

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

#### Lesson 10 “The Role of Stewardship”

#### Read for this week’s study

Colossians 1:16–18; Hebrews 4:14–16; 3 John 3; Genesis 6:13–18; Revelation 14:6–12; 1 Peter 1:15, 16.

#### Memory Text

“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Thessalonians 4:7, NIV).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. Christ as the Center
- III. Sanctuary Doctrine
- IV. Christ-Centered Doctrinal Beliefs
- V. The Three Angels’ Messages
- VI. Stewardship
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “What are some of the core tenets of what it means to be a Christian steward? This week we will look more at the roles that stewardship plays in Christian life. We will do so, though, through an interesting analogy: a chariot wheel.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Because of the depth and breadth of stewardship, it is easy to get lost in the big picture, bogged down by tangents and overwhelmed by its enormity. Stewardship is simple yet also complex, and thus can be easily misunderstood. However, neither the Christian nor the church can exist or function without it. To be a Christian is to be a good steward as well.” (Sabbath afternoon)
3. There is no question that stewardship can be easily misunderstood. It has happened in the past, it still happens today. However, how easy is it to “get lost in the big picture”? Or is it by not seeing the ‘big picture’ Christians risk getting lost in details and complexity? Why is being a Christian synonymous to being a good steward?
4. “Just as the axle is the center of the wheel and thus carries the weight of a wagon, Christ is the center of the steward’s life. Just as a solid axle provides stability, allowing the wheels to rotate, Jesus is also the fixed and stable center of our

Christian existence (Hebrews 13:8). His influence should affect everything we think and do. All aspects of stewardship rotate around and find their center in Christ.” (Sunday’s lesson) What do we mean when we say that Christ is the center of stewardship?

5. “The sanctuary doctrine [is] the hub of the wheel. The hub attaches to the axle and provides more stability for the wheel when it turns. Having experienced death and a victorious resurrection (2 Timothy 1:10), Christ through His death is the foundation for His work in the sanctuary (Hebrews 6:19, 20) *and provides the stability for our faith*. And it is from the sanctuary that He ministers in our behalf here on earth (see Hebrews 8:1, 2).” (Monday’s lesson)
6. What is the connection between the sanctuary doctrine and stewardship? “In the sanctuary we see not only Christ’s death for us, but His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as well. We can see, too, in the Most Holy Place the importance of God’s law and the reality of final judgment. Central to it all is the promise of redemption made available to us by the shed blood of Jesus.” (Monday’s lesson)
7. What is the connection between stewardship and the three angels’ messages? The lesson states: “That rim of a wheel is near the point of contact with the ground and represents the mission of the three angels’ messages. Their mission is to protect against theological drift and identifies our responsibility in the last-day events.” (Wednesday’s lesson)
8. “The iron band on the rim can represent the concept of stewardship. This is the moment of truth, where our spiritual lives rub against our practical lives. [...] Stewardship is the outer wrapping of who we are and what we do.” (Thursday’s lesson)
9. The Jews of Jesus’ day put 23% of their income into the right ‘storehouse’, yet, Jesus showed that their spirituality did not bring them closer to God or make their religion attractive to outsiders (Matthew 23:15,23). What does it mean, to put God first in our lives? How do we know if we’re on the right track?
10. As we demonstrate grace-filled generosity how can we be good examples in all the areas of life it touches—talents, time, energy, attitude towards those who do not agree with us, etc.?
11. “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.” (Phil 4:12,13)
12. Often we hear the words “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength” taken out of context and applied to a variety of situations. The actual strength Paul is talking about is the strength to say, “I don’t have to have everything the world tells me I have to have in order to be content.” Can we admire and enjoy without having to acquire more things?
13. Paul says, “I have learned the secret of being content.” Contentment is actually something you learn, not something you buy. Stewardship is the art of learning to

live a content life, walking with a God we know we can trust.

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

In the meantime, what is Christ doing in the human form, as he waits for that moment when he can say, “It is done. I have a people who are ready. All have made up their mind.” Daniel says that in this interval, as he waits for everything to be done, that God is involved in a court experience; the court is sitting in judgment, the books are open, and Christ is there at the center of this court scene. Why would God need to have a judgment? Doesn’t he know already who’s fit to be saved, and fit to be lost? Could he not have posted a list back in eternity? Not that he would do it, because the rest of us couldn’t bear that information in advance. Not even the angels are given that information in advance. Only the Infinite One can be trusted with that kind of foreknowledge.

Well, if God doesn’t need a judgment, then who does? Is not the 6000-year experiment of the plan of salvation for the instruction of the whole onlooking universe? You remember many statements from Ellen White to that effect. That the plan of salvation was not just for this one small world, it had a far larger purpose, for the whole onlooking universe. The questions about God were universe-wide. The accusations against God were given universal publicity by the enemy. And therefore the answers and the solutions must become well known to all. Well, the questions about God were answered 1900 years ago, and the loyal universe has been celebrating God’s victory in the great controversy ever since. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Faith, Righteousness and Salvation, #15 “What is Christ Doing in the Heavenly Sanctuary—Especially Since 1844?”, recorded April, 1975, Lynwood, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/15MMFRS> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMFRS> (Part 2)

But surely there is much fearsome wording in these three angels’ messages. If this is God’s last pleading with his children, would it be better perhaps to have just the first angel’s message, and then the last sentence of number three? If this is pleading with us to trust him, might it have been better to just have it say, “Honor God. Give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the seas, and the springs of water.” And then go straight to, “This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.” Why do we need all that fearsome wording in between? Wouldn’t that have seemed more like pleading?

