’s Lesson)
6. Read Proverbs 22:7. In what sense is the borrower a slave to the lender? How does that apply to an electronic payment, 24/7 world? If you find yourself in debt right now, what are some things you can do to get out of it? (Tuesday’s Lesson)
7. Reading the Bible, one could get the impression that one should not borrow for any purpose, just wait until you have the cash on hand. But are there situations where taking on debt makes sense? (Tuesday’s Lesson)
8. Read Proverbs 6:1-5, 17:18 and 22:26. What is the counsel here and is it a principle that should be applied without question today? Is there ever a time when it makes sense to co-sign a debt? Read Proverbs 28:20 and 1 Timothy 6:9-10. What warning is given there? (Wednesday’s Lesson)
9. Read Deuteronomy 15:1-5. What ancient Israelite practice is brought out here? Does that have any application today? (Thursday’s Lesson)
10. “Be determined never to incur another debt. Deny yourself a thousand things rather than run in debt. . . . Avoid it as you would the smallpox.” *Counsels on Stewardship*, 257. But at death the White Estate owed a significant sum, which she had used to support missions, backed up by future royalties on her books. How does that fact impact the way you read the above statement?

Further Study with Ellen White

The Lord will not compel men to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; He sets before the human agent good and evil, and makes plain what will be the sure result of following one course or the other. Christ invites us, saying, “Follow Me.” But we are never forced to walk in His footsteps. {RH, March 31, 1896 par. 10}

God has withheld nothing from man that could promote his happiness or secure to him eternal riches. He has clothed the earth with beauty, and furnished it with everything necessary for the comfort of man during his temporal life.—*Signs of the Times*, June 2, 1887. {TDG 162.6}

Christ is waiting to give you insight in regard to heavenly things; waiting to quicken your spiritual pulse to increased activity. {UL 313.5}

Our present peace must not be disturbed by anticipated trials, for God will never leave nor forsake one soul who trusts in Him. God is better unto us than our fears. If we would encourage a diligent remembrance and recital of our mercies, counting up instances in which God has wrought for us, has been better to us than our fears, in which He has interposed His power and His grace when sorely perplexed, sustained us when falling, comforted us when sorrowing, we would see that it is unbelief to distrust God or be filled with anxiety. Let mercies be remembered and enjoyed daily. We must live by faith daily. . . . Rejoice in God always. Today praise God for His grace, and continue to praise Him every day.—Letter 11a, Feb. 19, 1884, to Elder and Mrs. Uriah Smith. {TDG 58.4}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*

Lesson 6 “Laying Up Treasure in Heaven”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 6:5–14; Hebrews 11:8–13; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Genesis 13:10–12; Genesis 32:22–31; Hebrews 11:24–29.

Memory Text

“ ‘For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’ ” (Mark 8:36, 37, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Noah Found Grace
- III. Abram, the Father of the Faithful
- IV. Lot’s Bad Decisions
- V. From Deceiver to Prince
- VI. Moses in Egypt
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Our discussion this week begins with the meaning of “treasure” and how you lay up treasure in heaven. We will follow that up with a number of biblical examples of people who “laid up treasure in heaven”. There is also a biblical example of how NOT to lay up treasure in heaven (Lot). The lesson closes with some practical applications of the biblical material.
2. Read Matthew 6:19-21. What does Jesus mean by “treasure” in this passage? What do you think of Jesus’ motivational strategy? Is there room for selfish motivations in our response to God? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
3. Read Genesis 6:5-14. Notice the repetition in the passage and how the term for God changes from beginning to end. What do you make of that? What, according to this passage, are the central sins of the ante-diluvians? How did God’s call lead to a radical change in Noah’s life? (Sunday’s Lesson)

4. Read Genesis 12:1-3. What does the word “blessing” mean in practical terms? How have all the families of the earth been blessed as a result of God’s call to Abraham? Read Hebrews 11:8-13. What does this passage add to the call of Abraham in Genesis? Read 2 Corinthians 4:18. What principle does this verse suggest that might be relevant to the decision that Abraham made? (Monday’s Lesson)
5. Read Genesis 32:22-31. What happened to Jacob here? Are there any lessons we can take away about God’s grace to those who make bad decisions? What is the meaning of Israel? Read Genesis 49:29-33. Why did Jacob give the instructions he did about his burial? (Wednesday’s Lesson)
6. Read Hebrews 11:24-29. What did Moses have to leave behind when God called? What was he getting by accepting the call? How do you think he came to the decision that he did? What implications might you draw from that for us today? (Thursday’s Lesson)
7. Read Genesis 13:10-12. What factors do you think could have led Lot to make the decision he did? Read Genesis 18:20-33. What did God tell Abraham was the reason for His visit to earth? When Abraham heard God’s plan, how did he respond? (Tuesday’s Lesson)
8. Read 2 Peter 3:3-7. People were skeptical that a Flood would ever come. Things will be similar during the end-time events. What human characteristic is strongly predictive of the kind of decisions people will make in a crisis? (Friday’s Lesson)
9. How ready would you be to make a major change in your life if God called you the way he did Noah? (Friday’s Lesson)
10. Read Mark 4:19. What does Jesus mean when He talks about the deceitfulness of riches? How can riches deceive us? (Friday’s Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When God picks a person in the Bible who exemplifies the highest fulfillment of his ambitions for us sinners, when he finally really wins somebody, and he inspires later writers to say, “If you want to know what God wants, look at him, all the way through the Bible.” It’s Abraham. Over and over it’s Abraham who was what God wanted. And it says of Abraham that he was God’s friend. And what was it that made him such a friend? It always says Abraham trusted God. Now, a version may say “believed God.” Same word, there’s only one word for belief, trust, faith, all the same word. That’s why we need the different versions. Abraham trusted God, he really did. And God considered him His friend.

Now evidence that he really trusted God, James says is that he loved cooperating with God and doing what God said. And when God said take your son, sacrifice him; the trust was not, “Well, if you say so God, fine, I’ll do it.” No, he trusted God enough to say, “God, as I know you that

will make sense some day. It surely doesn't now. But I hear you speaking. We've talked so often, I know you wouldn't ask me to do something wrong, or something that will confuse others for eternity, so I'm on my way. But may I reverently ask you why?" And for three days and three nights he asked him why. And he came to a conclusion. God would either resurrect his son or provide a substitute and Hebrews says he was right. He showed he was a friend. And James says see how Abraham, the friend of God, *showed* his trust. He didn't just say, "Sure, I believe in God."

James says the devils do that and it scares them. They're no friends of God. Abraham's trust was the trust of a friend, and a friend shows his friendship in certain, very special ways, like being jealous for your friend's reputation. And when God said I'm going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham said, "God how could you? As I know you, you wouldn't. I mean, if there were fifty saints there you wouldn't. Forty. Thirty. Forgive me if I seem irreverent, but God, shouldn't the judge of all the earth do what is right?"

They must have been good friends to talk like that. It doesn't say, "And God rebuked him for talking like that and didn't speak to him for a month." No, God says, "Who else knows me that well? I love your jealousy for my reputation. You're right, I wouldn't destroy them if there were five saints, but I can't find that many." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Three Angels' Messages*, #1, recorded October 1981, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MM3ANGELSM>

Further Study with Ellen White

In sparing the life of Cain the murderer, God gave the world an example of what would be the result of permitting the sinner to live to continue a course of unbridled iniquity. Through the influence of Cain's teaching and example, multitudes of his descendants were led into sin, until "the wickedness of man was great in the earth" and "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Genesis 6:5, 11. {GC 543.2}

It was for the purpose of bringing the best gifts of Heaven to all the peoples of earth that God called Abraham out from his idolatrous kindred and bade him dwell in the land of Canaan. "I will make of thee a great nation," He said, "and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." Genesis 12:2. . . . {PK 15.1}

Through the Jewish nation it was God's purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His

mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man.

