

# ***Managing for the Master—Till He Comes***

## ***Giving Back***

Lesson #10 for March 11, 2023

Scriptures: Luke 12:16-21; Ecclesiastes 2:18-22; 5:10; Proverbs 27:23-27; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Colossians 1:15-17; Revelation 14:13.

1. As we as individuals are getting up in years, we start to think about what will happen when we retire and even after we die. However, if we are faithful church members, the real future goes far beyond this earth. We need to keep that in mind as we make plans.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] As people get older, they almost naturally begin to worry about the future. The most common fears are: dying too soon (before the family is taken care of); living too long (outliving one's assets or savings); catastrophic illness (all one's resources could go at one time); or mental and/or physical disability (who will take care of me?).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sabbath Afternoon, March 4.‡

2. Are you concerned about any of these problems? Is it appropriate for us to put our trust in God to care of us as He sees fit?

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] It is frequently the case that aged persons are unwilling to realize and acknowledge that their mental strength is failing. **They shorten their days by taking care which belongs to their children. Satan often plays upon their imagination and leads them to feel a continual anxiety in regard to their money. It is their idol, and they hoard it with miserly care.... All these fears originate with Satan.** He excites the organs which lead to slavish fears and jealousies which corrupt nobleness of soul and destroy elevated thoughts and feelings. Such persons are insane upon the subject of money. **If they would take the position which God would have them, their last days might be their best and happiest.** Those who have children in whose honesty and judicious management they have reason to confide, should let their children make them happy. Unless they do this, Satan will take advantage of their lack of mental strength and will manage for them. **They should lay aside anxiety and burdens, and occupy their time as happily as they can, and be ripening up for heaven.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 1, 423.2-424.0 [1864].†‡

3. ***How many of us fit this description? If you are already retired, or soon to be, do you see yourself as “ripening up for heaven”? Or, are we going to allow Satan to determine our futures?***
4. In 1880, Ellen White spoke some very interesting words regarding the use of our funds, especially after we die.

[EGW:] **Many manifest a needless delicacy on this point.** They feel that they are stepping upon forbidden ground when they introduce the subject of property to the aged or to invalids in order to learn what disposition they design to make of it. **But this duty is just as sacred as the duty to preach the word to save souls.** Here is a man with God's money or property in his

hands. He is about to change his stewardship. Will he place the means which God has lent him to be used in His cause, in the hands of wicked men, just because they are his relatives? Should not Christian men feel interested and anxious for that man's future good as well as for the interest of God's cause, that he shall make a right disposition of his Lord's money, the talents lent him for wise improvement? Will his brethren stand by and see him losing his hold on this life and at the same time robbing the treasury of God? This would be a fearful loss to himself and to the cause; for, by placing his talent of means in the hands of those who have no regard for the truth of God, he would, to all intents and purposes, be wrapping it in a napkin and hiding it in the earth.

The Lord would have His followers dispense their means while they can do it themselves. Some may inquire: "Must we actually dispossess ourselves of everything which we call our own?" We may not be required to do this now; but we must be willing to do so for Christ's sake.... Some close their ears to the calls made for money to be used in sending missionaries to foreign countries and in publishing the truth and scattering it like autumn leaves all over the world. Such excuse their covetousness by informing you that they have made arrangements to be charitable at death. They have considered the cause of God in their wills. Therefore **they live a life of avarice, robbing God in tithes and in offerings, and in their wills return to God but a small portion of that which He has lent them, while a very large proportion is appropriated to relatives who have no interest in the truth. This is the worst kind of robbery. They rob God of His just dues, not only all through life, but also at death.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 4, 479.1-2 [1880].<sup>††</sup> [Could any of us be guilty of any of these sins?]<sup>‡</sup>

5. What kind of counsel can we find from God about how we should prepare? Are we living as if we really believe that everything we are and have comes from the Lord? We are just "managing for the Master." Do we act like that in our daily transactions and specifically in our contributions to the cause of God?
6. Read Luke 12:16-21 which is the story of the fool who built bigger barns to hold his crops so he could take it easy, "eat, drink, and enjoy himself."
7. Consider what Jesus said about him.

**Luke 12:21:** And Jesus concluded, "This is how it is with those who pile up riches for themselves but **are not rich in God's sight.**"—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*\* (2nd ed., Luke 12:21). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].<sup>††</sup>

8. What does it mean to be "rich in God's sight"? We are told that we will take our characters to heaven. What attributes of character are you planning to take with you? We can also lay up treasure in heaven by paying our tithes and offerings. Are we doing that?
9. The rich man described in the parable in Luke 12 may have been an honest, hard-working man. We have no indication that he was lazy or dishonest. The problem was about how he expected to spend his wealth. But, let us remember that none of us know the exact day of our death. Are we prepared?