Of course, we must note the sequence of what has gone before, particularly Revelation 12, 13, and then 14. You recall that chapter 12 describes the war, and all the efforts of Satan to deceive

both angels and men. Then chapter 13 describes Satan's final efforts to deceive, which is the subject for our conversation next time. This time, in his final effort, he is primarily seeking to deceive the people living on this planet. Chapter 13 describes Satan's almost complete success. The whole world worships him, except for a certain few. It even describes the powers and the organizations that Satan works through in order to accomplish his deceptive purposes. These powers and organizations are represented by certain symbols in the customary biblical way that we are familiar with. More than that, near the end of chapter 13 that describes his final campaign, his loyal followers are pictured as bearing a certain mark of their preference for him and their trust in him—that mark that is notoriously known as the "*mark of the beast.*"

Then comes chapter 14, God's last pleading with his children, the three final messages of warning and invitation that are the subject of our conversation this evening. Knowing what has gone before one is not so surprised to find the fearsome words of warning in the second and third angel's messages. But we should always note when we read these three, that the first angel comes with good news. He comes with the everlasting gospel. And as you know, gospel means good news. Notice that he doesn't come with new information. God's last appeal is not something new. It is not something additional. It is the everlasting good news. For this good news has always been the truth. It will always remain the truth. It will always remain the basis of our faith and trust, and freedom for eternity.

So the first angel comes with the everlasting gospel, the everlasting good news. What is it? Well, everyone ought, perhaps, to state his own version. I had the privilege of putting it on the back of the invitation to these conversations about God. Right on the back, I wrote:

The Good News is God is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be; arbitrary, unforgiving, and severe. Jesus said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." God is just as loving and trustworthy as His Son; just as willing to forgive and heal. Though infinite in majesty and power, our Creator is an equally gracious person who values nothing higher than the freedom, the dignity, and the individuality of his intelligent creatures, that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey may be freely given.

This is the truth revealed through all the books of Scripture. This is the everlasting good news that wins the trust and admiration of God's loyal children throughout the universe.

Could you be dogmatic about that? That's the only truth that is safe to be dogmatic about. To be like Paul and say, "Even if an angel came with a different picture of God, it is wrong, and I will not believe it." To me, this is not a negotiable position. You see one can be adamant, immovable, and dogmatic about freedom, because you never hurt anybody with that view. You are immovably committed to freedom, and to the picture of God as valuing nothing higher than

the freedom of his children. To me, that is the essence of the message of the first angel. So the second angel comes and simply says, “The opposition has collapsed in corruption and defeat.” The third angel warns of the inevitable consequence of preferring Satan’s lies to this magnificent truth.

Now it’s true that the third angel’s message has the most fearsome wording in the whole Bible. I’m sure the devil would have us misunderstand these words as the words of an angry God. But all the previous books of Scripture have prepared us to understand the terrible consequences of sin. We watched Jesus die. We have read the description. We know how God would do anything to spare his children. We have been prepared all through Scripture, story after story, to see our heavenly Father, the one who would so much prefer to speak gently to us of the truth. We could trust him to raise his voice one last time in these messages of warning and invitation. The God we worship would never allow us to pass through these closing events, unenlightened and unwarned. We’ve also been prepared to understand that behind the fearsome warning of the third angel’s message, there stands the God of Hosea crying, “How can I give you up? Why will you die? How can I let you go?” Remember that the one who wrote the awesome words of the third angel, wrote the text that comes next on the sheet, 1 John 4:16, 18: “God is love . . . There is no fear in love” (Williams). Remember that the apostle John, the beloved disciple who knew all about love, and there is no need to be afraid, wrote the fearsome words of the third angel’s message, because he understood. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16, “God’s Last Pleading with His Children” recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>*

Lou: I was thinking about the title for the evening, “God’s Last Pleading With His Children,” and as I looked down at those messages in Revelation 14, particularly the second and the third, I wonder if the title tonight might have been more appropriately, “God’s Last Threatening.” Isn’t that what’s happening here?

Graham: Well, it certainly is a warning. It’s just that it’s so serious. If we were more willing to listen, he wouldn’t have to talk like this. Remember we just had the words of Hosea 14, “Come home, come home,” but we’re not listening. This is the God who sent she-bears and thundered on Sinai because he doesn’t want to lose his children. I forget whether we used this illustration before, but if a father were walking in the mountains on a trail with his son, and his son got perilously near the precipice, to save his son, the father might first talk softly, “Son stop where you are.” But the wind is blowing and the son doesn’t hear. The father raises his voice, “Son, stop where you are!” He still doesn’t hear. Then the father thunders to his son. The people following up the trail say, “Listen to that father bellowing to his poor little boy.” Then they

come up the trail and learn why he raised his voice, and they might apologize. And I think we owe God an apology for misunderstanding the times that he's raised his voice.

