

## ***Stewardship: Motives of the Heart***

### ***The Results of Stewardship***

Lesson #13 for March 31, 2018

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

1. In this lesson we will attempt to discover some of the benefits of being true Christian stewards. Should it impact us personally? What are the spiritual outcomes? If we are true stewards, how might our influence affect others around us? Could it make our own lives happier and healthier?
2. Christians do not have the option of isolating themselves from the rest of the world. We are in constant contact with others in our communities. So, is it possible to live Christ-like lives and be good stewards at the same time as we live in this world?
3. Read Titus 2:11-12. To be Godlike, to exhibit Godliness, should be the goal of every Christian. For a Christian nothing else can take the place of it. Would people notice?
4. There are numerous warnings in the Bible about how difficult it can be to live in our world. One of the most serious for us living in the last days of this earth's history is found in 2 Timothy 3:1-9:

**2 Timothy 3:1-9:** <sup>1</sup>Remember that there will be difficult times in the last days. <sup>2</sup>People will be selfish, greedy, boastful, and conceited; they will be insulting, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, and irreligious; <sup>3</sup>they will be unkind, merciless, slanderers, violent, and fierce; they will hate the good; <sup>4</sup>they will be treacherous, reckless, and swollen with pride; they will love pleasure rather than God; <sup>5</sup>they will hold to the outward form of our religion, but reject its real power. Keep away from such people. <sup>6</sup>Some of them go into people's houses and gain control over weak women who are burdened by the guilt of their sins and driven by all kinds of desires, <sup>7</sup>women who are always trying to learn but who can never come to know the truth. <sup>8</sup>As Jannes and Jambres were opposed to Moses, so also these people are opposed to the truth—people whose minds do not function and who are failures in the faith. <sup>9</sup>But they will not get very far, because everyone will see how stupid they are. That is just what happened to Jannes and Jambres.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., 2 Timothy 3:1-9). New York: American Bible Society.

5. Are there people who have lived Godlike lives on this earth? Of course, Jesus would be the ultimate Example; but, what about people like Enoch, Noah, Job, and Daniel? Were these people completely unusual and beyond our capacity to imitate? Think of all that Job went through. And yet, God predicted in advance that Job would remain faithful; and he did. (See Job 1&2; Job 42:7-8.) Could we live like that in our day?
6. Would one have to be perfect in order to be godly?

**Ezekiel 14:14:** "Even if those three men, Noah, Danel, and Job, were living there, their goodness would save only their own lives." The Sovereign LORD has spoken.—*Good News Bible\** (Ezekiel 14:14). Compare Ezekiel 14:20; 28:3.

[Traditionally this has been understood as a reference to the biblical Daniel, though he was still quite young when Ezekiel prophesied. One wonders if he had developed a reputation as an intercessor by this point. For this reason some prefer to see a reference to a ruler named Danel, known in Canaanite

legend for his justice and wisdom. In this case all three of the individuals named would be non-Israelites, however the Ugaritic Danel is not known to have qualities of faith in the Lord that would place him in the company of the other men. See D. I. Block, *Ezekiel* (NICOT), 1:447–50.]—Biblical Studies Press. (2006). *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Ezekiel 14:14). Biblical Studies Press.

7. Read Philippians 4:11. There are many parts of the story of Paul about which we know very little.

**2 Corinthians 11:21-29:** But if anyone dares to boast about something—I am talking like a fool—I will be just as daring. <sup>22</sup>Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. <sup>23</sup>Are they Christ’s servants? I sound like a madman—but I am a better servant than they are! I have worked much harder, I have been in prison more times, I have been whipped much more, and I have been near death more often. <sup>24</sup>Five times I was given the thirty-nine lashes by the Jews; <sup>25</sup>three times I was whipped by the Romans; and once I was stoned. I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent twenty-four hours in the water. <sup>26</sup>In my many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from fellow-Jews and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from false friends. <sup>27</sup>There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing. <sup>28</sup>And not to mention other things, every day I am under the pressure of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>When someone is weak, then I feel weak too; when someone is led into sin, I am filled with distress.—*Good News Bible\** (2 Corinthians 11:21-29).

8. But, despite all those troubles that Paul went through, he stated clearly in Philippians that no matter whether he was hungry or well-fed, no matter what his conditions were, he was content. Are we content with our current experience?

“Contentment in every condition is a great art, a spiritual mystery. It is to be learned, and to be learned as a mystery. . . . Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition. . . . It is a box of precious ointment, and very comforting and useful for troubled hearts, in troubled times and conditions.”—Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (London: Publisher W. Bentley, 1651), pp. 1, 3.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Monday, March 26].

9. Read Romans 8:28; Hebrews 13:5; and Philippians 4:4-13. These verses make it very clear that if we choose to serve God, He will be with us in all things. It is very personal.
10. Read Proverbs 3:5; Isaiah 55:9; 1 Corinthians 4:5; and 13:12. While it should be obvious to anyone thinking about it seriously, God’s ways are far above our ways.