{COL 286.1}

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. {PK 231.4}

God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

God scatters blessings all along our path to brighten our journey and lead our hearts out to love and praise Him, and He wants us to draw water from the well of salvation that our hearts may be refreshed. We may sing the songs of Zion, we may cheer our own hearts, and we may cheer the hearts of others; hope may be strengthened, darkness turned to light. God has not left us in a dark world—as pilgrims and strangers seeking a better country, even an heavenly—without giving us precious promises to lighten every burden. The borders of our path are strewn with fair flowers of promise. They blossom all around, sending forth rich fragrance. {OHC 10.2}

While slander may blacken the reputation, it cannot stain the character. That is in God's keeping. So long as we do not consent to sin, there is no power, whether human or satanic, that can bring a stain upon the soul. A man whose heart is stayed upon God is just the same in the hour of his most afflicting trials and most discouraging surroundings as when he was in prosperity, when the light and favor of God seemed to be upon him. His words, his motives, his actions, may be misrepresented and falsified, but he does not mind it, because he has greater interests at stake. Like Moses, he endures as "seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27); looking "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18). {MB 32.2}

Christ is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misrepresented by men. His children can afford to wait in calm patience and trust, no matter how much maligned and despised; for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, and those who honor God shall be honored by Him in the presence of men and angels. {MB 32.3}

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.

{DA 466.4}

Satan is constantly urging men to accept his principles. Thus he seeks to counterwork the work of God. He is constantly representing the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power he is constantly using against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the result of obedience to right principles. {6T 11.2}

God desires us to reach the standard of perfection made possible for us by the gift of Christ. He calls upon us to make our choice on the right side, to connect with heavenly agencies, to adopt principles that will restore in us the divine image. In His written Word and in the great book of nature He has revealed the principles of life. It is our work to obtain a knowledge of these principles, and by obedience to cooperate with Him in restoring health to the body as well as to the soul. . . . {AG 103.5}

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}

Each law of God is an enactment of mercy, love, and saving power. These laws, obeyed, are our life, our salvation, our happiness, our peace [Psalm 119:165 quoted] (Letter 112, 1902). {3BC 1153.6}

The Lord will work for all who put their trust in Him. Precious victories will be gained by the faithful. Precious lessons will be learned. Precious experiences will be realized. {MB 11.1}

Our God is a very present help in time of need. He is acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our hearts, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to Him our distresses, He is making arrangements for our deliverance.—Letter 73, Feb. 1, 1905, to Drs. D. H. and Laretta Kress. {UL 46.6}

Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. You may say, I am sinful, very sinful. You may be; but the worse you are, the more you need Jesus. He turns no weeping, contrite one away. He does not tell to any all that He might reveal, but He bids every trembling soul take courage. Freely will He pardon all who come to Him for forgiveness and restoration. {DA 568.3}

God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12. {MB 114.1}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to earnestly cry to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place. There is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained (RH May 6, 1862). {7BC 947.5}

By contemplation of Christ, by conformity to the divine likeness, your conceptions of the divine character will expand, and your mind and heart will be elevated, refined, and ennobled. . . . {HP 16.6}

He who constantly depends upon God through simple trust and prayerful confidence, will be surrounded by the angels of heaven. He who lives by faith in Christ, will be strengthened and upheld, able to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life. {HP 16.7}

The three great powers of heaven pledge Themselves to furnish the Christian with all the assistance he requires. The Spirit changes the heart of stone to the heart of flesh. And by partaking of the Word of God, Christians obtain an experience that is after the divine similitude. When Christ abides in the heart by faith, the Christian is the temple of God. Christ does not abide in the heart of the sinner, but in the heart of him who is susceptible to the influences of heaven. {RC 107.3}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*
Lesson 7 “Unto the Least of These”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 4:16–19; Isaiah 62:1, 2; Deuteronomy 15:11; Matthew 19:16–22; Luke 19:1–10; Job 29:12–16.

Memory Text

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” ’ ” (Matthew 25:34, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Life and Ministry of Jesus
- III. God’s Provision for the Poor
- IV. The Rich Young Ruler
- V. Zacchaeus
- VI. Consider the Man Job
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. In this week’s lesson we explore the role of stewardship in our ministry to “the least of these”. In biblical terms, the least of these is often described as strangers, the fatherless and the widows. How would you define each of these groups and what do all three of these groups have in common? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read Luke 4:16-19 and compare it with Isaiah 61:1-2. Did Jesus choose to read this passage at that moment or was the selection made for Him? Who is speaking in the Isaiah passage originally and Who does Jesus apply it to? Why do you think Jesus ended the reading where He did? What was Luke’s purpose in including this story? Why is this story not included in Matthew and Mark? Why would a physician (Dr. Luke), of all people, focus so much on ministry to the poor and the outcast? (Sunday’s Lesson)
3. In the Old Testament, God made special provisions for the poor, the fatherless, and the foreigner in the land of Israel. Read Exodus 23:10-11, Leviticus 23:22, Psalm

- 82:3-4, Deuteronomy 15:11. What implications does this have for the contemporary approach sometimes called social Darwinism? In light of that, why would so many evolutionists today be involved in issues of social justice? Is it possible to advocate for social justice on selfish grounds? (Monday's Lesson)
4. Read the story of the Rich Young Ruler in all three versions (Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23). Notice what all three stories have in common. Then notice what each version of the story adds and leaves out. What implications do these additions and omissions have for the theologies of Matthew, Mark and Luke? How do we apply Jesus' statement, "sell all you have and give it to the poor", to our lives today? Read Mark 8:35-37. What does it mean to lose your life for the sake of the gospel? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 5. Read Luke 19:1-10. Note that this story is in fairly close context with the story of the Rich Young Ruler (18:18-23). What are the similarities and differences between the Zacchaeus story and that of the rich young ruler? In what way does the latter story clarify Jesus' purpose in asking the young ruler for everything he had? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 6. Read Job 1:8. How was Job described by God Himself? What does Job 29:12-16 tell us about Job's character? What aspects of his behavior are applicable today? How does Isaiah 56:6-8 expand on the themes of this lesson? In practical terms, what can we do to be more like Job in today's world? (Thursday's Lesson)
 7. When Deuteronomy 15:11 says that the poor will never cease from the land, why should helping the poor be such an important emphasis among followers of God? Might it not create more guilt than good? (Friday's Lesson)
 8. Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19. What does this passage imply is the biggest danger that comes to people who have accumulated significant wealth? How does one avoid this danger? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And this idea, if you're good you're blessed; if you're bad you're punished, runs all the way through the Bible, and it's the basis for the story of the rich man and the eye of the camel. Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom." And the disciples said, "Well if that's true, who can be saved?" And you know, the background for that is this: You see, if you're rich, it's because you're blessed. And you're blessed because you're good. Therefore, if you're rich, you're good. So if a rich man cannot be saved, a good man cannot be saved. That's the way they'd worked it out. And so Jesus had to tell them that story. This belief prevailed right on down to the first members of the General Conference committee. That when you see a man who is poor, he is a sinner. The hand of God is on him. Now isn't that a pretty widespread view to this day?

When somebody is sick, folk in the hospital right now say, “Well the Lord has laid his hand on me.” Even on television programs, a disaster occurs. You know why? I must have done something bad. Even in “The Sound of Music”, when something good happens to the heroine, “I must have done something good,” she sings. Right? That’s been our simple view all along. When the disciples saw the blind man, they said, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” That’s had a very dominant influence on our theology. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded January 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/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

How marvelous that he was willing to go out and eat with these people who were regarded as the dregs of society, even stopping under the tree and saying, “Zacchaeus, I want to have dinner with you today.”

Can you imagine, though, the Lord turning up at your front door and saying, “Could I have dinner with you today?” What would you say? Zacchaeus was overcome, wasn’t he? He came down out of that tree, and he promised, not just restitution. He said, “I will give four times as much.” He was really overwhelmed. He never got over it. And that was a very wonderful occasion. {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/54MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

The scene at the very beginning is crucial for the reading of Job. If a person started out in the middle, I don’t know how he could carry on, although there are some very exciting statements in there. But the meaning is very much dependent on chapters one and two. This good man; God said he was perfect. He also said, “He will never let me down.” We have the picture of the heavenly council meeting. If Moses wrote this, the Great Controversy is portrayed page one in the Bible. Well, of course it’s in Genesis, isn’t it? Isn’t the conflict right there when Satan lied about God and accused God of lying to Adam and Eve. Either way, Genesis or Job. The Bible begins with the great controversy over the trustworthiness of God. And God says, “Who is on Job’s side, by the way?” God speaks with pride of his friend Job and says to Satan, “Have you considered my friend Job?” And Satan says, “Well, you know why he serves you. He’s got that key text that if he pays his tithes faithfully, you’ll open the windows of Heaven and reward him. Don’t reward him one time, and he’ll quit paying his tithes. In fact, he’ll curse you, and he’ll

trust you no longer.” God says, “You can take away all that he has, and he won’t give up his friendship with me.” And you remember what happened.

