

SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division



Stewards in the
Last Days (I)

Vol. 98, No. 3

July–September 2022

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

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Foreword

Why can't we just do things our own way? We certainly could, but such ways might not always promote our eternal salvation. The ways of fallen human nature are not the ways of God. The Almighty explains, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8, 9).

So, we cannot expect to enjoy God's full endorsement of finite, earthly ways of living. After all, we do not even own ourselves! Scripture reveals that we have been bought with a price—the blood of the only-begotten Son of God.

Even our love for others may not be everything it should be. All can benefit from the inspired warning given to one family:

"Our love is frequently selfish, for we confine it to prescribed limits. When we come into close union and fellowship with Christ, our love and sympathy and our works of benevolence will reach down deeper and will widen and strengthen with exercise. The love and interest of Christ's followers must be as broad as the world. Those who live merely for 'me and mine' will fail of heaven. God calls upon you as a family to cultivate love, to become less sensitive in regard to yourselves and more sensitive to the griefs and trials of others. This selfish spirit that you have cherished all your lives is correctly represented by the priest and the Levite who passed by the unfortunate on the other side. They saw that he needed help, but purposely avoided him.

"Each one of you needs to awake and face square about to get out of the cart rut of selfishness. Improve the short, probationary time given you by working with your might to redeem the failures of your past life. God has placed you in a world of suffering to prove you, to see if you will be found worthy of the gift of eternal life."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 530.

Relief for the suffering, ignorant, wayward specimens of humanity today requires unselfishness from all of us. We are not our own—we are the exclusive property of our Creator, who has given us an example in the life of Jesus Christ. To rightly represent the character qualities of heaven requires our entire being. We are stewards of God's grace, stewards of the light, the means, and the talents bestowed.

Therefore, to encourage us in the steps of our Master, the *Sabbath Bible Lessons* for the next two quarters are based on "Stewards in the Last Days." Through these studies, it is our prayer that God may grant us success in the unselfish walk of Christ!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for Winchester, Kentucky, USA

We are told: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (Matthew 5:14, 15).

The Commonwealth of Kentucky, (population over 4.5 million), is a state within the southeastern U.S.A. and is perhaps best known for Kentucky “bluegrass,” a distinct species of grass especially nutritious to thoroughbred horses—a major source of revenue for the state.

More than half of Kentucky’s population consider themselves to be “highly religious”—most professing Christianity. Over 25% are of the Baptist faith, 8.4% Catholic, 1.8% Pentecostal, 1.1% Presbyterian, with the remainder being of other Christian and non-Christian faiths. How important it is, then, to have a memorial to the true and living God in this state!

The message of Reformation came to Kentucky in the 1990’s and the Lord opened doors in amazing ways in those early years. A 2-acre property with an old house that had been converted into a church was purchased at a miraculously low price. The neighbor adjacent to the property then bought a portion, plus a pair of religious artifacts in the building were auctioned, so the exact cost of the church was paid off—and when the members had moved away/passed away, the property was sold at a profit. By another miracle, the Lord soon provided a huge, beautiful church in the capital city for our use free of charge.

Yet over time, the location of our membership had already shifted to the city of Lexington—so all resources gathered were now focused on this area. Land and buildings are quite costly in this nation, so God made another miracle: A church came for sale in the nearby town of Winchester. Our members in Kentucky, few in number, have struggled much to acquire it. They have put their utmost into this project and here the everlasting Gospel is being presented to the community, and new visitors attend Sabbath worship services regularly. We are encouraged to see this lighthouse in Kentucky—and are eager to see it free of debt as soon as possible, that the name of the Lord may be honored.

Your generous gifts are greatly appreciated!

Your brothers and sisters from the Winchester, Kentucky Church



The Steward

MEMORY TEXT: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

“That man might not lose the blessed results of benevolence, our Redeemer formed the plan of enlisting him as His coworker.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 25, 1874.

Suggested Reading: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 500–502.

Sunday

June 26

1. COMMITMENT

a. What is the basis of Christian stewardship? Psalms 37:4–6; 24:1.

“If the Word of God is cherished as an abiding principle in the heart and held fast under all and every circumstance, man is brought, with his entrusted capabilities, under [subjection] to the Lord Jesus Christ. His undivided powers, even his thoughts, are brought into captivity to Christ. This is true sanctification. All the parts of the experience blend in complete harmony. He is ‘wanting in nothing.’ He does not keep part to himself, to do with just as he pleases.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 190.

b. Explain the primary motives of the Christian steward and the chief asset sought. Matthew 6:33, 34; Philippians 3:8.

“We are Christ’s witnesses, and we are not to allow worldly interests so to absorb our time and attention that we pay no heed to the things that God has said must come first. There are higher interests at stake. ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.’ Christ gave His all to the work that He came to do, and His word to us is, ‘If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’ ‘So shall ye be My disciples.’ ”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 314.

2. STEWARDSHIP

- a. **A steward manages another's property. Name some important things over which we are stewards. 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.**
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“Those with whom God has entrusted His truth, must possess the same beneficent spirit that Christ manifested. They must adopt the same broad plans of action. They should have a kind, generous spirit toward the poor, and in a special sense feel that they are God's stewards. They must hold all they have—property, mental powers, spiritual strength—as not their own, but only lent them to advance the cause of Christ in the earth. Like Christ, they should not shun the society of their fellow men, but should seek it with the purpose of bestowing upon others the heavenly benefits they have received from God.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 335.

- b. **Where does the Christian steward accumulate wealth? Matthew 6:19–21, 24, 33.**
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“God desires us to choose the heavenly in place of the earthly. He opens before us the possibilities of a heavenly investment. He would give encouragement to our loftiest aims, security to our choicest treasure. He declares, ‘I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir’ (Isaiah 13:12). When the riches that moth devours and rust corrupts shall be swept away, Christ's followers can rejoice in their heavenly treasure, the riches that are imperishable.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 374.

- c. **How do Christian stewards handle the wealth entrusted to them by their Master? 1 Timothy 6:18, 19; Proverbs 19:17.**
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“All should feel that they are not proprietors, but stewards, and that the time is coming when they must give an account for the use they have made of their Lord's money. Means will be needed in the cause of God. With David they should say: ‘All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee’ [1 Chronicles 29:14].”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 382.