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 and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages\** 330.1; *Ministry of Healing\** 481.2.

11. Do we really believe that? How often do we feel like our path forward is almost impossible? Do we have enough faith to ask God to show us the way? How often do our wishes and wants prevent us from going the way that God would like us to go? Paul stated:

**1 Corinthians 13:12:** What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete—as complete as God’s knowledge of me.—*Good News Bible\** (1 Corinthians 13:12).

12. Is that why we so often have problems? What do we see in the dim mirrors?
13. Are there any negative effects of exercising faith in God? There is much evidence to suggest that the more we trust God, the more our faith will grow. In fact, *trust* is *faith*. And as we see the ways in which God can care for us, we become more and more comfortable with Him. As we have our faith tested and we stay firm, our faith increases.
14. Read Matthew 22:37. What does it mean to *trust in the Lord with all your heart*?

**When Jesus speaks of the new heart, he means the mind, the life, the whole being.** To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride.—Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*,\* September 26, 1901, par. 5; *4SDABC\** 1164.10; *AG\** 100.2; *MYP\** 72.1; *OHC\** 159.5; *SD\** 100.2; *BLJ\** 356.6. [Bold type is added.]

15. There are times in our lives when we face difficult situations which seem to be completely out of our control. Is it easier to trust God when the situation seems to be completely out of our control? What about times when we do have a choice? Are we more inclined to follow our own desires at those times? Does God need to bring us into hard places?

Jesus chose unlearned fishermen because they had not been schooled in the traditions and erroneous customs of their time. They were men of native ability, and they were humble and teachable,—men whom He could educate for His work. **In the common walks of life there is many a man patiently treading the round of daily toil, unconscious that he possesses powers which, if called into action, would raise him to an equality with the world’s most honored men.** The touch of a skillful hand is needed to arouse those dormant faculties. It was such men that Jesus called to be His collaborators; and He gave them the advantage of association with Himself. Never had the world’s great men such a teacher. When the disciples came forth from the Saviour’s training, they were no longer ignorant and uncultured. They had become like Him in mind and character, and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages\** 250.1. [Bold type is added.]

16. So, what should we learn from the disciples and the apostles?

There are lessons for us to learn from the experience of the apostles. These men were as true as steel to principle. They were men who would not fail nor be discouraged. **They were full of reverence and zeal for God, full of noble purposes and aspirations. They were by nature as weak and helpless as any of those now engaged in the work, but they put their whole trust in the Lord. Wealth they had, but it consisted of mind and soul culture; and this every one may have who will make God first and last and best in everything.** They toiled long to learn the lessons given them in the school of Christ, and they did not toil in vain. They bound themselves up with the mightiest of all powers, and were ever longing for a deeper, higher, broader comprehension of eternal realities, that they might successfully present the treasures of truth to a needy world.—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers\** 25.1;

RC\* 26.5. [Bold type is added.]

17. If we are true followers of Jesus and become stewards, will those around us be able to see it?

**Matthew 5:16:** “In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.”—*Good News Bible\** (Matthew 5:16).

**1 Peter 2:12:** Your conduct among the heathen should be so good that when they accuse you of being evildoers, they will have to recognize your good deeds and so praise God on the Day of his coming.—*Good News Bible\** (1 Peter 2:12).

18. True Christian stewardship is on display before our families, our fellow workers, and our communities, in fact, before the entire world and the entire universe. (1 Corinthians 4:9) What are they learning about us and about how God can work in human lives?

Everything in nature has its appointed work and murmurs not at its position. In spiritual things every man and woman has his or her own peculiar sphere and vocation. The interest God requires will be proportionate to the amount of entrusted capital according to the measure of the gift of Christ.... Now is your time and privilege to ...show a stability of character that will make you of real moral worth. Christ has a right to your service. Yield to Him heartily.—Ellen G. White, *Letter 30,\** August 22, 1875, to “Dear Sister Mary.” *This Day With God\** 243.4.

19. What would Jesus do if He had your job? Should we be able to answer that question?
20. The ultimate destination for every true Christian and every steward of God is the heavenly home. Like the faithful followers of God before us, (Hebrews 11:13-14) we look for that city.
21. But, before that day comes, there must be a judgment. God can only admit to heaven those who will not restart the great controversy in heaven! God “can” only save those who are safe to live next door to for the rest of eternity. Does that include us? Honestly now, what do you expect to hear from Jesus at His coming?

**Matthew 25:21:** “‘Well done, you good and faithful servant!’ said his master. ‘You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large amounts. Come on in and share my happiness!’”—*Good News Bible\** (Matthew 25:21).