And so at the next meeting, God said, “Have you considered my servant Job, a wonderful man? You took away everything that he has, but he didn’t sin with his lips, and he still trusts me.” And Satan says, “Well, that’s because you’ve protected him so much. You let me get at him personally. I’ll break him down.” And God says, “You can do everything you like to him short of taking his life, and he will not let me down.”

And Satan went out to do his work. And Job lost everything. Was it because he lacked faith, that he got into so much trouble? I thought if you paid your tithe faithfully and worshiped regularly, and did all that you should, the locusts would go through your neighbor’s field, but not yours. This is no bedtime story, the book of Job. All the good things that should have happened didn’t. It was all reversed, and it made no sense, because he used to be prosperous, he used to be healthy, and had a wonderful family. He even offered prayers for his children lest they sin and be unaware of it. He was that concerned about his family. There was no stone he left unturned, in order to do every good thing he knew he should. And yet he lost everything. He even lost his health. And he sat down on, do you have ‘a rubbish heap’ or ‘a dung heap’? Anyway, a very unpleasant place, and he tore his clothes and he threw ashes on himself, and he was covered with boils. And he began to express his utter depression over what had occurred. “Of course,” he said, “the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He didn’t condemn God for doing this. Did he blame God for doing this? Or was he puzzled as to why God was doing this? Or puzzled as to why God would allow this? Because when he said, “The Lord gives, the Lord takes away,” was he not saying what we’ve read before so many times, “This couldn’t happen if God’s hand were not in it somehow.”

See, he knew God could control things, that God was omnipotent, the Sovereign of the universe. This couldn’t happen if God were not somehow involved, and God’s involvement puzzled him. And he sat there in this utter depression. Even his wife couldn’t bear to see him suffer so, and said, “Why don’t you curse God and die?”

“But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job*, recorded January 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/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Jesus stood before the people as a living expositor of the prophecies concerning Himself. Explaining the words He had read, He spoke of the Messiah as a reliever of the oppressed, a liberator of captives, a healer of the afflicted, restoring sight to the blind, and revealing to the world the light of truth. His impressive manner and the wonderful import of His words thrilled the hearers with a power they had never felt before. The tide of divine influence broke every barrier down; like Moses, they beheld the Invisible. {DA 237.2}

Jesus was the fountain of healing mercy for the world; and through all those secluded years at Nazareth, His life flowed out in currents of sympathy and tenderness. The aged, the sorrowing, and the sin-burdened, the children at play in their innocent joy, the little creatures of the groves, the patient beasts of burden,—all were happier for His presence. He whose word of power upheld the worlds would stoop to relieve a wounded bird. There was nothing beneath His notice, nothing to which He disdained to minister. {DA 74.1}

Jesus began His work by breaking Satan's power over the suffering. He restored the sick to health, gave sight to the blind, and healed the lame, causing them to leap for joy and to glorify God. He restored to health those who had been infirm and bound by Satan's cruel power many years. With gracious words He comforted the weak, the trembling, and the desponding. The feeble, suffering ones whom Satan held in triumph, Jesus wrenched from his grasp, bringing to them soundness of body and great joy and happiness. He raised the dead to life, and they glorified God for the mighty display of His power. He wrought mightily for all who believed on Him. {EW 159.3}

Christ stood at the head of humanity in the garb of humanity. So full of sympathy and love was His attitude that the poorest was not afraid to come to Him. He was kind to all, easily approached by the most lowly. He went from house to house, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the distressed.— Letter 117, 1903. {WM 170.2}

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}

His tender compassion fell with a touch of healing upon weary and troubled hearts. Even amid the turbulence of angry enemies He was surrounded with an atmosphere of peace. The beauty of His countenance, the loveliness of His character, above all, the love expressed in look and tone, drew to Him all who were not hardened in unbelief. Had it not been for the sweet, sympathetic spirit that shone out in every look and word, He would not have attracted the large congregations that He did. The afflicted ones who came to Him felt that He linked His interest with theirs as a faithful and tender friend, and they desired to know more of the truths He

taught. Heaven was brought near. They longed to abide in His presence, that the comfort of His love might be with them continually. {DA 254.4}

The love of God alone can open and expand the heart, and give to love and sympathy a breadth and height that is without measure. Those who love Jesus will love all the children of God. The sense of personal infirmities and imperfections will lead the human agent to look away from self to Christ; and the Saviour's love will break down every cold, Pharisaical barrier, it will banish all harshness and selfishness, and there will be a blending of soul with soul, even with those who are opposite in temperament. {OHC 183.3}

The life of Christ was a life charged with a divine message of the love of God, and He longed intensely to impart this love to others in rich measure. Compassion beamed from His countenance, and His conduct was characterized by grace and humility, love and truth. {OHC 366.4}

What a wonderful reverence for human life Jesus expressed in His life mission! He stood not among the people as a king, demanding attention, reverence, service, but as one who wished to serve, to uplift humanity. He said He had not come to be ministered unto but to minister. . . . {OHC 176.3}

God is love, God is life. It is the prerogative of God to redeem, reconstruct, and restore. . . . The work of Christ is to redeem, to restore, to seek and to save that which was lost. {HP 291.2}

The Spirit of God does not create new faculties in the converted man, but works a decided change in the employment of those faculties. When mind and heart and soul are changed, man is not given a new conscience, but his will is submitted to a conscience renewed, a conscience whose dormant sensibilities are aroused by the working of the Holy Spirit. {OHC 104.2}

Through yielding to sin, man placed his will under the control of Satan. He became a helpless captive in the tempter's power. God sent His Son into our world to break the power of Satan, and to emancipate the will of man. {OHC 104.3}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*
Lesson 8 “Planning for Success”

Read for this week’s study

Ecclesiastes 12:1; Genesis 2:15; 1 Timothy 5:8; Colossians 3:23, 24; Genesis 39:2–5; Proverbs 3:5–8.

Memory Text

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23, 24, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. First Things First
- III. The Blessing of Work (Ideally)
- IV. The Earning Years
- V. Working With Integrity
- VI. Seeking Godly Counsel
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we are going to look at the idea of ‘success’ in the context of basic stewardship and financial principles. No matter who we are or where we live, money and finances are going to be a part of our life, whether we like it or not. What, then, are some practical steps, that we can take along the way that, though not guaranteeing ‘success,’ can nevertheless help us avoid common pitfalls and mistakes that can make financial success a bit more difficult?” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. The Bible speaks about how God is acting in the world, and His invitation to His family to identify with this work and collaborate with their Creator. God is concerned with all of life, not only religion. The church has had an uneasy relationship with the material world ever since Paul criticized Greek Gnostics in the first century for their perversion of the Gospel. This disengagement resulted in an unbalanced preoccupation with spiritual matters and preference for a convenient,

