

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

Lesson 8 “The Impact of Tithing”

Read for this week’s study

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

Memory Text

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

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

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

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

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

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

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

See material provided for lesson 7.

Further Study with Ellen White

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The sower multiplies his seed by casting it away. So it is with those who are faithful in distributing God's gifts. By imparting they increase their blessings. "Give, and it shall be given unto you," God has promised; "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." Luke 6:38. {AA 345.1}

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

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

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

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