10. How much planning does one need to do for her/his retirement years and future? That depends on one's health and life expectancy. How long did your parents live? Do you have any medical problems that could shorten your life or cause a lot of expenses in the future? Who else is depending on you for support? Have you written a will? What church-related commitments do you have or plan to have?
11. How long should we continue to be useful and work? Ellen White published some of her best-known works, including *Desire of Ages* after the age of 70. So long as we are healthy and active, we should continue to serve God.
12. Moses started his major lifework at the age of 80 and finished, still healthy, at the age of 120! Daniel and John were probably in their early 90s when they finished their life's work. You may be retired; but, there are plenty of volunteer opportunities in the church.
13. Read **Matthew 24:31-46**. This familiar parable teaches that we need to place God's work as a priority in our lives. It concludes: "How happy that servant is if his master finds him doing this when he comes home!"—*Good News Bible*.\*
14. As you look over your own life, what are the most important things in your life? Does God's work have a major influence in your life?
15. There are many verses in the Scripture suggesting that life is short and saying that just as we were born without anything, we will die without anything. (Psalm 49:17; 1 Timothy 6:6-7; Psalm 39:11; James 14:14; Ecclesiastes 2:18-22)
16. It is very important to have a will or trust or an estate plan to determine how your earthly possessions will be distributed when you die. Do you have faithful, church-loving, believing relatives who will carry on what you believe is the right thing to be done with your money? If your estate ends up going into the hands of someone who has no concern for the church, it is lost to God's cause.

[BSG:] In the simplest terms, we can say that because God is the Owner of everything (see *Ps. 24:1*), it would be logical to conclude from a biblical perspective that **when we are finished with what God has entrusted to us, we should return to Him, the rightful Owner, what is left, once the needs of loved ones are met.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Monday, March 6.<sup>†§</sup>

**Psalm 24:1:** The world and all that is in it belong to the LORD;  
the earth and all who live on it are his.—*Good News Bible*.\*

17. A number of verses in the Old Testament make it very clear that God recognizes our responsibilities for those who depend upon us—mainly our families. (See Proverbs 3:9-10; 27:23-27.)
18. Have we made adequate provisions for the care of those we will leave behind? It is very important that we make provisions while we are in the best mental and physical health to distribute our goods as God would have us do.
19. **Remember that the only treasure that lasts forever is that treasure which is stored in heaven. We can only take our characters and memories with us to heaven.**
20. Some comfort themselves with the idea that included in their will is something to be given to God's cause. But, look at what the Bible says about that.

**1 Timothy 6:17:** Command those who are rich in the things of this life not to be proud, but to place their hope, not in such an uncertain thing as riches, but in God, who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**2 Corinthians 4:18:** For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts for ever [*sic*].—*Good News Bible*.\*†

**Proverbs 30:8:** Keep me from lying, and let me be neither rich nor poor. So give me only as much food as I need.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Ecclesiastes 5:10:** If you love money, you will never be satisfied; if you long to be rich, you will never get all you want. It is useless.—*Good News Bible*.\*

21. If we make good use of our money and use a good share of it to support God's cause, might God bless us? And might He even give us more to use for His cause?

**Matthew 6:33:** "Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things."—*Good News Bible*.\* [Do we dare to depend on that promise?]<sup>‡</sup>

22. Many have ruined their lives and lost their souls in pursuit of money. However, with God's help, we can overcome such problems. The best answer is not just making a provision so that when one dies a portion is given to the church but also giving while one is alive.

[BSG:] In the context of being a good steward in planning for death, one danger that people face is the temptation to hoard assets now, justifying that hoarding with the idea that, well, "When I die, I can give it all away." Though better than just spending it all now (one billionaire had said that he knew that he would be living right only if the check for his funeral bounced), we can and should do better than that.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Wednesday, March 8.<sup>‡</sup>

[EGW:] I saw that many withhold from the cause while they live, quieting their consciences that they will be charitable at death; they hardly dare exercise faith and trust in God to give anything while living. **But this deathbed charity is not what Christ requires of His followers; it cannot excuse the selfishness of the living. Those who hold fast their property till the last moment, surrender it to death rather than to the cause.** Losses are occurring continually. Banks fail, and property is consumed in very many ways. Many purpose to do something, but they delay the matter, and Satan works to prevent the means from coming into the treasury at all. It is lost before it is returned to God, and Satan exults that it is so.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 5, 154.2.<sup>†‡</sup>

23. In some parts of the world, \$100 can support a pastor or a Bible worker and their families for an entire month. Should we consider that when we carelessly spend money on ourselves? Imagine what it will be like to get to heaven and discover many souls there thanking you for making it possible for them to learn the truth and end up in heaven because of your donations!

