

Managing for the Master—Till He Comes Unto the Least of These

Lesson #7 for February 18, 2023

Scriptures: Luke 4:16-19; 19:1-10; Isaiah 62:1-2; Deuteronomy 15:11; Matthew 19:16-22; 25:34; Job 29:12-16.

1. In numerous places throughout the Bible, God speaks of dealing with the fatherless, the widows, the aliens or strangers; these people are sometimes referred to as *the least of these my brethren*.

Matthew 25:40: [Jesus said:] “The King will reply, ‘I tell you, **whenever you did this for one of the least important of these members of my family, you did it for me!**’”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Matthew 25:40). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] How can we identify these people today? The strangers of Bible times were individuals who had to leave their homeland, perhaps because of war or famine. The equivalent in our day could be the millions of refugees who have become destitute because of circumstances that they did not choose.

The fatherless are children who have lost fathers through war, accident, or sickness. This group also could include those whose fathers are in prison or are otherwise absent. What a broad field of service is exposed here.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, February 11.[‡]

2. ***How does this apply to single-parent households? Does this apply to women who have never been married but have children?***

[BSG:] The widows are those, who for the same reasons as the fatherless, have lost their spouses. Many are the head of a single-parent family and could use the help that the church can provide.

As we will see this week, because we are managers of God’s business, helping the poor is not just an option. It is following the example of Jesus and obeying His commands.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, February 11.[‡]

3. If there were any group of people who were familiar with Jesus, it should have been the people of Nazareth. After Jesus left them and engaged in His ministry, they had heard rumors of His teachings and His miracles. When He came home, the rabbi in charge of the service asked Him to read the passage from Scripture for the day. It was not the first time Jesus had been asked to do that.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] [As a child,] The atmosphere of hope and courage that surrounded Him [Jesus] made Him a blessing in every home. And **often in the synagogue on the Sabbath day He was called upon to read the lesson from the prophets, and the hearts of the hearers thrilled as a new light shone out from the familiar words of the sacred text.**—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 74.2.^{†‡}

4. That day in Nazareth, Jesus read some of their favorite words from Isaiah.

Isaiah 61:1-2: ¹The Sovereign LORD has filled me with his Spirit.

He has chosen me and sent me
To bring good news to the poor,
To heal the broken-hearted,
To announce release to captives
And freedom to those in prison.

²He has sent me to proclaim

That the time has come

When the LORD will save his people

And defeat their enemies.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

5. **However, Jesus did not read the last line**, “And defeat their enemies.” This was the portion of the passage which the people loved to read. And it was part of the reason why they believed that when the Messiah would come, He would help them to defeat their enemies.
6. **So, why do you think Jesus did not read that last sentence? If that last sentence had not been attached, do you think they would have regarded the passage in Isaiah as a messianic prophecy?**

[BSG:] **Because the religious leaders apparently had overlooked the prophecies that spoke of a suffering Messiah and had misapplied those that pointed to the glory of His second coming (which should serve as a reminder to us of how important understanding prophecy really is), most of the people believed the false idea that the Messiah’s mission was to free Israel from its conquerors and oppressors, the Romans.** To think that the Messiah’s mission statement came from Isaiah 61:1, 2 must have been a real shock [when read without that last phrase!].

The poor usually were looked down upon by unscrupulous officials such as tax collectors, those in business, and even their own neighbors. **It commonly was thought that poverty was the curse of God and that their unfortunate condition must have been their own fault.** With this mindset, few people had any concern for the poor and their unhappy plight.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Sunday, February 12.^{†‡}

7. Even John the Baptist found it hard to believe that Jesus Christ was the coming Messiah when He was not making any move to lead the Israelites against the Romans.

Matthew 11:1-6: ¹ When Jesus finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he left that place and went off to teach and preach in the towns near there.

² When John the Baptist heard in prison about the things that Christ was doing, he sent some of his disciples to him. ³ “Tell us,” they asked Jesus, “are you the one John said was going to come, or should we expect someone else?”