3. POSITIVE ATTITUDES

- a. What should the Christian steward consider in the face of an economic downturn? **Philippians 4:13; Romans 8:28.**
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- b. Why is our approach to financial matters so important? **Proverbs 16:2.**
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- c. What warnings come to Christian stewards with regard to our attitudes and motives? **1 John 2:15, 16.**
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“Satan is constantly presenting inducements to God’s chosen people to attract their minds from the solemn work of preparation for the scenes just in the future. He is in every sense of the word a deceiver, a skillful charmer. He clothes his plans and snares with coverings of light borrowed from heaven. He tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit by making her believe that she would be greatly advantaged thereby. Satan leads his agents to introduce various inventions and patent rights and other enterprises, that Sabbathkeeping Adventists who are in haste to be rich may fall into temptation, become ensnared, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows. He is wide awake, busily engaged in leading the world captive, and through the agency of worldlings he keeps up a continual pleasing excitement to draw the unwary who profess to believe the truth to unite with worldlings. The lust of the eye, the desire for excitement and pleasing entertainment, is a temptation and snare to God’s people. Satan has many finely woven, dangerous nets which are made to appear innocent, but with which he is skillfully preparing to infatuate God’s people. There are pleasing shows, entertainments, phrenological lectures, and an endless variety of enterprises constantly arising calculated to lead the people of God to love the world and the things that are in the world. Through this union with the world, faith becomes weakened, and means which should be invested in the cause of present truth are transferred to the enemy’s ranks. Through these different channels Satan is skillfully draining the purses of God’s people, and for it the displeasure of the Lord is upon them.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 550, 551.

4. TRUST

a. What surrounds the true Christian steward? Psalm 32:10.

b. What qualities are present in a faithful steward of the Lord? Proverbs 3:5, 6; Job 23:12.

“The psalmist says, ‘Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed’ (Psalm 37:3). ‘Trust in the Lord.’ Each day has its burdens, its cares and perplexities; and when we meet how ready we are to talk of our difficulties and trials. So many borrowed troubles intrude, so many fears are indulged, such a weight of anxiety is expressed, that one might suppose we had no pitying, loving Saviour ready to hear all our requests and to be to us a present help in every time of need.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 121.

c. Describe some lessons from nature that can give instruction to the Christian steward. Matthew 6:25–30.

“As each thing in nature ministers thus to the world’s life, it also secures its own. ‘Give, and it shall be given unto you’ (Luke 6:38), is the lesson written no less surely in nature than in the pages of Holy Writ.”—*Education*, p. 103.

“Consider, says Jesus, how the lilies grow; how, springing from the cold, dark earth, or from the mud of the river bed, the plants unfold in loveliness and fragrance. Who would dream of the possibilities of beauty in the rough brown bulb of the lily? But when the life of God, hidden therein, unfolds at His call in the rain and the sunshine, men marvel at the vision of grace and loveliness. Even so will the life of God unfold in every human soul that will yield itself to the ministry of His grace, which, free as the rain and the sunshine, comes with its benediction to all. It is the word of God that creates the flowers, and the same word will produce in you the graces of His Spirit.

“God’s law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 97.

5. THANKFULNESS

- a. What does the Christian steward do upon discovering the truest riches of the universe? Luke 15:8, 9; 1 Thessalonians 5:18.
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“Forgetting our own difficulties and troubles, let us praise God for an opportunity to live for the glory of His name. Let the fresh blessings of each new day awaken praise in our hearts for these tokens of His loving care. When you open your eyes in the morning, thank God that He has kept you through the night. Thank Him for His peace in your heart. Morning, noon, and night, let gratitude as a sweet perfume ascend to heaven.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 2, 1910.

“Have we not reason to talk of God’s goodness and to tell of His power? When friends are kind to us we esteem it a privilege to thank them for their kindness. How much more should we count it a joy to return thanks to the Friend who has given us every good and perfect gift. Then let us, in every church, cultivate thanksgiving to God. Let us educate our lips to praise God in the family circle.”—*My Life Today*, p. 170.

- b. For what does the Christian steward give the greatest thanks? Psalm 119:14, 72, 127.
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“The glorious possibilities set before Israel could be realized only through obedience to God’s commandments. The same elevation of character, the same fulness of blessing—blessing on mind and soul and body, blessing on house and field, blessing for this life and for the life to come—is possible for us only through obedience.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 305.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can you demonstrate commitment to the cause of the gospel?
2. What is the job description of a Christian steward?
3. How does your attitude affect your financial decision-making?
4. What is necessary to put God totally in control of your finances?
5. What do you discover when you count your blessings?

The Faithful Steward

MEMORY TEXT: “Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words” (Psalm 119:57).

“All that we possess, our mental and physical powers, all the blessings of the present and the future life, are delivered to us stamped with the cross of Calvary.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 14, 1886.

Suggested Readings: *Child Guidance*, pp. 150–168;
Education, pp. 135–137.

Sunday

July 3

1. CONTENTMENT

- a. **What do Christian stewards realize about all of their earthly possessions? Job 1:21.**

“All things belong to God. Men may ignore His claims. While He bountifully bestows His blessings upon them, they may use His gifts for their own selfish gratification; but they will be called to give an account for their stewardship.

“A steward identifies himself with his master. He accepts the responsibilities of a steward, and he must act in his master’s stead, doing as his master would do were he presiding. His master’s interests become his. The position of a steward is one of dignity because his master trusts him. If in any wise he acts selfishly and turns the advantages gained by trading with his lord’s goods to his own advantage, he has perverted the trust reposed in him.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 246.

- b. **Why should Christian stewards be content with their earthly possessions, even if few? Psalm 37:16; Proverbs 15:16; 1 Timothy 6:8.**

“We think of Jesus the Creator of all the worlds, and how He came into the world as a poor man. He had not where to lay His head. So poverty is no disgrace. Sin is a disgrace.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1514.

2. FAIRNESS

- a. **Since we are Christian stewards, what should our attitude be toward our neighbors and their possessions? Deuteronomy 16:19.**
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“In the last great issue between Christ’s followers and the powers of darkness, Satan offers his bribes to men and women. Some sell themselves for naught; for what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 243.

“We must feel a special interest in looking upon the things of others—not to covet them, not to find fault with them, not to remark upon them and present them in a false light, but to do strict justice in all things to our brethren and all with whom we have any dealings.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 176.

- b. **What does God want us to realize about the evils of partiality? Deuteronomy 24:17; Romans 2:11.**
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“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan’s influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 369, 370.