24. When considering all of these issues, it is very important to remember that, ultimately, everything belongs to God. (Psalm 24:1 [in Item #16 above]) Not only our lives but also our future salvation depend on Him. Every breath comes only because of His power.

**Hebrews 3:4:** Every house, of course, is built by someone—and God is the one who has built all things.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Psalm 50:10:** “All the animals in the forest are mine and the cattle on thousands of hills.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

25. Is it not logical that when we are finished with our lives, we make provisions for our family and then return as much as possible to God? How many of us think in those terms?

[EGW:] In giving to the work of God, you are laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven. All that you lay up above is secure from disaster and loss, and is increasing to an eternal, an enduring substance [and] will be registered to your account in the kingdom of heaven.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,\* January 24, 1888, par. 3; *Counsels on Stewardship*\* 342.1.‡ [Content after the word *and* which is in brackets above is quoted from earlier in the same paragraph.]‡

26. There are many advantages to giving while we are alive. Below are some of them as enumerated in the Bible study guide:

1. The donor actually can see the results of the gift—a new church building, a young person in college, an evangelistic campaign funded, and so on.
2. The ministry or person can benefit now when the need is greatest.
3. There is no fighting among family or friends after your death.
4. It sets a good example of family values of generosity and love for others.
5. It minimizes estate tax consequence.
6. It guarantees that the gift will be made to your desired entity (no interference from courts or disgruntled relatives).
7. It demonstrates that the heart of the donor has been changed from selfish to unselfish. [That is a great way to reduce covetousness.]
8. It stores up treasures in heaven.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Thursday, March 9.‡

27. In light of all of that, notice these words from Ellen White.

[EGW:] That which many propose to defer until they are about to die, if they were Christians indeed they would do while they have a strong hold on life. They would devote themselves and their property to God, and, while acting as His stewards, they would have the satisfaction of doing their duty. **By becoming their own executors**, they could meet the claims of God themselves, instead of shifting the responsibility upon others.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 4, 480.2.†‡

28. **What does it mean to be your own executor? That means to make clear, firm decisions about the distribution of your goods, preferably while you are still alive so you can see the results.**

29. There are, of course, many calls for funds in many directions. We must be very wise in determining how we give our money. There are those who set dates for the second coming and ask us to give our funds to them so that they can be prepared and prepare others. Setting dates is not God's plan at this point in history. We must be very wise as we decide where we will place our money.

30. Is it reasonable for faithful Christians to return a significant portion of their retirement funds to God with the hope that He will care for them? How do you understand the following passages?

**Matthew 6:33-34:** <sup>33</sup> "Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. <sup>34</sup>So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings."—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Psalm 71:18:** Now that I am old and my hair is grey,  
do not abandon me, O God!  
Be with me while I proclaim your power and might  
to all generations to come.—*Good News Bible*.\* [See also Isaiah 46:4 and Psalm 92:12-14.]†

31. If we should pass before Jesus comes again, we will have no way of seeing exactly what happens with our assets.

32. How large should our future planning be? Are we thinking about a future in heaven? Clearly, everything belongs to God. Without His creative power, we could do nothing. (Again, see Psalm 24:1 as in Item #16 above.)

[BSG:] Our life and riches do not last forever (*Prov. 27:24*), our possessions will be passed on to others (*Ps. 49:10*), and we cannot take anything with us beyond this life (*Eccles. 5:15*). So, whenever possible, "a good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children" (*Prov. 13:22*); however, he must do it in such a way as to prevent disputes among them. In drawing up a will, we must not think of our own earthly interests only and fail to be generous toward God. This failure was the ruin of the foolish rich man in Jesus' parable (*Luke 12:19, 20*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 132.†§

**1 Corinthians 10:31:** Well, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for God's glory.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**2 Corinthians 4:18:** For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts for ever [*sic*].—*Good News Bible*.\*†

33. Whether we have a lot of this world's goods or only a little, it all belongs to God. Do we take that into consideration when we make use of our funds?