- private, otherworldly gospel concerned with ‘getting souls to heaven’, rather than expanding to include solid informed critical thought about the materiality of our faith. Whether we like it or not, the Christian faith is rooted in materiality. Materiality sets our hearts in a right relationship to “things,” while materialism traps us in service to our “things.” A healthy understanding of the role of money in their own lives and in the community empowers believers to reengage with the material world for the benefit of everyone.
3. Based on Ecclesiastes 12:1 (“Remember your creator in the days of your youth”) and using the example of Jacob (Genesis 28:20-22 & 29:9-20), Sunday’s lesson urges us to “make our spiritual decision and our lifework decision before committing to marriage.” While certainly desirable, how fair is it to use 77-year-old Jacob as a role model in this regard? What do we mean when we try to put “first things first” in the realm of money and possessions?
 4. Monday’s and Tuesday’s lesson focus on the “blessing of work” during the usual 40 earning years. What is the role of work before and after the Fall (Genesis 2:15; 3:17; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:8-10)?
 5. In the fallen world, work has a tendency to exploit, discriminate, destroy the environment, and cause dissatisfaction. The dehumanization caused by work should be of great concern to Christians, not only in industrial and post-industrial societies, but throughout the world. The doctrine of creation helped to develop a vocational understanding of work. But the NT theology of work should be based on *charismata* (gifts of the Holy Spirit) and the various activities that human beings engage in to satisfy their own needs and the needs of their fellow creatures.
 6. When viewed from the perspective of the work of Christ and His Spirit as “*transformatio mundi*”, human work can be seen as cooperation with God. “God the Creator chooses to become ‘dependent’ on the human helping hand and makes human work a means of accomplishing his work in the world.” (Miroslav Volf) For the majority of people in the modern industrial and information societies, work is no end in itself, but a necessary means to survival. This leads to alienation of the worker from self, community, and the product of their work. For work to be human, work must be an end in itself. To have full human dignity, it must be significant for people as work, not merely as a necessary instrument of earning or of socializing. People need to enjoy their work. It is transformational when we are able to view work as cooperation with God in the new creation. Then even undignified, dissatisfying, non-creative, and un-freeing realities of work can become holy endeavors and richly satisfying.
 7. Wednesday’s lesson deals with the role of integrity (Genesis 39:2-5). Why is this so significant in the context of money? How is *integrity* connected with greed? And what is the connection of integrity with the *extortion* economy so often observed, where the rich are devouring the poor, with subsequent destruction that seeks to sustain an unsustainable standard of living? How is integrity connected with an

empowering economy that is structured for the common good and abundance as opposed to self-interest and scarcity?

8. “There are scores of secular money management gurus out there, but God warned us against consulting them for the management of the assets He has entrusted to us.” (Thursday’s lesson) So what does Proverbs 3:5–8 provide that the secular gurus do not provide?
9. Money is a useful vehicle for the exchange of goods and it justifies market transactions. At the same time, money can be a powerful symbol of influence, power, success, and virtue. If an objective analysis of the successful economic production of Egypt were done, it might have concluded that the pain of the slaves was a necessary, normal, even natural arrangement of labor—the cost of doing business. But God intervened and brought a new perspective. Do we have enough courage and freedom and daring and sensibility to acknowledge that the pain of ruthless exploitation is not normal and cannot be the measure of success in His kingdom? The opportunity, if we choose, is to be part of that neighborly community that is in tune with the heart of God, centered around who God is and how God operates.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

As these women were brought in, they had their own religions, and Solomon was a gentleman, a very wise and gracious philosopher and gentleman. And he thought, “I’m not going to lay my religion on these people.” So very generously, in the full ecumenical spirit, he built for each of his new wives a shrine where she could worship her own god.

And soon Jerusalem was dotted with these shrines. And Solomon thought he could preside over all of this without becoming confused. Though through Moses God had said, “Don’t be so confident. Don’t even run the risk of getting close to these heathen. Don’t marry them. You’re not that strong.” And isn’t the history of Israel the history of the influence of these intermarriages with these other nations, and the gods of these foreign women apparently being very attractive and very seductive, and the Israelites following after these heathen deities? Even wise King Solomon was seduced by this thing.

Years later, after the Babylonian captivity, Ezra is confessing to God how Israel had come so far short, and that God had sent them into the discipline of Babylonian captivity because they really needed it. And Ezra says, “You haven’t punished us nearly as much as we deserve, because we knew we shouldn’t mix with the heathen the way we did. And now after returning from Babylonian captivity,” Ezra says, “we’ve done it all over again.”

Do you remember, in Ezra and Nehemiah, coming up soon? We do 1 and 2 Chronicles next week, then Ezra and Nehemiah the following week, then Esther and Job in the following one. So shortly in Ezra and Nehemiah, when those two men came to Palestine many years after the

exiles' return at the end of the seventy years, they found that God's people had intermarried all over again. And they were practicing all these abominations over again.

So take a look at Nehemiah 13, and notice Ezra's understanding of this, and why God didn't want them intermarrying. It isn't that he didn't love these heathen women, but Israel simply couldn't resist the influence. So look at Nehemiah 13:26. Later when we have more leisure, we must look at this in more detail. Nehemiah is urging these returnees from Babylonian exile to separate from the heathen women that they had married. And they had many children who couldn't even speak the language of God's people. Maybe start at verse 25:

And I contended with them and I cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves."

The hair pulling and the beating we'll discuss later when we get to Nehemiah. But Nehemiah says, "Did not Solomon, king of Israel sin on account of such women?" And Ezra had been saying the same thing. Did not Solomon king of Israel fail because he made the same mistake? "Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless foreign women made even him to sin." That's his comment on that, you see? "Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"

By foreign, of course, it meant these heathen women who were practicing all these heathen abominations in the worship of fertility. They were doing it all over again. But for this evening the main thing is, note this comment later as to what it was that confused and almost destroyed even wise King Solomon. And I see him starting out by being very generous about it, not wanting to force all these wives to act like Jews. But it wasn't safe to do that. {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> (1 Kings - Part 1)

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

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

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

All kinds of questions come out of this. One that's often raised: "What about the women and the children who were driven off?" Was that not a heartless thing? In fact, two weeks ago, in one of the classes at Loma Linda, we were going through Ezra and Nehemiah. One student, at considerable length, raised the question as to why God would handle these foreign women and

their children like this. Why didn't they work with them awhile? Try to win them over. Give them time. Give them Bible studies. Maybe if they had heard Ezra's reading of the law they would have come across. Well, how would you respond to that?

Didn't Paul suggest, if your husband or wife is not a believer, be patient, wait awhile. Maybe they will come across. Of course, how long had they been together? And how about the time before when they'd been together, for centuries? Had they been very successful in winning them over?

So let's say, there's no evidence that they would have been very successful. All the evidence points to Israel's weakness in the presence of these seductive neighbors. And they were more inclined to imitate them than for the heathen to imitate the Jews with their beliefs. Which at least would leave us with this question: Have we any evidence as to how God would feel about those foreign women, and those children, born of Jews who married the foreign women? Do you have any evidence in scripture as to how God would feel about them? Were they worthless to God? Or was He just trying to protect his people from their influence? Have we any suggestion as to how God would feel? He doesn't talk about them very much. Here they are just banished. Think of all the separations that took place among God's people. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Ezra and Nehemiah*, recorded December 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 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/23MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/24MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Last time at the end we were discussing the severity of Nehemiah's separation of the Jews from these foreign women and their children, half of whom couldn't even speak the language of the Jews. And the question was raised, "How do you think God felt about all the wives and children who were sent away?" Do we have evidence? And reference is made to Hagar and Ishmael. God loved the ones who were cast out. But then the question came up afterwards: What if one of the wives had said, "But I'd like to stay. I know I'm a foreign wife, but I love your God, and I'd like to stay? Do you think she would have been allowed to stay? Could you cite any evidence in scripture to indicate? Well, Ruth is mentioned. Wouldn't Ruth be a case in point? Naomi's son married a heathen woman, and she became a believer, and became one of the progenitors of Christ, one of the forerunners of David. Unfortunately, we don't have those nice stories in Ezra and Nehemiah that some of the wives, maybe some of them did, but the story is not told in great detail about that. At least we know from the rest of scripture how God would regard each person as an individual while this serious action had to be taken. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt

from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded January 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/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

The book of nature, which spread its living lessons before them, afforded an exhaustless source of instruction and delight. On every leaf of the forest and stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and sea and sky, God's name was written. With both the animate and the inanimate creation—with leaf and flower and tree, and with every living creature, from the leviathan of the waters to the mote in the sunbeam—the dwellers in Eden held converse, gathering from each the secrets of its life. God's glory in the heavens, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, "the balancings of the clouds" (Job 37:16), the mysteries of light and sound, of day and night—all were objects of study by the pupils of earth's first school. {Ed 21.3}