Lou: So what you're really saying is that it's not anger in the voice of God. It's the serious consequences that call forth such a serious warning.

Graham: He would spare us, that's the thing. It's like the tobacco problem, you know. People aren't believing the danger, and so they're printing it in red and underlining it, and they're trying to find more ways to warn people.

Lou: Trying to get the message through.

Graham: That this is serious. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16 with Lou Venden, "God's Last Pleading with His Children" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>*

I think that we could encourage people to believe they could grow up from rebirth to maturity much sooner; and it would be much more exciting. You know, when we're baptized, we think "I've launched myself on sixty-five years of slow sanctification." I think, "No, why not grow up without delay as quickly as possible and be settled into the truth?" But then when we have an absolutely out-of-sight, forbidding conception of perfection, we think, "well, I'm not going to make it anyway." The conception of perfection we find in the Bible is the conception of an individual who is so convinced of this truth about God, that if Satan should come as an angel of light—even as "Christ", and say God is arbitrary, vengeful, unforgiving and severe, a twelve year-old might be able to say, "That's not true and I will not believe it." So I think we have made the difference too extended in there—and God can, under the accelerating, energizing events of the close of time, he can produce a generation of grown-up Jobs of all ages. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4, "God's Way of Restoring Trust" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

Lou: I want to ask the same question but in another way: Isn't it enough to be justified? Do I also have to be sanctified? Are you saying here that the healing-trust model really challenges that kind of separation and that kind of thinking?

Graham: Very much so. Of course those two words do not occur in the Bible. They are English words of Latin derivation. Not to make light of them. But the Greek word could be more literally translated "set right, put right" for "justification." Now if a person has been really set right with

God and he now loves and trusts him and is willing to listen, don't you think he would say, "What else do you want me to do, Lord?"

"I want to heal you if you will cooperate."

"Absolutely! Just tell me, and I'll follow." There's no way to be justified without sanctification following. If you're not willing to be kept right, you obviously haven't been set right. So being set right and kept right are all part of the same package. They belong together. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14 with Lou Venden, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>

### **Recommended Listening:**

Faith, Righteousness and Salvation, #15 "What is Christ Doing in the Heavenly Sanctuary—Especially Since 1844?" is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/15MMFRS> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMFRS> (Part 2)

Conversations About God #16 "God's Last Pleading With His Children" is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

### **Further Study with Ellen White**

Holiness is wholeness to God. The soul is surrendered to God. The will, and even the thoughts, are brought into subjection to the will of Christ. The love of Jesus fills the soul, and is constantly going out in a clear, refreshing stream, to make glad the hearts of others (MS 33, 1911). {6BC 1076.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual

and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

Sanctification means habitual communion with God. There is nothing so great and powerful as God's love for those who are His children. {HP 129.5}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. The living God has given in His holy law a transcript of His character. The greatest Teacher the world has ever known is Jesus Christ; and what is the standard He has given for all who believe in Him? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48. As God is perfect in His high sphere of action, so man may be perfect in his human sphere. {CT 365.2}

The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. There is opened before us a path of continual advancement. We have an object to reach, a standard to gain, which includes everything good and pure and noble and elevated. There should be continual striving and constant progress onward and upward toward perfection of character. . . . {CT 365.3}

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

Wherever the religion of Christ works, it will brighten and sweeten every detail of life with more than an earthly joy and a higher than earthly peace (Letter 2a, 1892). {6BC 1117.15}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience. {AA 560.3}

As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. . . . At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. As our

opportunities multiply . . . We shall become strong to bear responsibility, and our maturity will be in proportion to our privileges. {COL 65.2}

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, “Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.” This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ. {SC 70.1}

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the subject for the soul’s contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness. {SC 70.2}

None need fail of attaining, in his sphere, to perfection of Christian character. By the sacrifice of Christ, provision has been made for the believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ’s character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through co-operation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God’s assurance to us that we, too, may obtain complete victory. {AA 531.2}

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance. {COL 384.2}

There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God. {DA 311.3}

Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the

passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around. {AA 551.2}

As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus (RH April 24, 1900). {7BC 943.2}

In His Word God reveals what He can do for human beings. He molds and fashions after the divine similitude the characters of those who will wear His yoke. Through His grace they are made partakers of the divine nature, and are thus enabled to overcome the corruption that is in the world through lust. It is God who gives us power to overcome. Those who hear His voice and obey His commandments are enabled to form righteous characters (Letter 44, 1903). {7BC 943.3}

God fixes no limit to the advancement of those who desire to be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Through prayer, through watchfulness, through growth in knowledge and understanding, they are to be "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." Thus they are prepared to work for others. It is the Saviour's purpose that human beings, purified and sanctified, shall be His helping hand. For this great privilege let us give thanks to Him who "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." {AA 478.3}