**Ecclesiastes 10:19:** Feasting makes you happy and wine cheers you up, but you can't have either without money.—*Good News Bible*.\*

34. It is so easy to grasp for money because we realize having it allows us to do many things. But, we need to remember:

**1 Timothy 6:10:** For **the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil.** Some have been so eager to have it that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows.—*Good News Bible.\*†*

35. Do you look forward with fear to death?

**Hebrews 2:14-15:** <sup>14</sup> Since the children, as he calls them, are people of flesh and blood, Jesus himself became like them and shared their human nature. **He did this so that through his death he might destroy the Devil, who has the power over death, <sup>15</sup>and in this way set free those who were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death.**—*Good News Bible.\*†*

**Hebrews 13:5:** Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, “I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.”—*Good News Bible.\** [God only leaves those who persistently leave Him and insist that God stay away.]‡

36. From the very beginning in the Garden of Eden, God planned for us to work. Try to imagine what beautiful and wonderful things Adam and Eve were given to do. But, then sin entered our planet, and things changed. We were forced to do hard work to get the ground to produce enough to feed ourselves and our families.

37. But, none of us should be surprised as we realize that as we get older, we become weaker. We may ask God not to abandon us, and He will not. But, despite our physical decline, we could still bear fruit for God (Psalm 92:14) who promises to care for us in our old age. (Isaiah 46:4) We must never forget:

**Ecclesiastes 5:15:** We leave this world just as we entered it—with nothing. In spite of all our work there is nothing we can take with us.—*Good News Bible.\**

**Proverbs 3:9-10:** <sup>9</sup>Honour the LORD by making him an offering from the best of all that your land produces. <sup>10</sup>If you do, your barns will be filled with grain, and you will have too much wine to be able to store it all.—*Good News Bible.\** [How are we to interpret these verses today?]+

38. Look at some of the promises God made to His faithful followers down through the Old Testament and the New Testament.

[BSG:] In this divine will are included material blessings, such as the land of Canaan (*Gen. 15:18*), becoming a great nation (*Gen. 12:2, Gen. 15:5*), and abundant material possessions (*Deut. 28:11*). There also are spiritual promises: the Messiah (*Gal. 3:16*) and the commission to take these blessings to all nations (*Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8, 14*). All those who live by faith are beneficiaries of this will, receive this commission, and need not fear because they are under God’s care.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\* 133.‡§*

39. ***Are we fulfilling this commission? Do these promises apply to Christians today?***

40. Of course, we do not expect to inherit property in the Middle East!

41. While the Old Testament promises were primarily addressed to the children of Israel, we know that Galatians 3:28-29 make it clear that all those who follow Christ are regarded as *Abraham’s descendants*.

42. Think of the promises made to Abraham.

**Genesis 18:17-19:** <sup>17</sup>And the LORD said to himself, “I will not hide from Abraham what I am going to do. <sup>18</sup>His descendants will become a great and mighty nation, and through him I will bless all the nations. <sup>19</sup>I have chosen him in order that he may command his sons and his descendants to obey me and to do what is right and just. If they do, I will do everything for him that I have promised.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

43. And notice David’s prayers to God.

**1 Chronicles 29:2-3:** <sup>2</sup> “I have made every effort to prepare materials for the Temple—gold, silver, bronze, iron, timber, precious stones and gems, stones for mosaics, and quantities of marble. <sup>3</sup>Over and above all this that I have provided, I have given silver and gold from my personal property because of my love for God’s Temple.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

**2 Chronicles 3:1-2:** <sup>1</sup>King David, Solomon’s father, had already prepared a place for the Temple. It was in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared to David, the place which Araunah the Jebusite had used as a threshing place. King Solomon began the construction <sup>2</sup>in the second month of the fourth year that he was king.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**2 Chronicles 6:32-33:** <sup>32</sup> “When foreigners who live in a distant land hear how great and powerful you are and how you are always ready to act, and then they come to pray at this Temple, <sup>33</sup>listen to their prayers. In heaven, where you live, hear them and do what they ask you to do, so that all the peoples of the world may know you and obey you, as your people Israel do. Then they will know that this Temple I have built is where you are to be worshipped.”—*Good News Bible*.\* [Other kings were there. See *PK* 45-46.]†

44. David made the provisions for the building of the temple. Solomon, of course, directed the work; but, **it was intended to be a house of prayer for the people of all nations.**

45. David recognized that everything they gave to be used for the building of the temple was really only what God previously had given them.

**1 Chronicles 29:14:** “Yet my people and I cannot really give you anything, because everything is a gift from you, and we have only given back what is yours already.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

46. With all of this in mind, it is clear that God intends for our material possessions to be used for the promotion of the gospel during our lives and during the lives of those we name in our wills.

