

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

Lesson 13 “The Results of Stewardship”

Read for this week’s study

2 Timothy 3:1–9; Ezekiel 14:14; Philippians 4:4–13; Proverbs 3:5; 1 Peter 2:11, 12; Matthew 7:23; 25:21.

Memory Text

“Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Stewardship and Godliness
- III. Contentment
- IV. Trust
- V. Our Influence
- VI. The Words We Want (and Don’t Want) to Hear
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This final lesson will look at the personal benefits, spiritual outcomes, successful results, our influence, and the key to contentment in the steward’s life, knowing that it is all about ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27, NKJV).” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Stewardship is the act of thriving while managing God’s call to live godly lives.” (Sabbath afternoon) Thriving is an important part of what Christ presents in the Sermon on the Mount as a characteristic of His new community. What do you think is behind God’s urgent desire for us to thrive even in these conditions of sin?
3. “God gives us the skill to live differently than any other lifestyle on earth (2 Corinthians 6:17), and it is something that others should notice and even ask about.” (Sabbath afternoon) While we should definitely be ready to give an answer to those who ask about our convictions (1 Peter 3:15), whether people ask or not, is not in our hands. What do you do in societies or circles where people do not ask? Does it automatically mean that they are wicked or uninterested?

4. Traditionally, we have a lot to say about God's work **in** us (=sanctification), and God's work **through** us (=mission), but we can be quite blind to God work **around** us. It is easy to forget that the Holy Spirit is not our private property and that he works on all minds (John 1:9). How can we learn from the best around us including in the area of stewardship? Are there lessons which are long overdue?
5. Who is 2 Timothy 3:1-9 talking about? It is easy to relate it to the world around us, but it actually speaks about people in the church! How is it possible that religion, which has been given the gift of sharing the most liberating story ever told, can also create people like that? What can be done to help free people from this enslaving type of religion?
6. How can we help people who rejected God and religion because they have been exposed to exactly this type of spirituality?
7. The strongest argument **in favor** of Christianity are Christians – their joy, their certainty, their completeness, their wholesomeness, their aliveness. The strongest argument **against** Christianity are Christians – when they are somber, joyless, self-righteous, smug, narrow-minded, judgmental and vindictive. Christianity dies a sad death. How many people are radically and permanently repelled from Christianity by Christians who are insensitive, rigid, unapproachable, boring, lifeless, obsessive and dissatisfied?
8. "Spirituality wrongly understood or pursued, is a major source of human misery and rebellion against God." (Dallas Willard) Why did Jesus devote a significant portion of his ministry to correcting spirituality wrongly understood or pursued?
9. What is biblical contentment? Will content people lose the drive to grow and move forward? What is God's will and goal for us? Is it possible that contentment looks different for different people? If yes, what does it look like in my own life?
10. First century Judaism was characterized by boundary markers, which were external, superficial signs or practices that set one group apart from another. The most notorious were Sabbath, circumcision and clean & unclean food laws. Is it possible that money and possessions can become just another boundary marker in 21st century Christianity, especially in the first world?
11. "The simple program of Christ for winning the whole world is to make each person he touches magnetic enough with love to draw others." (Frank Laubach) How can the picture of God we believe in transform the kind of people we are becoming?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Surely it's clear in the epistle to Rome that all that God asks of us is that we trust him, because if we trust him, without reservation, with no cheating, with a complete willingness to listen, he can heal and save and restore us. But if I'm forever violating that trust, that relationship with

him, if sometimes I'll listen and sometimes I don't, sometimes I'm honest with him and sometimes I'm not, will he condemn me? Do you doctors condemn your patients who are foolish enough not to take their medicine and so become more and more seriously ill? Now you might correct them; that's for sure. You might show great concern. You might if need be sound very stern and severe. You might read them the medical equivalent of the third angel's message, if you persist in this you're going to die. You might well do that. But you wouldn't condemn them, would you? What good would it do to send them home condemned and humiliated? Corrected to be sure.