⁴ Jesus answered, **“Go back and tell John what you are hearing and seeing: ⁵the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from**

dreaded skin diseases are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor. ⁶How happy are those who have no doubts about me!”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

[EGW:] **Like the Saviour’s disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ’s kingdom. He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 215.2.^{†‡}

We are not still waiting for the Israelites to rise up and defeat the Romans! What should be the essence of our Christianity and our goal for our time on this earth today?

James 1:27: What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

8. In the days of the ancient Israelites, God had made some very interesting and challenging provisions for the orphans, widows, and the strangers (sometimes called *aliens*).

Exodus 23:10-11,22: ¹⁰“For six years sow your field and gather in what it produces. ¹¹But in the seventh year let it rest, and do not harvest anything that grows on it. The poor may eat what grows there, and the wild animals can have what is left. Do the same with your vineyards and your olive trees....” [Could we do that today? Is that what we should do?]

²² **“But if you obey him and do everything I command, I will fight against all your enemies.”**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

9. ***Many of us live in places where the government or even charitable organizations have programs to support widows, orphans, the elderly, and the poor. How should the church’s responsibilities relate to these programs? Are we doing enough?***

Psalm 82:3-4: ³Defend the rights of the poor and the orphans; be fair to the needy and the helpless.

⁴**Rescue them from the power of the wicked.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

[BSG:] Then there are promises to those who help the needy. “He who gives to the poor will not lack” (*Prov. 28:27, NKJV*). “The king who judges the poor with truth, his throne will be established forever” (*Prov. 29:14, NKJV*). And King David noted, “Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord [*sic*] will deliver him in time of trouble” (*Ps. 41:1, NKJV*). This, then, always had been a priority in ancient Israel even if, at times, the people lost sight of it.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, February 13.^{‡§}

10. ***Do these promises apply to us in the 21st century? Are we primarily to look after our fellow believers? Or, even the unbelievers in the world? How are we doing?***

[BSG:] In contrast, even in more modern times, particularly in England, under the impact of what has been known as “**Social Darwinism**,” many thought that not only was there no moral imperative to help the poor but also that it was, in fact, wrong to do so. Instead, following the forces of nature, in which the strong survive at the expense of the weak, “Social Darwinists” believed that it would be detrimental to society to help the poor, the sickly, and the indigent because, if they multiplied, they would only

weaken the social fabric of the nation as a whole. However cruel, this thinking was the logical outgrowth of belief in evolution and the false narrative it proclaims.

How should the gospel, the idea that Christ died for everyone, impact how we treat everyone, regardless of who they are?—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, February 13.^{†‡§}

11. How did Jesus relate to the rich in His day? Let us consider several examples.

Matthew 19:16,21-22: ¹⁶ Once a man came to Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “**what good thing must I do to receive eternal life?**”...

²¹ **Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me.”**

²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he was very rich.—*Good News Bible.*^{*†} [Compare Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23.][‡]

12. Why do you think Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell everything and give to the poor? Should this command be implemented today? This young man made a terrible decision; instead of being willing to give up his idol, riches, he chose to keep the riches and rejected the chance to be a disciple of Jesus and receive eternal life. What a terrible trade-off!

[BSG:] Jesus doesn’t ask most of us to sell all we have and give the money to the poor. But money must have been this young man’s god, and though Jesus’ answer may seem quite severe, He knew that doing this was this man’s only hope of salvation....

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (*Mark 8:35–37*). What does it mean to lose your life for the sake of the gospel?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, February 14.^{‡§} [Could we still do that?][‡]

13. By contrast with that story, think of the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was despised and hated because he collected taxes on behalf of Herod and the Roman government. Often, such tax collectors collected more than they were directed by the government and pocketed the extra money for themselves.

14. Read the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. He was a wealthy tax collector.

Luke 19:1-10: ¹ Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. ²There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, “Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today.” [How did the people feel about that idea? They planned to crown Jesus as king at Jerusalem!]

⁶ Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. ⁷All the people who saw it started grumbling, “This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!”