47. There are numerous examples in the Bible when great revivals took place; then, people brought money to the sanctuary/temple or in the New Testament to the apostles. This was recorded in the Old Testament (Exodus 35:20-29; 2 Chronicles 31:1-12; Nehemiah 10:37-38; Malachi 3:6-12) and also in the New Testament. (Acts 2; Acts 4:34-37)

**Acts 4:34-37:** <sup>34</sup>There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale, <sup>35</sup>and hand it over to the apostles; and the money was distributed to each one according to his need.

<sup>36</sup> And so it was that Joseph, a Levite born in Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “One who Encourages”), <sup>37</sup>sold a field he



owned, brought the money, and handed it over to the apostles.—*Good News Bible*.\*

48. What would happen if all church members were faithful in the giving of their tithes and offerings and the sharing of their wealth with the cause of God?

[EGW:] This is as true in temporal as in spiritual things. The Lord does not come to this world with gold and silver to advance His work. He supplies men with resources, that by their gifts and offerings they may keep His work advancing. **The one purpose above all others for which God's gifts should be used is the sustaining of workers in the great harvest field. And if men, and women as well, will become channels of blessing to other souls, the Lord will keep the channels supplied. It is not returning to God His own that makes men poor; it is withholding that tends to poverty.**

**The work of imparting that which he has received will constitute every member of the church a laborer together with God. Of yourself you can do nothing; but Christ is the great worker. It is the privilege of every human being who receives Christ to be a worker together with Him.**

The Saviour said: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men [*sic*] unto Me." John 12:32. For the joy of seeing souls redeemed, Christ endured the cross. He became the living sacrifice for a fallen world. Into that act of self-sacrifice was put the heart of Christ, the love of God; and through this sacrifice was given to the world the mighty influence of the Holy Spirit. It is through sacrifice that God's work must be carried forward....

A flood of light is shining from the word of God, and there must be an awakening to neglected opportunities. **When all are faithful in giving back to God His own in tithes and offerings, the way will be opened for the world to hear the message for this time.** If the hearts of God's people were filled with love for Christ, **if every church member were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice, if all manifested thorough earnestness, there would be no lack of funds for home or foreign missions. Our resources would be multiplied; a thousand doors of usefulness would be opened, and we should be invited to enter. Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God.**

**If there was ever a time when sacrifices should be made, it is now. Those who have money should understand that now is the time to use it for God. Let not means be absorbed in multiplying facilities where the work is already established. Do not add building to building where many interests are now centered. Use the means to establish centers in new fields. Thus you may bring in souls who will act their part in producing.**

Think of our missions in foreign countries. Some of them are struggling to gain even a foothold; they are destitute of even the most meager facilities. **Instead of adding to facilities already abundant, build up the work in these destitute fields. Again and again the Lord has spoken in regard to this. His blessing cannot attend His people in disregarding His instruction.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 6, 448.3-450.2.†‡

49. God intends for the gospel to be preached in every part of the world. It takes means to accomplish that task.

[EGW:] **The Lord designs that the death of His servants shall be regarded as a loss because of the influence for good which they exerted and the many willing offerings which they bestowed to replenish the treasury of God. Dying legacies are a miserable substitute for living benevolence.** The servants of God should be making their wills every day in good works and liberal offerings to God. **They should not allow the amount given to God to be disproportionately small when compared with that appropriated to their own use.** In making their wills daily, they will remember those objects and friends that hold the largest place in their affections. Their best friend is Jesus. He did not withhold His own life from them, but for their sakes became poor, that through His poverty they might be made rich. He deserves the whole heart, the property, all that they have and are. **But many professed Christians put off the claims of Jesus in life and insult Him by giving Him a mere pittance at death. Let all of this class remember that this robbery of God is not an impulsive action, but a well-considered plan which they preface by saying: “Being in sound mind.” After having defrauded the cause of God through life they perpetuate the fraud after death. And this is with the full consent of all the powers of the mind.** Such a will many are content to cherish for a dying pillow.... Can these dwell with pleasure upon the requirement that will be made of them to give an account of their stewardship?—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 4, 481.1 [1880].†‡

50. Some might think that giving to the church is a kind of “works” and that we are not saved by works but by faith. So, how are faith and our works connected?

**Ephesians 2:8-10:** <sup>8-9</sup>For it is by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift, so that no one can boast about it. <sup>10</sup>God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.—*Good News Bible*.\*

51. So, how should all of this impact us? Do we regard the drawing up of a will that includes God’s cause as a sacred duty? As the preaching of the Word to save souls? If so, why?

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