

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### First Quarter 2023: *Managing for the Master—Till He Comes*

### Lesson 8 “Planning for Success”

#### Read for this week’s study

Ecclesiastes 12:1; Genesis 2:15; 1 Timothy 5:8; Colossians 3:23, 24; Genesis 39:2–5; Proverbs 3:5–8.

#### Memory Text

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23, 24, NKJV).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. First Things First
- III. The Blessing of Work (Ideally)
- IV. The Earning Years
- V. Working With Integrity
- VI. Seeking Godly Counsel
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we are going to look at the idea of ‘success’ in the context of basic stewardship and financial principles. No matter who we are or where we live, money and finances are going to be a part of our life, whether we like it or not. What, then, are some practical steps, that we can take along the way that, though not guaranteeing ‘success,’ can nevertheless help us avoid common pitfalls and mistakes that can make financial success a bit more difficult?” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. The Bible speaks about how God is acting in the world, and His invitation to His family to identify with this work and collaborate with their Creator. God is concerned with all of life, not only religion. The church has had an uneasy relationship with the material world ever since Paul criticized Greek Gnostics in the first century for their perversion of the Gospel. This disengagement resulted in an unbalanced preoccupation with spiritual matters and preference for a convenient,

- private, otherworldly gospel concerned with ‘getting souls to heaven’, rather than expanding to include solid informed critical thought about the materiality of our faith. Whether we like it or not, the Christian faith is rooted in materiality. Materiality sets our hearts in a right relationship to “things,” while materialism traps us in service to our “things.” A healthy understanding of the role of money in their own lives and in the community empowers believers to reengage with the material world for the benefit of everyone.
3. Based on Ecclesiastes 12:1 (“Remember your creator in the days of your youth”) and using the example of Jacob (Genesis 28:20-22 & 29:9-20), Sunday’s lesson urges us to “make our spiritual decision and our lifework decision before committing to marriage.” While certainly desirable, how fair is it to use 77-year-old Jacob as a role model in this regard? What do we mean when we try to put “first things first” in the realm of money and possessions?
  4. Monday’s and Tuesday’s lesson focus on the “blessing of work” during the usual 40 earning years. What is the role of work before and after the Fall (Genesis 2:15; 3:17; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:8-10)?
  5. In the fallen world, work has a tendency to exploit, discriminate, destroy the environment, and cause dissatisfaction. The dehumanization caused by work should be of great concern to Christians, not only in industrial and post-industrial societies, but throughout the world. The doctrine of creation helped to develop a vocational understanding of work. But the NT theology of work should be based on *charismata* (gifts of the Holy Spirit) and the various activities that human beings engage in to satisfy their own needs and the needs of their fellow creatures.
  6. When viewed from the perspective of the work of Christ and His Spirit as “*transformatio mundi*”, human work can be seen as cooperation with God. “God the Creator chooses to become ‘dependent’ on the human helping hand and makes human work a means of accomplishing his work in the world.” (Miroslav Volf) For the majority of people in the modern industrial and information societies, work is no end in itself, but a necessary means to survival. This leads to alienation of the worker from self, community, and the product of their work. For work to be human, work must be an end in itself. To have full human dignity, it must be significant for people as work, not merely as a necessary instrument of earning or of socializing. People need to enjoy their work. It is transformational when we are able to view work as cooperation with God in the new creation. Then even undignified, dissatisfying, non-creative, and un-freeing realities of work can become holy endeavors and richly satisfying.
  7. Wednesday’s lesson deals with the role of integrity (Genesis 39:2-5). Why is this so significant in the context of money? How is *integrity* connected with greed? And what is the connection of integrity with the *extortion* economy so often observed, where the rich are devouring the poor, with subsequent destruction that seeks to sustain an unsustainable standard of living? How is integrity connected with an

*empowering* economy that is structured for the common good and abundance as opposed to self-interest and scarcity?