“The reason for all division, discord, and difference is found in separation from Christ. Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, in love, growing into the character and image of Jesus. With God there is no respect of persons. . . .

“The Son of the infinite God, the Lord of life and glory, descended in humiliation to the life of the lowliest, that no one might feel himself excluded from His presence. He made Himself accessible to all. He did not select a favored few with whom to associate and ignore all others.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 99.

3. HONESTY

a. What blessing is given to all who follow integrity in all their business transactions? Proverbs 10:9.

b. What should link the action, the words, and even the thoughts of the Christian steward? Proverbs 12:5, 17; 14:2.

“By the terms of our stewardship we are placed under obligation, not only to God, but to man.”—*Education*, p. 139.

c. How does the Lord consider those who are dishonest in business? Proverbs 16:11; 20:10.

“It is neither the magnitude nor the seeming insignificance of a business transaction that makes it fair or unfair, honest or dishonest. By the least departure from rectitude we place ourselves on the enemy’s ground, and may go on, step by step, to any length of injustice. A large proportion of the Christian world divorce religion from their business.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 337.

“An honest man, according to Christ’s measurement, is one who will manifest unbending integrity. Deceitful weights and false balances, with which many seek to advance their interests in the world, are abomination in the sight of God. Yet many who profess to keep the commandments of God are dealing with false weights and false balances. When a man is indeed connected with God and is keeping His law in truth, his life will reveal the fact; for all his actions will be in harmony with the teachings of Christ. He will not sell his honor for gain. His principles are built upon the sure foundation, and his conduct in worldly matters is a transcript of his principles. Firm integrity shines forth as gold amid the dross and rubbish of the world. Deceit, falsehood, and unfaithfulness may be glossed over and hidden from the eyes of man but not from the eyes of God. The angels of God, who watch the development of character and weigh moral worth, record in the books of heaven these minor transactions which reveal character. If a workman in the daily vocations of life is unfaithful and slights his work, the world will not judge incorrectly if they estimate his standard in religion according to his standard in business.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 310, 311.

4. HUMILITY

- a. **What is the reward for the humble Christian steward? Psalm 37:11; Proverbs 22:4; Matthew 18:4.**
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“Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another, this is the best gift that the heavenly Father can bestow. Let all believers draw near to God and to one another, that God may draw near to them. No man is to be exalted as supreme. No man is to suppose that he is infallible because he has been enlightened by God and used by Him in bringing souls to the truth. Our endowments are valuable only as they are used as God’s entrusted talents to magnify the truth. The one through whom God works is never to exalt himself, never to seek to rule. As a wise steward, he is to do his work in sincerity and humility. He is to do God service by imparting what he has received, by speaking the truth in love in a clear, decided manner. Thus he is to enlighten others, remembering always that God only can impress the mind and purify the heart.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 275.

- b. **What must characterize all who seek to be among God’s elect? Proverbs 29:23.**
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“Love, compassion, and tenderness are to be revealed amongst us. Put on, as the elect of God, mercy and kindness. The sins that were practiced before conversion are to be put off with the old man. With the new man, Christ Jesus, are to be put on ‘kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering’ [Colossians 3:12].

“Those who have risen with Christ to walk in newness of life are the elect of God. They are holy unto the Lord and are acknowledged by Him as His beloved. As such, they are under solemn covenant to distinguish themselves by showing humility of mind. They are to clothe themselves in garments of righteousness. They are separate from the world, from its spirit, its practices, and they are to reveal that they are learning of Him who says, ‘I am meek and lowly in heart’ [Matthew 11:29]. If they realize that they have died with Christ, if they keep their baptismal vow, the world will have no power to draw them aside to deny Christ. If they live the life of Christ in this world, they are partakers of the divine nature. Then, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, they also will appear with Him in glory.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 19, pp. 236, 237.

5. OBEDIENCE

- a. What characteristics were shown to John the Revelator when he saw the people of God in these last days? Revelation 14:12.
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- b. Where do we find instructions concerning legitimate business principles? Deuteronomy 5:32; 25:13–15; Luke 11:28.
-

“There is no branch of legitimate business for which the Bible does not afford an essential preparation. Its principles of diligence, honesty, thrift, temperance, and purity are the secret of true success. These principles, as set forth in the book of Proverbs, constitute a treasury of practical wisdom. Where can the merchant, the artisan, the director of men in any department of business, find better maxims for himself or for his employees than are found in these words of the wise man: [Proverbs 22:29; 14:23; 13:4; 23:21; 20:19; 17:27; 20:3, 4:14; 6:28; 13:20; 18:24 quoted.] . . .

“How many a man might have escaped financial failure and ruin by heeding the warnings, so often repeated and emphasized in the Scriptures. . . .

“These are principles with which are bound up the well-being of society, of both secular and religious associations. It is these principles that give security to property and life. For all that makes confidence and cooperation possible, the world is indebted to the law of God, as given in His word, and as still traced, in lines often obscure and well-nigh obliterated, in the hearts of men.”—*Education*, pp. 135–137.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can you be content with your earthly possessions?
2. How should you treat others in your financial transactions?
3. What blessings will you receive if you are honest in all your transactions?
4. How can humility be manifested in my life in practical ways?
5. Name some benefits pertaining to financial honesty.

Conquering Bad Tendencies (I)

MEMORY TEXT: “Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:16).

“Whether we recognize it or not, we are stewards, supplied from God with talents and facilities, and placed in the world to do a work appointed by Him.”—*Education*, p. 137.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 242–248.

Sunday

July 10

1. ENVY AND KINDRED SINS

- a. **Explain the origin of pride, envy, and ambition for position—and its bitter results. Isaiah 14:12–15.**

“It was pride and ambition that prompted Lucifer to complain of the government of God, and to seek the overthrow of the order which had been established in heaven. Since his fall it has been his object to infuse the same spirit of envy and discontent, the same ambition for position and honor, into the minds of men.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 403.

- b. **Describe a carnal mind—a candidate for the second death? 1 Corinthians 3:3; Romans 8:6, 7; James 3:14, 15.**

“If you open your heart to envy and evil surmising, the Holy Spirit cannot abide with you.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 191.