Adam and Eve, in their untainted purity, delighted in the sights and sounds of Eden. God appointed them their work in the garden, "to dress it and to keep it." Genesis 2:15. Each day's labor brought them health and gladness, and the happy pair greeted with joy the visits of their Creator, as in the cool of the day He walked and talked with them. Daily God taught them His lessons. {MH 261.3}

To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth. {COL 59.3}

Christ has given us no promise of help in bearing today the burdens of tomorrow. He has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9); but, like the manna given in the wilderness, His grace is bestowed daily, for the day's need. Like the hosts of Israel in their pilgrim life, we may find morning by morning the bread of heaven for the day's supply. {MB 101.1}

One day alone is ours, and during this day we are to live for God. For this one day we are to place in the hand of Christ, in solemn service, all our purposes and plans, casting all our care upon Him, for He careth for us. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Jeremiah 29:11; Isaiah 30:15. {MB 101.2}

The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path. {PP 290.3}

He who has given His precious life because He loved you, and wanted you to be happy, will be a Captain who will always be mindful of your interest. {SD 160.4}

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}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*
Lesson 9 “Beware of Covetousness”

Read for this week’s study

Isaiah 14:12–14; Ephesians 5:5; Joshua 7; John 12:1–8; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Memory Text

“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses’ ” (Luke 12:15, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Ultimate Original Sin?
- III. An Accursed Thing in the Camp
- IV. The Heart of Judas
- V. Ananias and Sapphira
- VI. Overcoming Covetousness
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “Covetousness is right up there with extortion, idolatry, fornication, and adultery. That’s what the text in 1 Cor. 6:9, 10 says, and this week we will look at examples of just how bad it is and what we can do to overcome it.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Covetousness has been defined as an inordinate desire for wealth or possessions that really don’t belong to you.” The tenth commandment refers to a desire for what is not properly our own, the stuff the neighbor has (spouse, house, or anything else). Our current consumer society is to a great extent propelled by this desire, that is perhaps inherent in some form to all of us humans. This skewed desire is also artificially manufactured, to a great extent, by the constant bombardment with images of lifestyles of those who have more than we do.
3. What role did covetousness play in the fall of Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12–14) and Eve (Genesis 3:6)? (Sunday’s lesson) Is this the ultimate original sin and why? The most obvious way in which Israel was distinct in the ancient Mediterranean world was

- their practice of putting voluntary limits on their wealth. They were encouraged to live in deliberate generosity.
4. The prohibition of the tenth commandment is a combination of *wanting (desiring)* and *seizing (acquiring)* which produces an addictive system of money and possession, leading to skewed social relationships where no one is safe from predatory eagerness. The commandment uses the term “neighbor” three times providing a check on addictive acquisitiveness. Concern for the well-being of the neighbor is pervasive because the neighbor is an undeniable social fact that will not go away.
 5. Monday’s lesson focuses on Achan’s coveting “devoted things” thus “breaking faith” (Joshua 7). What is the connection with the cessation of the manna once the Israelites entered the Promised Land (5:12)? No motivation is given for this act of Achan, it is only described with a quick succession of four verbs: “I sinned, I saw, I covered, I took.” (7:20-21) The objects are a mantle, silver, and gold. The consequences of Achan’s action are not only a disaster for him, his family and his tribe, but also for the people of Israel as a whole. As a result, Achan loses all he had (7:24). His coveting is in a context where he already had great wealth. Having many possessions does not curb a compelling desire for more. The valley is named Valley of Trouble, but see Hosea 2:15, where God redesignates it as a “door of hope”.
 6. Tuesday’s lesson brings us to the teaching of Jesus (see also the memory text!) and the action of Judas, the NT counterpart of Achan and the direct opposite of Jesus, who brought life in abundance (John 10:10; 12:1-8). Judas claims to be mindful of the poor, so the extravagance of the oil for anointing Jesus evokes opposition from Judas. He operates in terms of a zero-sum notion about money: money used for this will not be available for that – used for precious oil it will not be available for the poor. However, Jesus operates from a principle of *abundance*, assuring the disciples that “your heavenly Father” gives all that is needed. The *stinginess* of Judas and the *abundance* of Jesus are an epitome of the larger struggle between darkness and light, between evil and good. Jesus is an agent of boundless abundance, and His disciples, then and now, are invited to participate in what God is doing in the larger domain of society.
 7. Wednesday’s lesson takes us into the book of Acts, where we witness the clash between the *imperial authority* and the *work of the Holy Spirit*. The early church is presented as a community of solidarity without needing or being able to be precise about economic matters, and with a multiplicity of models and mandates. When Jesus rose from the dead, a community of irrational joy and irrepressible generosity was created. The privilege of stewardship took precedence over the right of ownership. Therefore, the strong were helping the weak. What is the significance of the story of Ananias and Sapphira in this context (Acts 5:1-11)? How is it contrasted with the story of Achan (Joshua 7:1 LXX) and Barnabas (Acts 4:37)?
 8. How is covetousness overcome? (Thursday’s lesson) Was the “great fear” (Acts 5:11) among the members of the community rooted in the awareness that the same

dangerous temptation can operate in all of our lives? Why does it seem to be so much easier for us to follow in the wake of Ananias and Sapphira rather than the example of Barnabas? Where are we tempted to seek recognition greater than our honesty?

9. The Jews of Jesus' day put 23.33% of their income into the right 'storehouse', yet, Jesus showed that their show of spirituality did not bring them closer to God or make their religion attractive to outsiders (Matthew 23:15.23). How can a clearer understanding of Sabbath be an antidote to coveting?
10. Research shows that a tendency for upward financial comparisons generates increasing amounts of greed and decreasing amounts of compassion. The ancient financial practices in Israel discouraged upward financial comparisons. How can God's church be one of God's answers to the community-shattering forces at work in the world today and become a positive force for neighborly good?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

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 anymore. 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:*

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

But we have the same problem in English. The meaning of a word depends on the setting. How about “coveting” in our book for tonight? Is it all right to covet? “Thou shalt not covet.” But 1 Corinthians 12 says, “Covet earnestly the best gifts.”

Sometimes in fun at Christmas time when we were all home and my parents were both still alive there would be the gifts around the breakfast table on Christmas morning, and since so many of us had studied for the ministry, it might slip out, you know, the verse that says, “Covet earnestly the best gifts,” but we knew better than that. In the proper setting of 1 Corinthians 12, it’s of all the gifts of the Spirit, they’re all good ones, desire the best one of all, which is love. But the same word “covet” is the word in the tenth commandment “Thou shalt not covet.” When the context so indicates, coveting is bad. When the context so indicates, coveting is good. It means to desire something very much. Now if you desire something bad, that’s bad. If you desire something good, that’s good. That’s the difference. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Exodus, 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/3MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/4MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Then Paul goes on, “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? Because when I just deal with the law impersonally, it seems to even provoke and arouse me, by no means. Yet if it had not been for the law I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’” It’s interesting that Paul picks out the tenth commandment, which might seem to be the most general one. In the Greek it simply prohibits any evil desire. But it was the tenth one that provoked him the most because the tenth doesn’t prohibit any particular act that could be avoided. The tenth commandment prohibits even evil desire, and thus puts its finger on the very essence of sin.

You remember 1 John 3:4. You see, sin is not so much *the* transgression of *the* law. The Greek word for sin is lawlessness, rebelliousness, it is an attitude. And the commandment that touches on that innermost attitude is the tenth, “Thou shalt not have evil desire.” But Jesus applied the tenth, didn’t he, to some of the others. He said, “Maybe you never murder, but if you hate your brother you’re a murderer, if you want to kill him.” A man may have never seemed to commit adultery, but he says, “If you desire to, if you lust, you have broken that commandment.” For Jesus very well understood the tenth.