Whenever we violate our relationship of trust in God he can't trust us. Sometimes we're with him, sometimes we're not, it's a very irregular relationship. Sometimes we're so honest and sometimes we cheat, we're looking for alibis, we're always rationalizing. He cannot heal us and we lose. This is a rebellious, untrusting, untrustworthy relationship. And that's why sin is so dangerous. That's why sin results in death, not because our heavenly Father and physician will kill us, but the man who doesn't trust God, the man who's cheating will reap the consequences. He will die, for God cannot heal this person who doesn't trust him. And I think this is such a correction to the definition so often used, sin is just breaking this or that rule and you know what God does to sinners. This suggests that breaking our trusting relationship with God is the most dangerous thing we can do. The consequences are very disastrous both in this life and in the end, but not at the hands of our gracious God. If we persist in cheating he will let us go and reap the consequences. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 14, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/27MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

As the Bible describes our beginning, this world was to be a place of perfect freedom and security. Trusting each other and trusting God, what would there be to fear? But the enemy of God is our enemy too. The one who would deceive us into distrusting God works also to destroy our trust in each other and our own trustworthiness. And where there is no mutual trust and love, there is no real freedom, no real security.

Yet these are the things in life we all desire the most. How good we feel when in times of emergency we show what friends we could always be! How pleased we are when countries work together to rush medicine and food to a neighbor struck by some natural disaster! The whole world applauds when the ship of one nation steams to the rescue of another—especially when it flies the flag of an old enemy.

If only universal trust could somehow be restored, then we could enjoy again that peaceful assurance that comes with faith in God and confidence in each other. Then we could feel once

more that vital sense of dignity and self-respect that come with knowing that God and our friends can safely place their confidence in us. . . .

The Bible points forward to a time of worldwide peace, a day when love and trust will fill God's whole universe. Then "no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord" {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations*, recorded February , 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

You see, Moses had been maybe the best friend God ever had. God even talked to him face to face—even differently than the way God talks to a prophet with visions and dreams. He says, "I talk to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friends." And the people knew Moses had a special relationship with God, and they revered him—at least when they were behaving. They had seen him go up on Mt. Sinai and come down carrying the Ten Commandments. If your pastor came down some mountain nearby, carrying the Ten Commandments and his face shining so brightly that you couldn't look at him, wouldn't he have increased influence among the congregation? Moses had enormous influence. And that's what made his behavior at the rock so serious. Moses had pictured God as angry when he was not. God wished by his kindness to lead some of those Israelites to repentance (Romans 2:4). And Moses deprived God of that opportunity. Standing as they were on the verge of going into Canaan to meet those well-armed tribes there, they needed to trust God very closely. And God purposed to win them, with all their complaining and grumbling. He was not going to condemn them or criticize them; just give them abundant water. "Moses," he said, "don't even strike the rock."

But Moses pictured God as angry.

What a contrast to the way Moses had behaved once earlier when God said, "I'm tired of these people. Step aside. Let me destroy them and I'll make a great nation out of you."

And Moses said, "God, you couldn't do that. Think what it would do to your reputation. What would the Egyptians think? They would assume that you couldn't take your people to the Promised Land!"

And God said, "I love that, Moses. Who knows me as well as you do? You really are my friend."

But now under pressure, Moses let God down. He misrepresented God as vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. And that was precisely Satan's sin in the beginning, the sin that is the most devastating of all.

God has honored his friend Moses ever since. He even personally buried him and resurrected him, and later sent him down to comfort his Son on the Mount of Transfiguration. But God had to go on record before the eyes of the onlooking universe as to the terrible seriousness of Moses' sin. It wasn't just that he disobeyed, or by smiting the rock he had "spoiled a symbol." He had, to be sure. But Moses had broken faith with God. He hadn't shown himself to be God's trusted, trusting friend. And that's the essence of sin.

How many of us have committed the same sin? How many of us have hurt our own children, and others who trust us to tell the truth about our God? Have you apologized lately to God for ever putting him in a bad light and suggesting that he's not the kind of person we know him to be?

Moses repented (as we know) and became a better friend of God than ever before. But so many people have continued to mistrust. What happens—what are the results?