- c. **How does envy affect your personality and well-being? Job 5:2; Proverbs 14:30; 27:4.**

“The envious man diffuses poison wherever he goes, alienating friends and stirring up hatred and rebellion against God and man. He seeks to be thought best and greatest, not by putting forth heroic, self-denying efforts to reach the goal of excellence himself, but by standing where he is and diminishing the merit due to the efforts of others.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 56.

2. COVETOUSNESS IN THE HEART

- a. In what sense does covetousness violate the commandments of God? Exodus 20:17. What do we learn about this sin from the experience of Achan? Joshua 7:20–26.
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“The deadly sin that led to Achan’s ruin had its root in covetousness, of all sins one of the most common and the most lightly regarded. While other offenses meet with detection and punishment, how rarely does the violation of the tenth commandment so much as call forth censure. The enormity of this sin, and its terrible results, are the lessons of Achan’s history.

“Covetousness is an evil of gradual development. Achan had cherished greed of gain until it became a habit, binding him in fetters well-nigh impossible to break. While fostering this evil, he would have been filled with horror at the thought of bringing disaster upon Israel; but his perceptions were deadened by sin, and when temptation came, he fell an easy prey.

“Are not similar sins still committed, in the face of warnings as solemn and explicit? We are as directly forbidden to indulge covetousness as was Achan to appropriate the spoils of Jericho. God has declared it to be idolatry. We are warned, ‘Ye cannot serve God and mammon’ (Matthew 6:24). ‘Take heed, and beware of covetousness’ (Luke 12:15). ‘Let it not be once named among you’ (Ephesians 5:3). We have before us the fearful doom of Achan, of Judas, of Ananias and Sapphira. Back of all these we have that of Lucifer, the ‘son of the morning,’ who, coveting a higher state, forfeited forever the brightness and bliss of heaven. And yet, notwithstanding all these warnings, covetousness abounds.

“Everywhere its slimy track is seen. It creates discontent and dissension in families; it excites envy and hatred in the poor against the rich; it prompts the grinding oppression of the rich toward the poor. And this evil exists not in the world alone, but in the church.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 496, 497.

- b. What should be our relationship to those who are controlled by the spirit of covetousness? Ephesians 5:5; 1 Corinthians 5:11.
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- c. Among what other sinners will covetous persons be kept out of the kingdom of God? 1 Corinthians 6:10.
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3. THE EVIL OF GREED

- a. As envy and covetousness take root in the heart, what follows? Job 5:2–5.
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“The Scriptures describe the condition of the world just before Christ’s second coming. James the apostle pictures the greed and oppression that will prevail. He says, ‘Go to now, ye rich men, . . . ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton. Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you’ (James 5:1–6). This is a picture of what exists today. By every species of oppression and extortion, men are piling up colossal fortunes, while the cries of starving humanity are coming up before God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 170.

- b. What is the result in cases where wealth is selfishly retained by greedy owners? Ecclesiastes 5:13.
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“The natural, covetous, rich man has obtained these riches by grinding down the hireling, and taking advantage of individuals where he could, and adding to his treasure here, that will eat his flesh as it were fire.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 247.

- c. How do wicked people reveal what is in their heart and mind? Psalm 10:3.
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“Men in their blindness boast of wonderful progress and enlightenment; but to the eye of Omniscience are revealed the inward guilt and depravity. The heavenly watchers see the earth filled with violence and crime. Wealth is obtained by every species of robbery, not robbery of men only, but of God. Men are using His means to gratify their selfishness. Everything they can grasp is made to minister to their greed. Avarice and sensuality prevail. Men cherish the attributes of the first great deceiver. They have accepted him as God and have become imbued with his spirit.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 14, 15.

4. PRIDE

- a. The concept of pride is highly valued in this world. How does Scripture describe pride? Proverbs 16:5.
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- b. What will the Lord do to the proud? Proverbs 15:25; 16:18, 19; Luke 18:14. Describe what the servant of the Lord was shown regarding the outcome of the proud—and how this can be avoided.
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“I saw that God hates pride, and that all the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up. I saw that the third angel’s message must yet work like leaven upon many hearts that profess to believe it, and purge away their pride, selfishness, covetousness, and love of the world.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 132, 133.

- c. Rather than pride, what is seen in the life of the Christian steward? James 4:6.
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“All who study the life of Christ and practice His teaching will become like Christ. Their influence will be like His. They will reveal soundness of character. They are established in the faith and will not be overcome by the devil because of vanity and pride. They seek to walk the humble path of obedience, doing the will of God. Their character exerts an influence that tells for the advancement of the cause of God and the healthful purity of His work. . . .

“In these thoroughly converted souls the world has a witness to the sanctifying power of truth upon the human character. Through them Christ makes known to the world His character and will. In the lives of God’s children is revealed the blessedness of serving the Lord, and the opposite is seen in those who do not keep His commandments. The line of demarcation is distinct. All who obey God’s commandments are kept by His mighty power amid the corrupting influence of the transgressors of His law. From the lowliest subject to the highest in positions of trust, they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 315, 316.

5. THE LOVE OF MONEY

- a. What will the love of money bring you? 1 Timothy 6:10; Ecclesiastes 5:10.
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“The Bible condemns no man for being rich, if he has acquired his riches honestly. Not money, but the love of money, is the root of all evil. It is God who gives men power to get wealth; and in the hands of him who acts as God’s steward, using his means unselfishly, wealth is a blessing, both to its possessor and to the world. But many, absorbed in their interest in worldly treasures, become insensible to the claims of God and the needs of their fellow men. They regard their wealth as a means of glorifying themselves. They add house to house, and land to land; they fill their homes with luxuries, while all about them are human beings in misery and crime, in disease and death. Those who thus give their lives to self-serving are developing in themselves, not the attributes of God, but the attributes of the wicked one.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 212, 213.

- b. What is the top priority in the life of every faithful steward? 1 Corinthians 2:2; Matthew 6:33; Luke 9:25.
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“When the sinner reaches the cross and looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy; for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 29, 1902.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How will envy impact your stewardship?
2. What kind of association should you have with persons who do not follow the principles of Christian stewardship?
3. What is the result of living a greedy life?
4. What is to be the basis of your financial decisions?
5. Explain the dangers of becoming preoccupied with material goods.

Conquering Bad Tendencies (II)

MEMORY TEXT: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).

“All money lovers . . . will one day cry in bitter anguish: ‘Oh, the deceitfulness of riches! I have sold my soul for money.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 544, 545.

Suggested Reading: *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 133–140.