8. “There are scores of secular money management gurus out there, but God warned us against consulting them for the management of the assets He has entrusted to us.” (Thursday’s lesson) So what does Proverbs 3:5–8 provide that the secular gurus do not provide?
9. Money is a useful vehicle for the exchange of goods and it justifies market transactions. At the same time, money can be a powerful symbol of influence, power, success, and virtue. If an objective analysis of the successful economic production of Egypt were done, it might have concluded that the pain of the slaves was a necessary, normal, even natural arrangement of labor—the cost of doing business. But God intervened and brought a new perspective. Do we have enough courage and freedom and daring and sensibility to acknowledge that the pain of ruthless exploitation is not normal and cannot be the measure of success in His kingdom? The opportunity, if we choose, is to be part of that neighborly community that is in tune with the heart of God, centered around who God is and how God operates.

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

As these women were brought in, they had their own religions, and Solomon was a gentleman, a very wise and gracious philosopher and gentleman. And he thought, “I’m not going to lay my religion on these people.” So very generously, in the full ecumenical spirit, he built for each of his new wives a shrine where she could worship her own god.

And soon Jerusalem was dotted with these shrines. And Solomon thought he could preside over all of this without becoming confused. Though through Moses God had said, “Don’t be so confident. Don’t even run the risk of getting close to these heathen. Don’t marry them. You’re not that strong.” And isn’t the history of Israel the history of the influence of these intermarriages with these other nations, and the gods of these foreign women apparently being very attractive and very seductive, and the Israelites following after these heathen deities? Even wise King Solomon was seduced by this thing.

Years later, after the Babylonian captivity, Ezra is confessing to God how Israel had come so far short, and that God had sent them into the discipline of Babylonian captivity because they really needed it. And Ezra says, “You haven’t punished us nearly as much as we deserve, because we knew we shouldn’t mix with the heathen the way we did. And now after returning from Babylonian captivity,” Ezra says, “we’ve done it all over again.”

Do you remember, in Ezra and Nehemiah, coming up soon? We do 1 and 2 Chronicles next week, then Ezra and Nehemiah the following week, then Esther and Job in the following one. So shortly in Ezra and Nehemiah, when those two men came to Palestine many years after the

exiles' return at the end of the seventy years, they found that God's people had intermarried all over again. And they were practicing all these abominations over again.

So take a look at Nehemiah 13, and notice Ezra's understanding of this, and why God didn't want them intermarrying. It isn't that he didn't love these heathen women, but Israel simply couldn't resist the influence. So look at Nehemiah 13:26. Later when we have more leisure, we must look at this in more detail. Nehemiah is urging these returnees from Babylonian exile to separate from the heathen women that they had married. And they had many children who couldn't even speak the language of God's people. Maybe start at verse 25:

And I contended with them and I cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves."

The hair pulling and the beating we'll discuss later when we get to Nehemiah. But Nehemiah says, "Did not Solomon, king of Israel sin on account of such women?" And Ezra had been saying the same thing. Did not Solomon king of Israel fail because he made the same mistake? "Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless foreign women made even him to sin." That's his comment on that, you see? "Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"

By foreign, of course, it meant these heathen women who were practicing all these heathen abominations in the worship of fertility. They were doing it all over again. But for this evening the main thing is, note this comment later as to what it was that confused and almost destroyed even wise King Solomon. And I see him starting out by being very generous about it, not wanting to force all these wives to act like Jews. But it wasn't safe to do that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 1&2 Kings*, recorded November 1981, 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 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/17MMPOGIA66> (1 Kings - Part 1)

<http://pkp.cc/18MMPOGIA66> (1 Kings - Part 2)

<http://pkp.cc/19MMPOGIA66> (2 Kings - Part 1)

<http://pkp.cc/20MMPOGIA66> (2 Kings - Part 2)

All kinds of questions come out of this. One that's often raised: "What about the women and the children who were driven off?" Was that not a heartless thing? In fact, two weeks ago, in one of the classes at Loma Linda, we were going through Ezra and Nehemiah. One student, at considerable length, raised the question as to why God would handle these foreign women and

their children like this. Why didn't they work with them awhile? Try to win them over. Give them time. Give them Bible studies. Maybe if they had heard Ezra's reading of the law they would have come across. Well, how would you respond to that?