⁸ Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. ¹⁰The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

15. How similar were the experiences of the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus? They were both wealthy. They both wanted to see Jesus because they felt that He had something they needed. Jesus told the rich young man to sell everything; however, He was satisfied when Zacchaeus said he was willing to give half. Why this difference?

[EGW:] **When the rich young ruler had turned away from Jesus, the disciples had marveled at their Master’s saying,** “How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!” They had exclaimed one to another, **“Who then can be saved?” Now they had a demonstration of the truth of Christ’s words, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” Mark 10:24, 26; Luke 18:27. They saw how, through the grace of God, a rich man could enter into the kingdom.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 555.3.††

16. Consider the story of Job, a man who was very wealthy and lived long before the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus. Notice the words of God about Job.

Job 1:8: “Did you notice my servant Job?” the LORD asked [the Devil]. “There is no one on earth as faithful and good as he is. He worships me and is careful not to do anything evil.”—*Good News Bible*.*††

17. Don’t you wish that God could say those words about you? And, incredibly, despite the disasters that came upon Job, he remained faithful to God. The Devil was sure that he could cause Job to give up his faith and turn against God. But, God essentially said: “No! Job is faithful and good, perfect and upright.” And who proved to be correct? God!

18. What kind of a person was Job before all the disasters hit him?

Job 29:12-16: ¹² When the poor cried out, I helped them;
I gave help to orphans who had nowhere to turn.

¹³ Those who were in deepest misery praised me,
and I helped widows find security.

¹⁴ I have always acted justly and fairly.

¹⁵ I was eyes for the blind,
and feet for the lame.

¹⁶ **I was like a father to the poor
and took the side of strangers in trouble.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

19. **Notice these very interesting words that Job spoke. He went to the extra effort to take the side of strangers in trouble and even search them out in order to help them! Should we be doing that in our day?**

[EGW:] Do not wait for them [the poor] to call your attention to their needs. Act as did Job. The thing that he knew not he searched out. Go on an

inspecting tour and learn what is needed and how it can be best supplied.—
Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 151.1.‡

20. **How many Seventh-day Adventist Christians in our day are doing this?** Compare:

Isaiah 58:6-8: ⁶ “The kind of fasting I want is this: **remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free.**

⁷Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.

⁸ “Then my favour will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed. I will always be with you to save you; my presence will protect you on every side.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

[EGW:] [After quoting Matthew 25:31-33, she wrote:] Thus Christ on the Mount of Olives pictured to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He represented its decision as turning upon one point. When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 637.1.‡

[EGW:] **As you open your door to Christ’s needy and suffering ones, you are welcoming unseen angels.** You invite the companionship of heavenly beings. They bring a sacred atmosphere of joy and peace. They come with praises upon their lips, and an answering strain is heard in heaven. Every deed of mercy makes music there. The Father from His throne numbers the unselfish workers among His most precious treasures.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 639.2.†

21. **We know about the statements both in the Old Testament and the New Testament that poverty will never cease any time short of the second coming. So, how should we respond? Is this a good excuse for us not to “take on” the situation of the poor?**

1 Timothy 6:17-19: ¹⁷Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, ¹⁹storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.—*New King James Version*.*§ [Think of the story of Paul. He was born wealthy!]‡

How do you think things would be in our world today if everyone had followed God’s original directions for dealing with the poor as given in the Old Testament?

Deuteronomy 15:4-5,11: ⁴ “The LORD your God will bless you in the land that he is giving you. Not one of your people will be poor ⁵if you obey him and carefully observe everything that I command you today....

¹¹ “There will always be some Israelites who are poor and in need, and so I command you to be generous to them.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Matthew 26:11: [Jesus said:] “You will always have poor people with you, but you will not always have me.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

22. God's original plan for the poor included not just a collective societal responsibility, but also individual responsibility for the poor. First of all, people were to be responsible for their own relatives. Special provisions were made at the end of every seven-year period and then even more provisions at the end of the 50-year cycle for all land and property to be returned to its original owners.