Sunday

July 17

1. DECEPTION

- a. How does Satan often pervert the heart and the mouth of people who want to take unfair advantage in business transactions? Jeremiah 6:13; Acts 5:3, 4.

- b. How earnestly did David and Solomon both aspire to freedom from deceptive lips? Psalm 101:7; Proverbs 30:8 (first part).

- c. As Christian stewards must often be in contact with deceitful people, what prayer should ascend to Heaven? Psalm 43:1 (last part).

- d. How does God often permit a deceitful person to be the victim of his or her own tricks? Psalm 7:14–16.

2. DISHONESTY

- a. Describe the depth of evil that occurs when we injure the reputation of others—and how God sees it. Proverbs 6:12–19.
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“We think with horror of the cannibal who feasts on the still warm and trembling flesh of his victim; but are the results of even this practice more terrible than are the agony and ruin caused by misrepresenting motive, blackening reputation, dissecting character? . . .

“The spirit of gossip and talebearing is one of Satan’s special agencies to sow discord and strife, to separate friends, and to undermine the faith of many in the truthfulness of our positions.

“It is natural for human beings to speak sharp words. Those who yield to this inclination open the door for Satan to enter their hearts and to make them quick to remember the mistakes and errors of others. Their failings are dwelt upon, their deficiencies noted, and words are spoken that cause a lack of confidence in one who is doing his best to fulfill his duty as a laborer together with God. Often the seeds of distrust are sown because one thinks that he ought to have been favored but was not.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 440, 441.

- b. How does the Lord consider those who are dishonest in their financial transactions? Deuteronomy 27:17–19; Proverbs 11:1; 20:23.
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“The accounts of every business, the details of every transaction, pass the scrutiny of unseen auditors, agents of Him who never compromises with injustice, never overlooks evil, never palliates wrong. . . .

“Against every evildoer God’s law utters condemnation. He may disregard that voice, he may seek to drown its warning, but in vain. It follows him. It makes itself heard. It destroys his peace. If unheeded, it pursues him to the grave. It bears witness against him at the judgment. A quenchless fire, it consumes at last soul and body.”—*Education*, pp. 144, 145.

- c. What will happen to anything that is acquired dishonestly? Proverbs 13:11; 15:27; 21:6.
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“No scheme of business or plan of life can be sound or complete that embraces only the brief years of this present life and makes no provision for the unending future.”—*Ibid.*, p. 145.

3. INJUSTICE

- a. How are we warned to avoid partiality in our dealing with others? Leviticus 19:15.
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“Do not show partiality to one or more, and neglect other of your brethren because they are not congenial to you. Beware lest you deal harshly with those who you think have made mistakes, while others, more guilty and more deserving of reproof, who should be severely rebuked for their unChristlike conduct, are sustained and treated as friends.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 12, 1895.

“Each one is to stand in his lot and in his place, doing his work. Every individual among you must before God do a work for these last days that is great and sacred and grand. Every one must bear his weight of responsibility. . . . No one of you needs to be afraid of the other, lest the other shall have the highest place. Without partiality and without hypocrisy each is to be treated.”—*Christian Leadership*, p. 39.

- b. What does the Christian steward do when dealing with disadvantaged groups? Psalm 82:2–4.
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“God requires that His people should not allow the poor and afflicted to be oppressed. If they break every yoke and release the oppressed, and are unselfish and kindly considerate of the needy, then shall the blessings promised be theirs. If there are those in the church who would cause the blind to stumble, they should be brought to justice; for God has made us guardians of the blind, the afflicted, the widows, and the fatherless. The stumbling block referred to in the word of God does not mean a block of wood placed before the feet of the blind to cause him to stumble, but it means much more than this. It means any course that may be pursued to injure the influence of their blind brother, to work against his interest, or to hinder his prosperity.

“A brother who is blind and poor and diseased, and who is making every exertion to help himself that he may not be dependent, should be encouraged by his brethren in every way possible. But those who profess to be his brethren, who have the use of all their faculties, who are not dependent, but who so far forget their duty to the blind as to perplex and distress and hedge up his way, are doing a work which will require repentance and restoration before God will accept their prayers. And the church of God who have permitted their unfortunate brother to be wronged will be guilty of sin until they do all in their power to have the wrong righted.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 519, 520.

4. AVOIDING BAD COMPANY

- a. **While the Lord is our great Counselor, from whom may we seek counsel on this earth? Proverbs 13:20.**
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“The only safe course for the youth is to mingle with the pure, the holy, and thus natural tendencies to evil will be held in check. By choosing for their companions such as fear the Lord, they will seldom be found disbelieving God’s Word, entertaining doubts and infidelity. The power of a truly consistent example is very great for good.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 172.

- b. **What must we consider regarding persons not in harmony with the principles of Christian stewardship? Proverbs 14:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:6.**
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“Let the youth choose the influence of, and become associated with, men and women of bad principles and practices, . . . and they are polluted. Silent and unconscious influences weave their sentiments into their lives, become a part of their very existence, and they walk on the very brink of a precipice and sense no danger. They learn to love the words of the smooth tongued, the honeyed words of the deceiver, and are restless, uneasy, and unhappy unless they are carried to the pinnacle of someone’s flattery. . . . To walk in the counsel of the ungodly is the first step toward standing in the place of sinners and sitting in the seat of the scornful.”—*Ibid.*

“It is wrong for Christians to associate with those whose morals are loose. An intimate, daily intercourse which occupies time without contributing in any degree to the strength of the intellect or morals is dangerous. If the moral atmosphere surrounding persons is not pure and sanctified, but is tainted with corruption, those who breathe this atmosphere will find that it operates almost insensibly upon the intellect and heart to poison and to ruin. It is dangerous to be conversant with those whose minds naturally take a low level. Gradually and imperceptibly those who are naturally conscientious and love purity will come to the same level and partake of and sympathize with the imbecility and moral barrenness with which they are so constantly brought in contact.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 125.

5. THE FUTILITY OF ACQUIRING RICHES

- a. How much of our earthly riches do we retain when we die? Psalm 49:16, 17; Ecclesiastes 5:13–15; 1 Timothy 6:7.
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- b. What can we take with us to the great judgment of humanity? Matthew 16:26; Proverbs 11:4; Isaiah 31:7.
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“The redeemed will be welcomed to the home that Jesus is preparing for them. There their companions will not be the vile of earth, liars, idolaters, the impure, and unbelieving; but they will associate with those who have overcome Satan and through divine grace have formed perfect characters. Every sinful tendency, every imperfection, that afflicts them here has been removed by the blood of Christ, and the excellence and brightness of His glory, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, is imparted to them. And the moral beauty, the perfection of His character, shines through them, in worth far exceeding this outward splendor. They are without fault before the great white throne, sharing the dignity and the privileges of the angels.