The tenth is the most personal of all of them, and the one that provoked Paul the most. For he'd been a very exemplary Pharisee, and he'd gone for days without violating the Commandments, it would appear. But then he read that tenth again, that he couldn't even desire to sin. And he says, "That provoked me, that irritated me." Later on he says, "I delight in that tenth one" because you know what that tenth one means? That in the New Earth, to which no one will be admitted whose life cannot be described by the Ten Commandments, or Jesus' summary that love is the fulfilling of the law. We'll not only live in a society where people don't murder and don't steal, they won't even want to, they won't even desire to. For the tenth commandment will also describe the way they think and feel and treat other people. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 7, recorded November 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/13MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/14MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character. Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil, He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than leave any to be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one; for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. And shall we not be as forbearing toward our fellow men as the Lord of heaven and earth is toward Satan? {COL 72.2}

God in His great mercy bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission. Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise were made to convince him of his error. The spirit of discontent had never before been known in heaven. Lucifer himself did not at first see whither he was drifting; he did not understand the real nature of his feelings. But as his dissatisfaction was proved to be without cause, Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong, that the divine claims were just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at this time fully cast off his allegiance to God. Though he had forsaken his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office. But pride

forbade him to submit. He persistently defended his own course, maintained that he had no need of repentance, and fully committed himself, in the great controversy, against his Maker. {GC 495.3}

In His dealing with sin, God could employ only righteousness and truth. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. He had sought to falsify the word of God and had misrepresented His plan of government before the angels, claiming that God was not just in laying laws and rules upon the inhabitants of heaven; that in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself. Therefore it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of heaven, as well as of all the worlds, that God's government was just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper, and his real object, must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works. {GC 498.1}

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments. {GC 499.1}

This condition of things had existed a long period of time before Satan was unmasked and the evil ones expelled (Letter 162, 1906). {4BC 1143.3}

God permitted Satan to carry forward his work until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for his plans to be fully developed, that their true nature and tendency might be seen by all. Lucifer, as the anointed cherub, had been highly exalted; he was greatly loved by the heavenly beings, and his influence over them was strong. God's government included not only the inhabitants of heaven, but of all the worlds that He had created; and Lucifer had concluded that if he could carry the angels of heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also all the worlds. He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. His power to deceive was very great. By disguising himself in a cloak of falsehood, he had gained an advantage. All his acts were so clothed with mystery that it was difficult to disclose to the angels the true nature of his work. Until fully developed, it could not be made to appear the evil thing it was; his disaffection would not be seen to be rebellion. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character or see to what his work was leading. {PP 41.2}

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}

Seeing the danger of Judas, He had brought him close to Himself, within the inner circle of His chosen and trusted disciples. Day after day, when the burden lay heaviest upon His own heart, He had borne the pain of continual contact with that stubborn, suspicious, brooding spirit; He had witnessed and labored to counteract among His disciples that continuous, secret, and subtle antagonism. And all this that no possible saving influence might be lacking to that imperiled soul! {Ed 92.4}

Christ knew the heart of Judas, yet He washed his feet. Infinite love could do no more to bring Judas to repentance, and save him from taking this fatal step. If this service of his Master, in humbling Himself to wash the feet of the worst sinner, did not break his heart, what more could be done? It was the last act of love that Jesus could evidence in behalf of Judas. Infinite love could not compel Judas to repent, confess his sin, and be saved. Every opportunity was granted him. Nothing was left undone that could be done to save him from the snare of Satan (RH June 14, 1898). {5BC 1138.7}

Truthfulness and integrity are attributes of God, and he who possesses these qualities possesses a power that is invincible. {HP 179.6}

If in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us. We need never feel that we are alone. Angels are our companions. The Comforter that Christ promised to send in His name abides with us. In the way that leads to the City of God there are no difficulties which those who trust in Him may not overcome. There are no dangers which they may not escape. There is not a sorrow, not a grievance, not a human weakness, for which He has not provided a remedy. {MH 249.1}

There is no power in the whole satanic force that can disable the soul that trusts, in simple confidence, in the wisdom that comes from God. {ML 316.3}

Christ is our tower of strength, and Satan can have no power over the soul that walks with God in humility of mind. The promise, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." In Christ there is perfect and complete help for every tempted soul. . . . If we will look to Jesus as the One in whom we may trust, He will never fail us in any emergency. {ML 316.4}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*
Lesson 10 “Giving Back”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 12:16–21; Ecclesiastes 2:18–22; Proverbs 27:23–27; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Ecclesiastes 5:10; Colossians 1:15–17.

Memory Text

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Rich Fool
- III. You Can’t Take It With You
- IV. Begin With Personal Needs
- V. Deathbed Charity
- VI. Spiritual Legacy
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we will review God’s counsel regarding our last years. What are things that we should do, what should we avoid doing, and what principles should we follow?” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. The most common fears about the future are: dying too soon (before the family is taken care of); living too long (outliving our assets or savings); catastrophic illness (all my resources could go at one time); and mental and/or physical disability (who will take care of me?) What help does the Bible offer to deal with this anxiety?
3. Sunday’s lesson looks at Jesus’ parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21). What strong rebuke did the Lord give to the foolish man? What message does the story have for us today, about our attitude towards what we own?
4. Jesus is not just giving good advice on how to live a happy, carefree life. The man in the story wanted the security of enough possessions to last him a long time. Jesus

- calls him a 'fool' (cf. Matthew 5:22), as his values and attitudes are contrary to those of God's kingdom. How does understanding that God is a loving Father who provides for his children change that (12:22-32)?
5. What does it mean to have a "treasure in heaven" (v. 33-34)? Why does the meaning center around the reality that the values and priorities of God's kingdom transform the greed and anxiety of the world? How is this different from an assumption that the treasure is something that one will possess after one's death? What does it mean to be "rich toward God" (v. 21)?
 6. What is Jesus' contribution to the Biblical storyline regarding money and possessions? How does he move from the *extortion* economy (cf. Exodus 1:11 & Luke 12:18-19) that assumes *scarcity* to an *empowering* economy based on *abundance* of God, the Creator & Father? How does our giving contribute to the restoration of communal responsibility?
 7. The rest of the lesson focuses on the fact that you can't take anything with you (Monday's lesson), making and periodically updating the balance sheet (Tuesday's lesson), deathbed charity (Wednesday) and leaving a legacy (Thursday). This can be helpful, or it can be easily abused by unscrupulous people for nefarious purposes. What steps can we take to avoid being gullible, to discern trickery, while exploring legitimate ways we can use our money for both our family and the cause of God?
 8. You are not what you own, Jesus warns us. If a person is seduced to want more, even at somebody else's expense (his own brother in the parable), one's energy will be used for selfish accumulation for us and considering neighbors as disposable. Jesus points out that the accumulation of more wealth cannot be the measure of our life.
 9. Withdrawing from the world where fear of scarcity and anxiety about the future rule is possible by living in the world where "our Father", the creator of abundance governs. Birds and flowers (v. 24-31), practitioners of abundance, are contrasted to Solomon, who was a practitioner of scarcity, accumulation and greed. Our "striving" is not for money and possessions but for the "kingdom" that defies commoditization of creation (v. 31). Commodity is presided over by fear. Creation is presided over by the God who generously guarantees abundance.
 10. This can free us from the world of fear that we do not yet have enough, that we have not yet done enough and that we are not yet enough. The man in the parable was a fool. He never gave, he only took. If we live in our Father's world, we will become a source of blessings to others.