**Matthew 7:21-23:** 21 “Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do. 22When Judgement Day comes, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord! In your name we spoke God’s message, by your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!’ Then I will say to them, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you wicked people!’”—*Good News Bible\** (Matthew 7:21-23).

22. We know that there is nothing that we can do on our own that will adequately prepare us for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. We need a constant relationship with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit because They are the only Ones able to transform us to become truly Christ-like. Are we ready for that?
23. Are we giving to God of our time, our talents, our money, and our influence what we should be giving? Are we loving God and our fellow humans as we should?

When Christ’s followers give back to the Lord His own, they are accumulating treasure which will be given to them when they shall hear the words, “Well

done, good and faithful servant; ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” [Matthew 25:23]—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*\* 523.4. [Content in brackets is added.]

24. When asked, Jesus said that there were two great commandments: Love God and love our fellow human beings. Are we doing that? How would you go about measuring yourself to determine how well you are doing?

**Christ came to this world to reveal the love of God.** His followers are to continue the work which He began. Let us strive to help and strengthen one another. Seeking the good of others is the way in which true happiness can be found. Man does not work against his own interest by loving God and his fellow men. **The more unselfish his spirit, the happier he is, because he is fulfilling God’s purpose for him.**—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,\* December 25, 1901, par. 17; *Review and Herald*,\* June 25, 1908, par. 10; *Counsels on Stewardship*\* 24.4-25.0.

The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and **God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary.** He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. **Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth.** Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes....**

**Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.**—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*,\* January 20, 1890, par. 6,9. **Contrast** *ST*, December 4, 1893; *Manuscript Releases*, vol 18, 358.3-359.1; *RH*, August 14, 1900; *YI*, November 21, 1883; *RH*, November 1, 1892, par. 12.

There is also a constant interchange, taking and giving out, receiving and returning to the Lord His own. To every true believer God imparts light and blessing, and this the believer imparts to others in the work that he does for the Lord. **As he gives of that which he receives, his capacity for receiving is increased.** Room is made for fresh supplies of grace and truth. Clearer light, increased knowledge, are his. **On this giving and receiving depend the life and growth of the church. He who receives, but never gives, soon ceases to receive. If the truth does not flow from him to others, he loses his capacity to receive. We must impart the goods of heaven, if we would receive fresh blessing.**—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,\* December 24,

1903, par. 9; *Counsels on Stewardship*\* 36.1. [Bold type is added.]

25. How much influence do you think God has in your life? Does the road forward seem extremely difficult? Does God help you over the rough spots? It has been said that one person plus God is a majority. If we have God on our side, do we have anything to worry about?
26. Abraham Lincoln was once quoted as saying: "My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."
27. Could you write out in a few words what you have learned about stewardship during these lessons? Could you explain why stewardship is important in the life of a Christian?
28. Read Matthew 7:21-23 again. How could these people who claim to have cast out demons and worked miracles in Christ's name be told by Him: "Go away, I never knew you"? Are they just totally self-deceived?
29. Usually, we think of the question of stewardship and Christian influence on an individual level. But, what influence does your local Sabbath school class or your local church have in your community?
30. How is stewardship related to witnessing? Does one need to be a steward before one can be a true witness?
31. Try to imagine how you will feel if Christ says to you one day: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Is there anything that you can imagine more rewarding in a person's lifetime than to hear those words?
32. As we have learned, *stewardship* means a careful and honest dealing with what has been entrusted to us by God. Obviously, God always does His part perfectly in that relationship. But, we are often imperfect; sometimes we follow His instructions; sometimes we do not. Or, occasionally we partially follow them. So, clearly, to improve the effectiveness of this relationship, we need to work on our side!
33. Would you agree that stewardship is all about our relationship with Jesus Christ? Do we trust Him as we should? Do we really love Him? Are we willing to give up everything that interferes with that relationship?
34. Do you find it difficult to talk about your Christianity in your community? Or, your workplace? Are you viewed as an outsider, perhaps a religious extremist? Or, because you are afraid to say anything, are you spiritually invisible?
35. What can we do to make our churches seem more attractive to those around us? Read Job 1:1; 29:11-17; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; and James 1:27. Do these verses suggest to us the very elements of the two sides: A pure and honest religion versus the world around us?
36. Hebrews 11 is known as *the faith chapter*. Many very faithful people are mentioned there. Some of the names are actually quite surprising! What would you need to do to get your name mentioned in the next version of Hebrews 11?
37. Read Proverbs 3:5; Isaiah 55:9; Matthew 22:37; 1 Corinthians 4:5; and 1 Corinthians 13:12. In Matthew 19, Matthew told the story of the rich young ruler. In *Desire of Ages*, Ellen White suggested that he could have been a valuable addition to the followers of Jesus. But, the rich young ruler was afraid to trust his riches with God. Are we doers of God's Word and not just hearers of the Word? (James 1:22-27)

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