“In view of the glorious inheritance that may be his, ‘what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ (Matthew 16:26). He may be poor, yet he possesses in himself a wealth and dignity that the world could never bestow. The soul redeemed and cleansed from sin, with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, is of surpassing worth; and there is joy in heaven in the presence of God and the holy angels over one soul redeemed, a joy that is expressed in songs of holy triumph.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 126.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the results of deceptive communication?
2. How does dishonesty affect the one who deceives?
3. How do Christian stewards treat others in their financial dealings?
4. Who is the Christian steward’s financial counselor?
5. What should remind us of the temporal nature of material wealth?

The Blessing of Work

MEMORY TEXT: “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

“The true glory and joy of life are found only by the working man and woman. Labor brings its own reward, and sweet is the rest that is purchased by the fatigue of a well-spent day.”—*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 98.

Suggested Reading: *Messages to Young People*, pp. 177–180.

Sunday

July 24

1. LABOR

a. At creation, what was graciously supplied to humanity? Genesis 2:15.

“God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. In mental and physical activity Adam found one of the highest pleasures of his holy existence. And when, as a result of his disobedience, he was driven from his beautiful home, and forced to struggle with a stubborn soil to gain his daily bread, that very labor, although widely different from his pleasant occupation in the garden, was a safeguard against temptation and a source of happiness. Those who regard work as a curse, attended though it be with weariness and pain, are cherishing an error. The rich often look down with contempt upon the working classes, but this is wholly at variance with God’s purpose in creating man. What are the possessions of even the most wealthy in comparison with the heritage given to the lordly Adam? Yet Adam was not to be idle. Our Creator, who understands what is for man’s happiness, appointed Adam his work. The true joy of life is found only by the working men and women.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 50.

b. What portion of a wise person’s labor belongs to him or to her? Ecclesiastes 3:13.

2. THE COMMAND TO WORK

- a. Name one vital aspect of the fourth commandment. Exodus 20:9.
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“The religion you profess makes it as much your duty to employ your time during the six working days as to attend church on the Sabbath. You are not diligent in business. You let hours, days, and even weeks pass without accomplishing anything. The very best sermon you could preach to the world would be to show a decided reformation in your life, and provide for your own family. Says the apostle: ‘If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel’ [1 Timothy 5:8].”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 179.

“Laziness and indolence are not the fruit borne upon the Christian tree.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 124.

- b. How do Christian stewards do their work? Colossians 3:23.
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“The path of toil appointed to the dwellers on earth may be hard and wearisome; but it is honored by the footprints of the Redeemer, and he is safe who follows in this sacred way. By precept and example, Christ has dignified useful labor. From His earliest years He lived a life of toil. The greater part of His earthly life was spent in patient work in the carpenter’s shop at Nazareth. In the garb of a common laborer the Lord of life trod the streets of the little town in which He lived, going to and returning from His humble toil; and ministering angels attended Him as He walked side by side with peasants and laborers, unrecognized and unhonored.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 276.

“You are not to neglect the duty that lies directly in your pathway; but you are to improve the little opportunities that open around you. You must go on doing your very best in the smaller works of life, taking up heartily and faithfully the work God’s providence has assigned you. However small, you should do it with all the thoroughness with which you would do a larger work. Your fidelity will be approved in the records of heaven.”—*The Signs of the Times*, June 16, 1890.

- c. Besides teaching our children to work and be industrious, what other aspect of stewardship should we teach them early in life? Proverbs 3:9.
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3. THE FAMILY FIRM

- a. **When should Christian stewards begin their training? Deuteronomy 6:7.**
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“The education of the child for good or for evil begins in its earliest years. The children should be taught that they are a part of the family firm. They should be trained to act their part in the home. They are not to be continually waited upon; rather, they should lighten the burdens of father and mother. As the older children grow up, they should help to care for the younger members of the family. The mother should not wear herself out by doing work that the children might do and should do.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, pp. 206, 207.

- b. **How can parents teach their children the principles of work and the duties of life? Proverbs 22:6.**
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“In the home school the children should be taught how to perform the practical duties of everyday life. While they are still young, the mother should give them some simple task to do each day. It will take longer for her to teach them how than it would to do it herself; but let her remember that she is to lay for their character building the foundation of helpfulness. Let her remember that the home is a school in which she is the head teacher. It is hers to teach her children how to perform the duties of the household quickly and skillfully. As early in life as possible they should be trained to share the burdens of the home. From childhood, boys and girls should be taught to bear heavier and still heavier burdens, intelligently helping in the work of the family firm.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 122.

- c. **What is the inevitable outcome of idleness? Proverbs 19:15.**
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“Where there is an abundance of idleness, Satan works with his temptations to spoil life and character.”—*The Youth's Instructor*, October 18, 1894.

4. IMPROPER REST

- a. **What is the counsel for those who do not fulfill God’s mandate in the fourth commandment to work six days—choosing instead to rest on the six common days of the week? 2 Thessalonians 3:10.**
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“God has given men six days wherein to labor, and He requires that their own work be done in the six working days.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 307.

“The word of God declares that if a man will not work, neither shall he eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10.) The Lord does not require the hard-working man to support others in idleness. With many there is a waste of time, a lack of effort, which brings to poverty and want. If these faults are not corrected by those who indulge them, all that might be done in their behalf would be like putting treasure into a bag with holes.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 247.

“Those who are endeavoring to reform should be provided with employment. None who are able to labor should be taught to expect food and clothing and shelter free of cost. For their own sake, as well as for the sake of others, some way should be devised whereby they may return an equivalent for what they receive. Encourage every effort toward self-support. This will strengthen self-respect and a noble independence. And occupation of mind and body in useful work is essential as a safeguard against temptation.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 177.

“Indolent, careless habits indulged in secular work will be brought into the religious life and will unfit one to do any efficient service for God. Many who through diligent labor might have been a blessing to the world, have been ruined through idleness. Lack of employment and of steadfast purpose opens the door to a thousand temptations. Evil companions and vicious habits deprave mind and soul, and the result is ruin for this life and for the life to come.