Further Study with Ellen White

When God gave His Son to our world, He endowed human beings with imperishable riches—riches compared with which the treasured wealth of men since the world began is nothingness. 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}

God has given us these precious things as an expression of His love. The Lord is a lover of the beautiful, and to please and gratify us He has spread before us the beauties of nature, even as an earthly parent seeks to place beautiful things before the children that He loves. The Lord is always pleased to see us happy. Sinful as it is with all its imperfections, the Lord has lavished upon this earth the useful and the beautiful. The beautiful, tinted flowers tell of His tenderness and love. They have a language of their own, reminding us of the Giver. {UL 327.3}

Whatever the position in which God has placed us, whatever our responsibilities or our dangers, we should remember that He has pledged Himself to impart needed grace to the earnest seeker. Those who feel insufficient for their position, and yet accept it because God bids them, relying upon His power and wisdom, will go on from strength to strength. When they enter upon their work, they may have almost everything to learn; but with Christ as a teacher they will become efficient laborers. God does not intrust His work to the worldly wise; for they are too proud to learn. He chooses those who, feeling their deficiencies, seek to be guided by unerring wisdom (ST Sept. 7, 1882). {2BC 1017.2}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {GC 493.2}

The God of heaven is constantly at work. It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. It is not as the result of a mechanism, that, once set in motion, continues its work, that the pulse beats and breath follows breath. In God we live and move and have our being. Every breath, every throb of the heart, is the continual evidence of the power of an ever-present God. {6BC 1062.5}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*
Lesson 11 “Managing in Tough Times”

Read for this week’s study

2 Chronicles 20:1–22; 1 Chronicles 21:1–14; 2 Peter 3:3–12; 1 John 2:15–17; Revelation 13:11–17.

Memory Text

“Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me’ ” (Psalm 50:14, 15, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Putting God First
- III. Trust God, Not Your Own Resources
- IV. Time to Simplify?
- V. Priorities
- VI. When No One Can Buy or Sell
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The toils of life do take a lot of our daily focus. With debts to pay, children to raise, property to maintain, it does take time and thought. And, of course, we do need clothes, food, and shelter. [...] Amid trying times, when we need to lean on the Lord more than ever, there are some concrete steps, based on biblical principles, that we should follow.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What does it mean to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33)? Richard Foster reminds us that “the person who does not seek the kingdom first, does not seek it at all”. Thus, giving away all money or redistribution of the world’s wealth cannot be central. But seeking *first* God’s kingdom and His righteousness, both personal and social, must be central in our endeavor.
3. Sunday’s lesson discusses a singular historical event – Jehoshaphat’s war against a ‘vast army’ in 2 Chronicles 20:1-22. What spiritual principles can we learn from a historical event written in a historical book? If this is a recipe for gaining a victory,

- why was it not used later against Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 7:1-4)? How can we then apply those principles to our own walk with God in a completely different time and place?
4. What lesson are we to learn from another a historic event that happened only once – David’s numbering of Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1–14; cf. 2 Samuel 24:1-17 & Exodus 30:12)? (Monday’s lesson) How is this related to managing finances in difficult times, especially if in the previous lesson we were told that we should be making and periodically updating the balance sheet of our finances?
 5. Tuesday’s lesson invites us to consider the words of 2 Peter 3:3-12. How do they relate to managing our finances in light of the soon coming of Jesus? How do they apply on an individual and corporate level? How can this be easily abused, and people left disappointed if the second coming does not happen when they expect it? Why is it important to add other texts for a balanced picture? (e.g. Luke 19:13)?
 6. Why does Jesus present an either-or option in Matthew 6:24 (“You cannot serve God and wealth”)? (NRSV; Wednesday’s lesson). Notice the personification of “capital”. Jesus is speaking of a power which tried to be like God, which makes itself our master and has specific goals – to make us servants. Why is it significant that in certain social contexts we avoid speaking of money; while in other contexts people seem to feel that if the money question is resolved, all the problems of humankind will be resolved as well?
 7. What is the significance of financial matters and end-time persecution in Revelation 13:11-17? (Thursday’s lesson)
 8. How can money lose its seductive pulling power, and almost a sacred character, and once again become a material instrument? There is one act which profanes money by going directly against the law of money, an act for which money is not made. In the biblical view, the act of giving is seen as a consecration to God. Thus, it represents God’s grace breaking into the world of competition and selling. Giving to others not only robs money of its pulling quality, but functions as an imitation of God’s way, who as Creator, is always generously giving. It is God’s invitation to a life free from the intrusion of an anxiety producing power; greed is demolished and there is no fear of scarcity.
 9. What was the Old Testament model of giving (Deuteronomy 14-15)? What is the New Testament counterpart to it?

Further Study with Ellen White

God was the strength of Judah in this crisis, and He is the strength of His people today. We are not to trust in princes, or to set men in the place of God. We are to remember that human beings are fallible and erring, and that He who has all power is our strong tower of defense. In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater. {CC 217.5}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amidst the strife and tumult of nations He guards His children still. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands. {PK 176.1}

In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. . . . {CC 250.3}

God does not ask us to do in our own strength the work before us. He 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. {8T 19.1}

There is by our side a witness, a heavenly messenger, who will lift up for us a standard against the enemy. He will shut us in with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Beyond this Satan cannot penetrate. He cannot pass this shield of holy light. {COL 171.3}

Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings. {PP 33.2}

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God's people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him. {GC 633.1}

Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. {FLB 62.8}

As the wheellike complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth. {PK 536.1}

The Lord does not leave His wounded and bruised sheep to the power of Satan to be torn in pieces. He is ever strengthening His own when they are weak. He delivers the tried and tempted ones from the enemy's power. The Lord Jesus never forsakes any soul that puts his trust in Him. {UL 150.4}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord's hand can keep in perfect order. He can devise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked counselors, and those who plot out mischief. {4BC 1161.1}

He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a "God of gods," able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him. {CC 252.5}

It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). {COL 69.2}

God created the earth to be the abode of holy, happy beings. That purpose will be fulfilled when, renewed by the power of God and freed from sin and sorrow, it shall become the eternal home of the redeemed. {AH 540.3}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to cry earnestly to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place, there is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained. {1T 340.2}

To His faithful followers Christ has been a daily companion, a familiar friend. They have lived in close, constant communion with God. Upon them the glory of the Lord has risen. In them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has been reflected. Now they rejoice in the undimmed rays of the brightness and glory of the King in His majesty. They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for they have heaven in their hearts. {AG 358.3}

I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty. {EW 43.2}

Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites. {EW 56.2}

The eye of God, looking down the ages, was fixed upon the crisis which His people are to meet, when earthly powers shall be arrayed against them. Like the captive exile, they will be in fear of death by starvation or by violence. But the Holy One who divided the Red Sea before Israel, will manifest His mighty power and turn their captivity. “They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” Malachi 3:17. If the blood of Christ’s faithful witnesses were shed at this time, it would not, like the blood of the martyrs, be as seed sown to yield a harvest for God. Their fidelity would not be a testimony to convince others of the truth; for the obdurate heart has beaten back the waves of mercy until they return no more. If the righteous were now left to fall a prey to their enemies, it would be a triumph for the prince of darkness. Says the psalmist: “In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.” Psalm 27:5. Christ has spoken: “Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.” Isaiah 26:20, 21. Glorious will be the deliverance of those who have patiently waited for His coming and whose names are written in the book of life. {GC 634.1}

As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth’s history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God’s saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a “God of gods,” able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him. {PK 513.1}

In the time of trouble, just previous to the coming of Christ, the lives of the righteous will be preserved through the ministration of holy angels. {3SG 196.1}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*

Lesson 12 “Rewards of Faithfulness”

Read for this week’s study

Hebrews 11:6; Isaiah 62:11; Romans 6:23; John 14:1–3; Revelation 21; Matthew 25:20–23; Romans 8:16–18.

Memory Text

“ ‘His lord said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” ’ ” (Matthew 25:21, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Reward for Faithfulness
- III. Everlasting Life
- IV. The New Jerusalem
- V. The Settling of Accounts
- VI. Eyes on the Prize
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “In various places the Bible talks about our rewards, what we are promised through Christ after the Second Coming and this terrible detour with sin is once and for all over and done. What are we promised, and what assurance do we have of getting what we have been promised?” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Why does the Bible talk about the rewards, if we are all undeserving recipients of God’s grace? How can this be a motivating factor, depending on stages of faith?
3. Jim C. Collins, the leading Management and Leadership guru said: “Get involved in something that you care so much about that you want to make it the greatest it can possibly be, not because of what you will get, but just because it can be done.”
4. Why do we need to please God, and how does He reward those who earnestly seek Him (Hebrews 11:6)? (Sunday’s lesson)