Not "what are the penalties?" {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God, #2, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe?"* recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

Which one of us would have dared to approach God with the incredible idea of John 15:15? "We are no longer willing to be called your servants. We insist that from now on we be addressed as friends!"

Actually, it's an honor to be God's servant. And how wonderful it would be to hear God say in the end, "Well done, you good and faithful servant." But it's God himself who offers us something better, far better—to be his understanding friends.

Nor should we make light of that bumper sticker, "God said it! I believe it! That settles it!" God has said, "I call you no longer my servants, because servants just do what they're told. I call you rather my friends, for I want you to understand." A truly good and faithful servant will live up to the meaning of that bumper sticker and take very seriously what God has said about his preference for friends.

Do you consider yourself God's servant or God's friend?

"Oh," you might say, "I consider myself something even better. I consider myself God's child."

Why is it better to be God's child?

"Ah, because children have rights, and I prize the rights Jesus bought for me at such price."

As I heard a man say in the pulpit the other day, “When I get to heaven and meet God, and he should wonder how a person such as I could possibly be there, all I’ll have to do is show him my rights. He doesn’t have to like me. All he has to do is see my right to be there.”

To me, that’s servant talk. And it’s certainly not very friendly. Besides, I know many children who are not their father’s friends. Absalom was David’s son, and he was his father’s worst enemy. (The sad story is told in 2 Samuel 15-18.)

So I would have to say for myself, I would rather be God’s friend than just his child. But fortunately we can be all three. We don’t have to choose.

I believe it is a great honor to be God’s servant, and especially to be regarded as a faithful one. It is also a high privilege to be called God’s child.

But most of all, I’d rather be his friend. A trusting and trusted friend. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 23-24. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter2.html>

These are the consequences of not loving, trusting, and admiring our God enough to be willing to listen and to do things his way. Hosea 5:4: “For their spirit is steeped in unfaithfulness and they know nothing of the Lord.” (Phillips)

And then Hosea 4:1, and 5:6, 12: “There is no honesty nor compassion nor knowledge of God . . . My people! Asking advice from a piece of wood and consulting a staff for instructions!” (Phillips)

Now this raises the significant point, how could it be said that Israel does not know God? Who else knew God so well? Look at all the prophets, and all their marvelous pictures of God. Jeremiah said, “I’m glad to know God as I do.” But the way many people knew God those days was not knowing God in the special, biblical sense. That is, to know God as a friend; to even know God intimately as a husband and a wife know each other. The Bible says, “Adam knew Eve” his wife. And as a result, they didn’t learn each other’s names. They had a baby. Elsewhere, God says of Israel, “Thee only have I known.” He knew all the rest. But he knew *them* in a special way. And when those disappointed saints find that they are not acceptable in the kingdom, and they plead, “Lord, Lord. Open unto us.” He says, “Go away. I never knew you.” Why, he knew the hairs on their head, but he did not know them as friends. And friendship is the very essence of the relationship God wishes to have with his people. If Israel had really *known* God, they would have been better friends. They would have been jealous for his reputation. And they would have been better people themselves, as were the wonderful prophets in the Old Testament who wrote so well of God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #2, “What Went Wrong in God’s Universe?” recorded

January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ does not bid His followers strive to shine. He says, Let your light shine. If you have received the grace of God, the light is in you. Remove the obstructions, and the Lord's glory will be revealed. The light will shine forth to penetrate and dispel the darkness. You cannot help shining within the range of your influence. {COL 420.1}

God permits every person to exercise his individuality. No human mind should be submerged in another human mind. But the invitation has been given, "Let *this mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Each person is to stand before God with an individual faith, an individual experience, knowing for himself that Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. {OHC 108.3}

Men and women can reach God's ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can unite hearts in bonds that are of heavenly origin. Love will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet more firm, than can be woven by the looms of earth. The result is not a tissue fabric, but a texture that will bear wear and test and trial. Heart will be bound to heart in the golden bonds of a love that is enduring. {MH 362.3}

The work of Christ in the heart does not destroy man's powers. Christ directs, strengthens, ennobles, and sanctifies the faculties of the soul. It is through personal acquaintance with Him that we become qualified to represent His character to the world. John says, "As many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). And again, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (verse 16). {TDG 219.3}