“Whatever the line of work in which we engage, the word of God teaches us to be ‘not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.’ ‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,’ ‘knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ’ (Romans 12:11; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:24).”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 345, 346.

5. "HIS REST" (HEBREWS 4:1)

- a. When did the Lord institute His rest day for humanity? Genesis 2:2. How did the Lord confirm His original institution? Mark 2:27, 28.
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"God Himself measured off the first week as a sample for successive weeks to the close of time. Like every other, it consisted of seven literal days. Six days were employed in the work of creation; upon the seventh, God rested, and He then blessed this day and set it apart as a day of rest for man."—*Christian Education*, p. 190.

- b. How do you prepare for what the Lord calls "My Sabbaths" or "My rest" (Exodus 31:13; Hebrews 4:5)? Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54, 56.
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"On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that all the clothing is in readiness and that all the cooking is done. Let the boots be blacked and the baths be taken. It is possible to do this. If you make it a rule you can do it. The Sabbath is not to be given to the repairing of garments, to the cooking of food, to pleasure seeking, or to any other worldly employment. Before the setting of the sun let all secular work be laid aside and all secular papers be put out of sight. Parents, explain your work and its purpose to your children, and let them share in your preparation to keep the Sabbath according to the commandment."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 355, 356.

"Those who neglect to prepare for the Sabbath on the sixth day, and who cook food upon the Sabbath, violate the fourth commandment and are transgressors of God's law."—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 253, 254.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of labor?
2. What part of the fourth commandment is often overlooked?
3. When should we begin to appreciate labor?
4. What happens if we are not productive during the week?
5. Describe the nature of rest for the Christian on God's holy day.

First Sabbath Offering for the GC Education Department

Now, more than ever, there is a need to invest in the education of our children. Bombarded from every corner by the things of this world, it is increasingly difficult to protect them from the wiles of the enemy. What was once limited in its accessibility is now literally attached to our children through “smart” phones and other devices. How can we be fitted for the work of evangelism when our own children cannot be prepared for it?



“True education is missionary training. Every son and daughter of God is called to be a missionary; we are called to the service of God and our fellow men; and to fit us for this service should be the object of our education.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 395.

During this pandemic time, many parents became much more aware of how their children are being educated. Many realized how much influence schooling has on their children, and they have been requesting materials to help educate them for the honor and glory of God. The General Conference Education Department is in the process of creating an entire kindergarten through 12th grade curriculum with this very aim as its focus. Partnering with our educators and with the various unions and field conferences, the work of preparing this curriculum is well underway.

The project requires time, resources, and personnel. Those involved must be qualified in education and in the field of study for which they are preparing their textbooks and workbooks. Your support makes it possible for us to prepare materials of the highest quality so that the students using them in our schools and home schools will be “qualified for usefulness in this life and for the service of God throughout eternity.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 495.

This project is larger than the sums we have available. We need your generous contributions to do three things: Prepare the materials, translate the materials, and make them available and affordable in places of poverty where access to this material is beyond their financial abilities. Yes, the project is large, but it is well worth it. With your generous support we will produce materials from math to language to social sciences that will prepare the youngest among us to give the gospel message in all the world.

General Conference Education Department

Active and Capable

MEMORY TEXT: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

“Real happiness is found only in being good and doing good. The purest, highest enjoyment comes to those who faithfully fulfill their appointed duties. No honest work is degrading.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, December 5, 1901.

Suggested Reading: *Education*, pp. 262–271.

Sunday

July 31

1. CHOOSING AN OCCUPATION

a. How does Scripture extol useful occupation? 2 Thessalonians 3:11, 12.

“The things of earth are more closely connected with heaven and are more directly under the supervision of Christ than many realize. All right inventions and improvements have their source in Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. The skillful touch of the physician’s hand, his power and nerve and muscle, his knowledge of the delicate mechanism of the body, is the wisdom of divine power, to be used in behalf of the suffering. The skill with which the carpenter uses his tools, the strength with which the blacksmith makes the anvil ring, come from God. Whatever we do, wherever we are placed, He desires to control our minds, that we may do perfect work.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 277.

b. Name one of the worst curses to society, and one of the greatest blessings. 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Proverbs 10:16.

“One of the surest safeguards against evil is useful occupation, while idleness is one of the greatest curses; for vice, crime, and poverty follow in its wake. Those who are always busy, who go cheerfully about their daily tasks, are the useful members of society.”—*Ibid.*, p. 275.

2. ACCEPTABLE SERVICE

- a. **In choosing an occupation, what factors should be considered? How do our capabilities determine our place in life? Give examples. Philippians 2:14, 15.**
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“As regards life’s possibilities, who is capable of deciding what is great and what is small? How many a worker in the lowly places of life, by setting on foot agencies for the blessing of the world, has achieved results that kings might envy! . . .

“The specific place appointed us in life is determined by our capabilities. Not all reach the same development or do with equal efficiency the same work. God does not expect the hyssop to attain the proportions of the cedar, or the olive the height of the stately palm. But each should aim just as high as the union of human with divine power makes it possible for him to reach.

“Many do not become what they might, because they do not put forth the power that is in them. They do not, as they might, lay hold on divine strength. Many are diverted from the line in which they might reach the truest success. Seeking greater honor or a more pleasing task, they attempt something for which they are not fitted. Many a man whose talents are adapted for some other calling, is ambitious to enter a profession; and he who might have been successful as a farmer, an artisan, or a nurse, fills inadequately the position of a minister, a lawyer, or a physician. There are others, again, who might have filled a responsible calling, but who, for want of energy, application, or perseverance, content themselves with an easier place.

“We need to follow more closely God’s plan of life. To do our best in the work that lies nearest, to commit our ways to God, and to watch for the indications of His providence—these are rules that ensure safe guidance in the choice of an occupation.”—*Education*, pp. 266, 267.

- b. **Whatever our talents and calling, what is the most important aspect of our lifework? Hebrews 6:10.**
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“Pure, sanctified love, such love as was expressed in Christ’s lifework, is as a sacred perfume. Like Mary’s broken box of ointment, it fills the whole house with fragrance.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 84.

3. WORK ETHICS

- a. **Regardless of our specific occupation, what should be our goal with reference to our work? 1 Corinthians 3:12–14; 2 Thessalonians 2:17.**
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“God will not put His superscription upon the work of any man, high or low, rich or poor, that is not done heartily, faithfully, and with an eye single to His glory.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 128, 129.