23. When Jesus spoke of *the least of these*, (Matthew 25:35-40) who was included?

[BSG:] *All Those Who Suffer*: From Bible references, it is possible to identify classes of suffering individuals who needed protection. Using a basic grouping concept, the poor were

(a) those who were incapable of providing for their material needs and thus were unable to live a dignified life because of social rejection or prejudice (prisoners, lepers, and foreigners, for example);

(b) those who suffered extreme economic deprivation because of adverse conditions (the poor, diseased, hungry, thirsty, naked, needy, and wretched);

(c) those with physical constraints (the mute, blind, and lame);

(d) those who were emotionally discouraged and, perhaps, psychologically unable to care for themselves without assistance (the brokenhearted, the mentally ill, and the perishing);

(e) victims of their own mistakes, oppression, and injustice (outcasts, exiles, prisoners, victims of inequity, brutality, and exploitation); and

(f) those who needed help to start their lives anew (*read Lev. 23:22; Deut. 15:11; Luke 4:18, 19; Isa. 62:1, 2; Deut. 15:11; Job 29:12-16; Matthew 11; Luke 7:20-22; Matthew 25:35-40*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 93-94.†§

24. Often, when we look at those who are impoverished in our day, the first questions which come to our minds are: "What happened to them? And why are they in this condition?"

[BSG:] **The circumstances of poverty and the question of whether the sufferer is responsible for his or her impoverished state are irrelevant.**

Neither is the question of whether such a person deserves to receive assistance or not. Even a person from a rival nation should be the object of God's love in practicing charity, as we see demonstrated in the parable of the Samaritan (*Luke 10:28-37, Luke 17:16-18, John 8:48*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 94.†§

25. Certainly, the best response to this question is the story of the good Samaritan.

Luke 10:27-37: ²⁷ The man answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind'; and 'Love your neighbour [*sic*] as you love yourself.' "

²⁸ "You are right," Jesus replied; "do this and you will live."

²⁹ But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?" [Pharisees argued about this question endlessly.]

³⁰ Jesus answered, "There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat

him up, leaving him half dead. ³¹It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side. ³²In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. ³⁴He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins [That was wages for a standard worker for two days.] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he told the innkeeper, 'and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.' "

³⁶ And Jesus concluded, "In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man attacked by the robbers?"

³⁷ The teacher of the Law answered, "**The one who was kind to him.**"

Jesus replied, "You go, then, and do the same."—*Good News Bible*.*††

26. Christ referred to Himself as *the Son of God* and our *Brother* and *Kinsman-Redeemer*. How are we to interpret those words and apply His teachings?
27. The story of the good Samaritan tells us that every person in need is our brother and that how we should relate to him/her is not linked to ties of blood, religion, or nationality. Our love should extend to the entire human race! God sent His Son to this world to save everyone without discrimination of any kind. (John 3:16)
28. How are we to implement charitable goals? Charity should motivate and enable a person to learn how to improve his/her own situation and not to continue to depend upon charity.
Proverbs 25:21-22: ²¹ If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink. ²²You will make them burn with shame, and the LORD will reward you.—*Good News Bible*.*
Romans 12:20-21: ²⁰Instead, as the scripture says: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink; for by doing this you will make them burn with shame." ²¹Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good.—*Good News Bible*.*
29. Those who suffer persecution because of their faith are God's special ones. We should help them as far as we are able. What about the Ukrainians right now?
Matthew 5:10-12: ¹⁰ "Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!
¹¹ "Happy are you when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers. ¹²Be happy and glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted."—*Good News Bible*.*
30. In our day, does charity encourage begging and parasitic dependency? What is the best way to employ charity to improve people's efforts at recovery? Charity is to become rehabilitative. (Isaiah 58:6-8; Luke 4:16-19)
31. So, apart from whatever efforts the church might undertake, **what is our individual responsibility for helping the poor?**

[BSG:] 1. *Feel the Desire to Participate*: Church members may adopt a personal support plan to assist someone in need. They also may work together to volunteer in an educational project run by the church to help the needy with life skills and personal development.

2. *A Dedicated Fund for the Poor*: Each member may set aside a dedicated amount or percentage from the family budget to regularly assist people in need, as well as to contribute to the welfare and development projects run by his or her church.