It is when we come into difficult places that He reveals His power and wisdom in answer to humble prayer. Have confidence in Him as a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. He will reveal Himself to you as One who can help in every emergency. He who created man, who gave him his wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, will not withhold that which is necessary to sustain the life He has given. He who has given us His word—the leaves of the tree of life—will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children. {MH 199.4}

The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife. {HP 35.3}

Christ's followers are sent to the world with the message of peace. Whoever, by the quiet, unconscious influence of a holy life, shall reveal the love of Christ; whoever, by word or deed, shall lead another to renounce sin and yield his heart to God is a peacemaker. {HP 35.4}

And "blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). The spirit of peace is evidence of their connection with heaven. The sweet savor of Christ surrounds them. The fragrance of the life, the loveliness of the character, reveal to the world the fact that they are children of God. Men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. {HP 35.5}

But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace. Then let us not cast away our confidence, but have firm assurance, firmer than ever before. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," and He will help us to the end. 1 Samuel 7:12. Let us look to the monumental pillars, reminders of what the Lord has done to comfort us and to save us from the hand of the destroyer. Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us,—the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed,—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us through the remainder of our pilgrimage. {SC 125.1}

Christ is "the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), and it is His mission to restore to earth and heaven the peace that sin has broken. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1. Whoever consents to renounce sin and open his heart to the love of Christ, becomes a partaker of this heavenly peace. {MB 27.2}

There is no other ground of peace than this. The grace of Christ received into the heart, subdues enmity; it allays strife and fills the soul with love. He who is at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmisings will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife. {MB 27.3}

Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isaiah 26:3. Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory. And

that character which expresses the glory—character—of Christ will be received into the Paradise of God. A renovated race shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy. {DA 331.2}

As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more intense will be our happiness. As we walk with Jesus in this life, we may be filled with His love, satisfied with His presence. All that human nature can bear, we may receive here. {DA 331.3}

If happiness is drawn from outside sources and not from the Divine Fount, it will be as changeable as varying circumstances can make it; but the peace of Christ is a constant and abiding peace. It does not depend on any circumstance in life, on the amount of worldly goods, or the number of earthly friends. Christ is the fountain of living waters, and happiness and peace drawn from Him will never fail, for He is a well-spring of life. {FW 88.2}

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only One who can help us out of all our difficulties, and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear in mind that He is present, and is directing us to commune with Him. We are to keep our minds stayed upon God; and in our weakness, He will be our strength; in our ignorance, He will be our wisdom; in our frailty, He will be our enduring might. {SD 27.2}

Divine wisdom will order the steps of those who put their trust in the Lord. Divine love will encircle them, and they will realize the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. {OHC 324.6}

Righteous words and deeds have a more powerful influence for good than all the sermons that can be preached.—ML 114. {VSS 52.1}

The voice and tongue are gifts from God, and if rightly used, they are a power for God. Words mean very much. They may express love, devotion, praise, melody to God, or hatred and revenge. Words reveal the sentiments of the heart. They may be a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. The tongue is a world of blessing, or a world of iniquity. {SD 180.5}

Some are seen to come forth from their daily communion with God clothed with the meekness of Christ. Their words are not like a desolating hail, crushing everything before it; they come forth sweetly from their lips. They scatter seeds of love and kindness all along their path, and

that all unconsciously, because Christ lives in their heart. Their influence is felt more than it is seen. {SD 180.6}

Kind, tender, compassionate words will flow from sanctified hearts and lips. {SD 180.7}

The closer we keep to Christ, and the more meek and lowly and self-distrustful we are, the firmer will be our hold on Christ, and the greater will be our power, through Christ, to convert sinners; for it is not the human agent that moves the soul. Heavenly intelligences co-operate with the human agent and impress the truth upon the heart. Abiding in Christ we are able to exert an influence over others; but it is because of the presence of Him who says: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:20. The power we have to overcome Satan is the result of Christ working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. {6T 399.2}

Recommended Reading: *Steps to Christ* Chapter 8 – “Growing Up Into Christ”

<https://egwwritings.org/>