

## **Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**

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

### **Lesson 9 “Offerings of Gratitude”**

#### **Read for this week’s study**

Matthew 6:19–21; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Peter 4:10; Luke 7:37–47; 2 Corinthians 8:8–15; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7.

#### **Memory Text**

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, 18 NKJV).

#### **Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. “Where Your Treasure Is”
- III. Stewards of the Grace of God
- IV. Our Best Offering
- V. The Motives of the Heart
- VI. The Experience of Giving
- VII. Further Study

#### **Questions and Notes for Consideration**

##### **Facilitator: Daniel Duda**

1. “This week we will look at important aspects of offerings. Giving generously, whether from means, time, or talent, is a powerful means of living our faith and revealing the character of the God whom we serve.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Notice these texts: “Bring the best of the first-fruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.” (Exodus 23:19) – “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:20) Compare it with our memory text.
3. In these verses, Jesus is God’s first-fruits, God’s firstborn gift to us. Thus, God not only gave, he gave his very best. What are the implications of this for us and our giving?
4. Given our self-centered perspective, the invitation to tithe can be distorted as an arbitrary command or austere requirement, a religious duty. And that understanding can often result in reprimanding others and manipulating them into giving more.

5. In reality, the whole earth belongs to God. Everything we have is a gift from him. The invitation to tithe becomes a gracious “taste and see” introduction to his children about the way his kingdom works, the generosity upon which it operates.
6. The Bible talks about *bringing* the tithe, not about *giving* the tithe (2 Chronicles 31:6; Malachi 3:10). That is not by chance. I cannot give something that does not belong to me. By bringing the tithe to God, I acknowledge him as the owner of all and source of all the blessings I have received.
7. In the Bible, it speaks about people bringing their tithe into God’s house. Perhaps it is not surprising, knowing the joy of generosity in his kingdom, that the Bible also speaks of people *giving* offerings over and above the tithe, an overflow of generous and grateful hearts.
8. When Jesus rose from the dead, it created a community of irrational joy and irrepressible generosity. People said, “We’re in a new community now, characterized by the resurrection. We know who and what we trust!” Love and joy overflowed in generosity, reflecting the over-abundant God who deals with us in such an incredibly gracious way.
9. Read Matthew 6:19-21. The passage is about priorities and the safety of having God as our central priority. While there is no question that we want to put him first, it’s so easy to allow things to take over, especially when they bring us money or fame.
10. The “treasure in heaven” does not refer to getting ready for the next life. The Jews of the day did not refer to the future life as “in heaven”. ‘Heaven’ is where God is right now. When we learn to love and serve God in the present, we will have treasure now as well as in the future.
11. Jesus wanted his followers to establish a treasure right now, one they could enjoy in the present as well as the future. Such treasure would not be subject to depreciation or loss. How is this accomplished? The clue is given within the chapter: learn to live in the presence of the loving Father. Operating on the principles of his kingdom, following his lead, establishes our priorities and protects against the pitfalls of playing to how others may see or judge us.
12. We joke about money (‘The Almighty Dollar’) because we are all too aware of its power. Jesus is warning that if we are not careful, money can be what determines our actions or priorities. When we enter into God’s kingdom, and allow him to guide our thinking and our decisions, money can be a blessing in our lives and the lives of others in the community.

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

See material provided for lesson 7.

### Further Study with Ellen White

The Teacher from heaven, no less a personage than the Son of God, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship Him in spirit and in truth. Christ revealed to men the fact that the strictest adherence to ceremony and form would not save them; for the kingdom of God was spiritual in its nature. Christ came to the world to sow it with truth. He held the keys to all the treasures of wisdom, and was able to open doors to science, and to reveal undiscovered stores of knowledge, were it essential to salvation. He presented to men that which was exactly contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the paternal love of the Father, who “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them, who treated them despitefully. In this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. Those who accepted His teaching were under the guardian care of angels, who were commissioned to strengthen, to enlighten, that the truth might renew and sanctify the soul. {FE 177.1}

When Adam’s sin plunged the race into hopeless misery, God might have cut Himself loose from fallen beings. He might have treated them as sinners deserved to be treated. He might have commanded the angels of heaven to pour out upon our world the vials of His wrath. He might have removed this dark blot from His universe. But He did not do this. Instead of banishing them from His presence, He came still nearer to the fallen race. He gave His Son to become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, . . . full of grace and truth.” Christ by His human relationship to men drew them close to God. He clothed His divine nature with the garb of humanity, and demonstrated before the heavenly universe, before the unfallen worlds, how much God loves the children of men. {SD 11.3}

The gift of God to man is beyond all computation. Nothing was withheld. God would not permit it to be said that He could have done more or revealed to humanity a greater measure of love. In the gift of Christ He gave all heaven. {SD 11.4}

Jesus came into the world to illustrate the character of God in His own life, and He swept back the misrepresentations that Satan had originated, and revealed the glory of God. It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father; for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. The unbelief of men was deep seated, and yet they could not resist the testimony of His God-like example, and His deeds of love and truth. {SD 139.3}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. {FLB 45.2}

The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. . . . Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. . . . {AG 104.2}

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. {SC 68.1}

As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven's light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ. {SC 68.2}

The badge of Christianity is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with God. By the power of His grace manifested in the transformation of character the world is to be convinced that God has sent His Son as its Redeemer. No other influence that can surround the human soul has such power as the influence of an unselfish life. The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian. {MH 470.1}

It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God gave to human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. The gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that, having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. {9T 254.1}

Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life. . . . To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient one, with the whole strength and mind and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored. {RC 51.2}

Like the first is the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. . . . {RC 51.3}

The souls of those who love Jesus will be surrounded with a pure, fragrant atmosphere. There are those who hide their soul hunger. These will be greatly helped by a tender word or a kind remembrance. The heavenly gifts, freely and richly bestowed by God, are in turn to be freely bestowed by us upon all who come within the sphere of our influence. Thus we reveal a love that is heaven-born, and which will increase as it is freely used in blessing others. Thus we glorify God. {OHC 231.5}