The money in every believer's hand should be divided into three equal parts: (a) God first, through tithes and offerings (*Mal. 3:8–10, Matthew 6:33*); (b) the family (*1 Tim. 5:8*); and (c) the destitute (*Gal. 2:10, James 1:27*). However, it is important to remember that.... [Then, Ellen White is quoted as below].—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 95.†§

[EGW:] **The tithe is set apart for a special use. It is not to be regarded as a poor fund. It is to be especially devoted to the support of those who are bearing God's message to the world; and it should not be diverted from this purpose.**—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* December 1, 1896, par. 25; *Counsels on Stewardship** 103.2.††

32. It may be difficult for us to understand exactly how leaving extra corn or wheat in the field or not harvesting the corners of our property should be applied to us who are not in the farming business.

[BSG:] There was a contribution that the Israelites called the “second tithe” (Heb. *ma'aser sheni*) of all the increase (*Deut. 14:28, 29; Deut. 26:12, 13*), set aside for the family's religious expenses and for charity.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 96.†§

Deuteronomy 14:28-29: ²⁸ “At the end of every third year bring the tithe of all your crops and store it in your towns. ²⁹This food is for the Levites, since they own no property, and for the foreigners, orphans, and widows who live in your towns. They are to come and get all they need. Do this, and the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Deuteronomy 26:12-13: ¹² “Every third year give the tithe—a tenth of your crops—to the Levites, the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows, so that in every community they will have all they need to eat. When you have done this, ¹³say to the LORD, ‘None of the sacred tithe is left in my house; I have given it to the Levites, the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows, as you commanded me to do. I have not disobeyed or forgotten any of your commands concerning the tithe.’”—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] Every devout Israelite **had to spend in Jerusalem one-tenth of the increase of their land as a second tithe.** (Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation Into Economic and Social Conditions During the New Testament Period* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969], pp. 28, 57).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 96.††§

[EGW:] This [second] tithe, or its equivalent in money, they were for two years to bring to the place where the sanctuary was established. **After presenting a thank offering to God, and a specified portion to the**

priest, the offerers were to use the remainder for a religious feast, in which the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow should participate. Thus provision was made for the thank offerings and feasts at the yearly festivals, and the people were drawn to the society of the priests and Levites, that they might receive instruction and encouragement in the service of God.

Every third year, however, this second tithe was to be used at home, in entertaining the Levite and the poor, as Moses said, “That they may eat within thy gates, and be filled.” Deuteronomy 26:12. This tithe would provide a fund for the uses of charity and hospitality.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 530.1-2.†‡ [How can we do this today?]

[EGW:] There are many who urge with great enthusiasm that all men should have an equal share in the temporal blessings of God. But this was not the purpose of the Creator. A diversity of condition is one of the means by which God designs to prove and develop character. Yet He intends that those who have worldly possessions shall regard themselves merely as stewards of His goods, as entrusted with means to be employed for the benefit of the suffering and the needy.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 535.2.‡

33. This lesson has included stories about Job, the rich young ruler, and Zacchaeus. But, the final results in each case were very different. They were all rich and presumed to be righteous. But, Job and Zacchaeus chose to take the side of God and were winners; the rich young ruler chose to keep his riches and was the loser.
34. So, what can we conclude? Is it true that care for the poor is a divine covenant command? Is this what you think of when you think of pure religion? (James 1:27)
35. What is the relationship between welfare and Christian charity? First Corinthians 13:1-3 tell us that Christian charity motivated by love is absolutely essential for salvation. It is not the same as government or even individual welfare given to the poor.

[EGW:] I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 3, 511.2.‡

[EGW:] **Those on the left hand of Christ, those who had neglected Him in the person of the poor and the suffering, were unconscious of their guilt. Satan had blinded them; they had not perceived what they owed to their brethren. They had been self-absorbed, and cared not for others’ needs.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 639.3.†‡

36. We cannot claim that we did not know the extent of our obligations to the poor and suffering. This lesson has outlined a very clear and challenging standard for us to follow. Are we ready?

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