Didn't Paul suggest, if your husband or wife is not a believer, be patient, wait awhile. Maybe they will come across. Of course, how long had they been together? And how about the time before when they'd been together, for centuries? Had they been very successful in winning them over?

So let's say, there's no evidence that they would have been very successful. All the evidence points to Israel's weakness in the presence of these seductive neighbors. And they were more inclined to imitate them than for the heathen to imitate the Jews with their beliefs. Which at least would leave us with this question: Have we any evidence as to how God would feel about those foreign women, and those children, born of Jews who married the foreign women? Do you have any evidence in scripture as to how God would feel about them? Were they worthless to God? Or was He just trying to protect his people from their influence? Have we any suggestion as to how God would feel? He doesn't talk about them very much. Here they are just banished. Think of all the separations that took place among God's people. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Ezra and Nehemiah*, recorded December 1981, 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/23MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/24MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Last time at the end we were discussing the severity of Nehemiah's separation of the Jews from these foreign women and their children, half of whom couldn't even speak the language of the Jews. And the question was raised, "How do you think God felt about all the wives and children who were sent away?" Do we have evidence? And reference is made to Hagar and Ishmael. God loved the ones who were cast out. But then the question came up afterwards: What if one of the wives had said, "But I'd like to stay. I know I'm a foreign wife, but I love your God, and I'd like to stay? Do you think she would have been allowed to stay? Could you cite any evidence in scripture to indicate? Well, Ruth is mentioned. Wouldn't Ruth be a case in point? Naomi's son married a heathen woman, and she became a believer, and became one of the progenitors of Christ, one of the forerunners of David. Unfortunately, we don't have those nice stories in Ezra and Nehemiah that some of the wives, maybe some of them did, but the story is not told in great detail about that. At least we know from the rest of scripture how God would regard each person as an individual while this serious action had to be taken. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt

from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded January 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/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

### Further Study with Ellen White

The book of nature, which spread its living lessons before them, afforded an exhaustless source of instruction and delight. On every leaf of the forest and stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and sea and sky, God's name was written. With both the animate and the inanimate creation—with leaf and flower and tree, and with every living creature, from the leviathan of the waters to the mote in the sunbeam—the dwellers in Eden held converse, gathering from each the secrets of its life. God's glory in the heavens, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, "the balancings of the clouds" (Job 37:16), the mysteries of light and sound, of day and night—all were objects of study by the pupils of earth's first school. {Ed 21.3}

Adam and Eve, in their untainted purity, delighted in the sights and sounds of Eden. God appointed them their work in the garden, "to dress it and to keep it." Genesis 2:15. Each day's labor brought them health and gladness, and the happy pair greeted with joy the visits of their Creator, as in the cool of the day He walked and talked with them. Daily God taught them His lessons. {MH 261.3}

To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth. {COL 59.3}

Christ has given us no promise of help in bearing today the burdens of tomorrow. He has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9); but, like the manna given in the wilderness, His grace is bestowed daily, for the day's need. Like the hosts of Israel in their pilgrim life, we may find morning by morning the bread of heaven for the day's supply. {MB 101.1}

One day alone is ours, and during this day we are to live for God. For this one day we are to place in the hand of Christ, in solemn service, all our purposes and plans, casting all our care upon Him, for He careth for us. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Jeremiah 29:11; Isaiah 30:15. {MB 101.2}

The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path. {PP 290.3}

He who has given His precious life because He loved you, and wanted you to be happy, will be a Captain who will always be mindful of your interest. {SD 160.4}

The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ. {7T 143.2}