5. Monday's lesson focuses on the fact that it is either eternal life or eternal death, a case of all or nothing (Romans 6:23 & John 3:16). How do you understand John 14:1-3 in light of Revelation 21 & 22?
6. Tuesday's lesson speaks about the New Jerusalem from Revelation 21. What attracts and fascinates you in this description? Why does it have thick walls when there are also gates that are always open? What is the significance of the various images? Why is it important that the history starts in a Garden, but ends in a City? How is the New Jerusalem presented also as a familiar place at the end of the journey?
7. Thursday's lesson concludes the quarter with keeping our eyes on the prize (1 Timothy 6:6-12 & Romans 8:16-18). The Stewardship Vision for the SDA Church around the World makes some interesting reading (Friday's lesson).
8. Wednesday's lesson discusses the parable of talents from Matthew 25:14-30 and the settling of accounts. Why is the parable important in the context of money and possessions? Why do you think that the author chose this parable rather than the parable of the last judgement (vs. 31-46)? That parable clearly insists that there is accountability for the management of material resources, which cannot be avoided by more money and more power and that none of us is immune against this. Besides, it shows that the accountability has to do with the fabric of human neighborliness which is essential to safety and well-being and that indifference towards those without resources is incompatible with being a follower of Jesus.
9. There is always a danger that people will regard Christianity as a kind of heavenly exam. God has given us a textbook to study; rules to keep and things to do (and avoid doing). One day He will come and set the final examination and see who passes and who fails. There will be especially good things in store for people who get good grades or marks, and likewise, especially bad things for people with bad grades. It is easy to read the parable in such a way that it reinforces that impression (and Christians throughout the centuries frequently did!) But this misreads the story, and the whole of Jesus' ministry which was a protest against such a view of religion.
10. How can we end the quarter in a way that inspires people, rather than inducing anxiety and guilt? How can the followers of Jesus be motivated by the economy of *generosity* rather than the economy of *greed*? In financial matters it is so easy to compare ourselves to others, but that leads to envy, greed, depression, and decreasing amounts of compassion. Every day, week, month or year, we are all given new opportunities. The question is: "What are you going to do with the opportunities that God gives you?"
11. The master is coming back, but he is not coming back to settle the accounts, or to catch us. When he comes back, all will be able to see what we did with all the opportunities that were given to us. We want Jesus to put his arms around us and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! I am so proud of you! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master's happiness!" Our master wants nothing more than to share his joy not just with his servants, but with his sons and daughters and with his friends.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And look at the rest of the book of Job. Did Job show himself to be a trustworthy friend of God? Did he trust God because he was being richly rewarded or did he seem to be utterly abandoned and yet he still trusted God? And the book ends with God saying, “Thank you, Job, you’ve said of Me what is right.” Job was God’s friend all the way through, and God could then turn to the heavenly court and say, “Do you need any more evidence about the falsity of Satan’s charges and the trustworthiness of My friend Job?” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, “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>*

If you were ever asked to explain why you obey God (assuming that you do), what answer would you give? Would you say, “I do what I do as a believer, because God has told me to and He has the power to reward and destroy”? Is that why you don’t lie and murder? Nothing wrong in those things themselves, but it upsets God when you do that—and that is a dangerous thing to do. This might be all right for a beginner or for a little child, but it makes God’s laws seem so arbitrary. They have no sense in themselves. That kind of obedience does not speak well and truly about our God.

Would you rather say, “I do what I do as a believer, because God has told me to, and I love Him and want to please Him”? Is that why you don’t steal or commit adultery? It is not that you see anything wrong in these things in themselves, it’s just that God doesn’t like it when we do that. He has been so good to us, surely we owe it to Him to do the things He has asked us to do, whether they make sense or not. Again this does not speak well of God. It might be a little improvement from obeying out of fear or desire for reward. But it still smacks of arbitrariness. It still does not speak well of God, though that is often thought to be the antidote for the first answer.

Could you say this? “I do what I do because more and more I am finding it to be right and sensible to do so. How I admire and revere the One who so advised me and even commanded me in the days of my ignorance and immaturity,” hastening to add, “being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I am willing to listen to this God and to heed His commandments when He asks me to do something beyond my present understanding.” That says that God is not arbitrary, but that everything He has asked us to do makes such good sense, we should want to do it anyway. If you can say that, then truly God’s law is not a threat to your freedom, and you thank Him for it. {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>*

Lou: Here's an intriguing one: "Would we lose our freedom if God always rewarded the righteous? If righteousness always pays off—"

Graham: Ah, that might explain why He does what He does sometimes, as with Job in Scripture. It's true. If every time I did what was right, God would reward me, see what that would do in the way of motivation? Then I do what I do because God has told me to, and He has the power to reward and destroy. I think that would produce obedience number one. And so even at times like Job, we're not rewarded right away and we love God anyway? That friend of God was able to say, "Though God slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Lou: And that would be like the obedience number three you talked about earlier. If He commands me to do something beyond my present understanding, I can trust Him even when it appears that righteousness is not rewarded. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #12 with Lou Venden, "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>*

Think of it meaning so much to God that He would even resurrect the wicked! Who would suffer more than God, seeing all His children resurrected? The wicked ones? Why would He do this? The price must be worth it. It must be apparent to the whole family that God is not the one who takes anyone of His children's eternal life away. He does not do that. He never said, "Obey Me, or I'll kill you." We do not live with that kind of a God.

Or, "If you disobey Me, I'll discipline you." There's a lot of that in scripture. But do you discipline your children because you hate them? Do you discipline them to the point of destruction? Does it do any good to kill your son and say, "I hope that's taught you a lesson"? It wouldn't do any good. That's not discipline. "Whom the Lord loves, He disciplines."

The death in the end is no discipline. It is the inevitable and awful consequence of God leaving His children to reap the natural results of their own rebellious choice. And if we have any doubts about it at that time, we now can watch the wicked die, as the angels watched Jesus die. We didn't watch that. We read about it. The universe watched and got the message. In the end we will watch the wicked die, and we can look in the face of Jesus, still in His human form. And how do you think He will look? He will be crying. Hosea 11, and all these other places. And if we don't feel the same way, a mistake was made in letting us in. We'll all feel that way. "How can we give you up? How can we let you go?" But we know it leads to death. {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)

Lou: Graham, I want you to comment on this question of God's wrath. I can hear somebody saying this evening, "But doesn't the Bible talk about God's wrath, many, many times? God's anger?" Can you give me about a forty-five second response on that?

Graham: When we talk about why Jesus had to die, we can do more with this. But I wouldn't want to leave tonight without having the question pretty well resolved. If you take all sixty-six books and look at the references to God's wrath all the way through, you'll find so many places that will say God's wrath is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choice. It is not like our anger. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2 with Lou Venden, "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

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}

The work of grace upon the heart is not an instantaneous work. It is effected by continuous, daily watching and believing the promises of God. The repentant, believing one, who cherishes faith and earnestly desires the renewing grace of Christ, God will not turn away empty. He will give him grace. And ministering angels will aid him as he perseveres in his efforts to advance.— Manuscript 55, 1910. {Ev 287.3}

The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God's power to help in every emergency. Man is, through faith, to be a partaker in the divine nature, and to overcome every temptation wherewith he is beset. {7BC 929.6}

Where there is not only a belief in God's Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. {AG 137.5}

Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power. {DA 347.1}

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}

The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. Never will evil again be manifest. Says the word of God: "Affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9. The law of God, which Satan has reproached as the yoke of bondage, will be honored as the law of liberty. A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom. {GC 504.1}

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}

The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God. {GC 542.2}

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. {AG 313.5}

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 decided to give human beings 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. {CH 222.1}

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}

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}

The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity. {FLB 76.4}

All the heavenly intelligences were watching with intense interest the warfare that was going on upon the earth—the earth that Satan claimed as his dominion. Every moment was big with eternal realities. How would the conflict end? The angels looked for the justice of God to be revealed, His anger to be aroused against the prince of darkness and his sympathizers. But lo, mercy prevailed. When the Son of God might have come to the world to condemn, He came as righteousness and peace, to save not merely the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but all the world—every son and daughter of Adam who would believe on Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. What an exhibition of the love of Jehovah! This is love without a parallel. {TMK 19.3}

The years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.—GC 678 (1911). {1MCP 252.1}

There immortal minds will study with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There is no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward,

the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. {SR 432.2}

Sin and sinners are no more, God's entire universe is clean, and the great controversy is forever ended. {SR 433.2}

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}

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}