- b. **What is the Christian’s work ethic? Colossians 3:22–24.**
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“Practical religion is to be carried into the lowly duties of daily life. The greatest qualification for any man is to obey implicitly the word of the Lord.

“Because they are not connected with some directly religious work, many feel that their lives are useless; that they are doing nothing for the advancement of God’s kingdom. But this is a mistake. If their work is that which someone must do, they should not accuse themselves of uselessness in the great household of God. The humblest duties are not to be ignored. Any honest work is a blessing, and faithfulness in it may prove a training for higher trusts.

“However lowly, any work done for God with a full surrender of self is as acceptable to Him as the highest service. No offering is small that is given with true-heartedness and gladness of soul.

“Wherever we may be, Christ bids us take up the duty that presents itself. If this is in the home, take hold willingly and earnestly to make home a pleasant place. If you are a mother, train your children for Christ. This is as verily a work for God as is that of the minister in the pulpit. If your duty is in the kitchen, seek to be a perfect cook. Prepare food that will be healthful, nourishing, and appetizing. And as you employ the best ingredients in preparing food remember that you are to give your mind the best thoughts. If it is your work to till the soil or to engage in any other trade or occupation, make a success of the present duty. Put your mind on what you are doing. In all your work represent Christ. Do as He would do in your place.

“However small your talent, God has a place for it. That one talent, wisely used, will accomplish its appointed work. By faithfulness in little duties, we are to work on the plan of addition, and God will work for us on the plan of multiplication. These littles will become the most precious influences in His work.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 359, 360.

4. THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK

- a. **What is the highest work in which a Christian can engage? Matthew 28:19, 20; Psalm 96:3.**
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“The work above all work—the business above all others which should draw and engage the energies of the soul—is the work of saving souls for whom Christ has died. Make this the main, the important work of your life. Make it your special lifework. Cooperate with Christ in this grand and noble work, and become home and foreign missionaries. Be ready and efficient to work at home or in far-off climes for the saving of souls. Work the works of God, and demonstrate your faith in your Saviour by toiling for others. O that young and old were thoroughly converted to God, and would take up the duty that lies next them, and work as they have opportunity, becoming laborers together with God! Should this come to pass, multitudes of voices would show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, May 4, 1893.

“Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. 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.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 195.

- b. **Why is the missionary full of joy at his or her labor? Luke 15:6, 7; Psalm 51:12, 13.**
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“The conversion of souls to God is the greatest, the noblest work in which human beings can have a part. In this work are revealed God’s power, His holiness, His forbearance, and His unbounded love. Every true conversion glorifies Him and causes the angels to break forth into singing.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 52.

“We can have no higher joy than to be laborers together with God, rescuing souls from the slavery of sin; and upbuilding the kingdom of Christ. This joy is Christ’s joy, and every soul who partakes of it has his joy full. Again and again we may drink of this fountain of joy, and rejoice in it, knowing that no other joy can bear any comparison to it.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 13, 1894.

5. OTHER OCCUPATIONS

- a. How can we implement the work of soul-saving in various Christian occupations? Ephesians 4:28; 1 Corinthians 15:58.
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(1) Medical Work. "There is no missionary field more important than that occupied by the faithful, God-fearing physician."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 448.

(2) Business. "There is need of businessmen who will weave the grand principles of truth into all their transactions. . . . [Daniel] was a sample of what every businessman may be."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 350, 351.

(3) Teachers. "Teachers are needed, especially for the children."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 201.

(4) Other Employment. "Real happiness is found only in being good and doing good. . . . No honest work is degrading."—*The Youth's Instructor*, December 5, 1901.

- b. How does God view wealth honestly gained? Deuteronomy 8:18.
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"The Bible does not condemn the rich man because he is rich; it does not declare the acquisition of wealth to be a sin, nor does it say that money is the root of all evil. On the contrary, the Scriptures state that it is God who gives the power to get wealth. And this ability is a precious talent if consecrated to God and employed to advance His cause. The Bible does not condemn genius or art; for these come of the wisdom which God gives. We cannot make the heart purer or holier by clothing the body in sackcloth, or depriving the home of all that ministers to comfort, taste, or convenience."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 138.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can we benefit from useful labor?
2. What factors should influence our choice of occupation?
3. How can one use his or her occupation as a blessing?
4. In what lifework can we all have a taste? Why is it such a delight?
5. Give some examples of wonderful opportunities for soul-saving.

Financial Pyramids and Schemes

MEMORY TEXT: “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent” (Proverbs 28:20).

“All the advantages which God has given are His means to throw ardor into the spirit, zeal into effort, and vigor into the carrying out of His holy will.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 360.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 225, 226.

Sunday

August 7

1. GET-RICH-QUICK

- a. **What will be the result of participating in get-rich-quick schemes? Proverbs 21:5.**

“The spirit of gain getting, of making haste to be rich, of this all-absorbing worldliness, is painfully contradictory to our faith and doctrines.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 231, 232.

- b. **Why does the Christian steward labor for eternal wealth instead of participating in get-rich-quick schemes? Psalm 37:7.**

“Satan watches the peculiar, selfish, covetous temperament of some who profess the truth, and he will tempt them by throwing prosperity in their path, offering them the riches of earth. He knows that if they do not overcome their natural temperament, they will stumble and fall by loving mammon, worshiping their idol. Satan’s object is often accomplished. The strong love of the world overcomes, or swallows up, the love of the truth. The kingdoms of the world are offered them, and they eagerly grasp their treasure and think they are wonderfully prospered. Satan triumphs because his plan has succeeded. They have given up the love of God for the love of the world.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 142.

2. RICHES THROUGH LABOR

- a. What is the difference between a get-rich-quick scheme and a proper investment of means? Proverbs 28:20; 31:16, 24.
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“Many times, when the Lord has opened the way for brethren to handle their means to advance His cause, the agents of Satan have presented some enterprise by which they were positive the brethren could double their means. They take the bait; their money is invested, and the cause, and frequently themselves, never receive a dollar.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 154.

“Every movement . . . which comes in to excite the desire to get riches quickly by speculation, takes the minds of the people away from the most solemn truths that ever were given to mortals. There may be encouraging prospects for a time, but the end of the matter is *failure*. The Lord endorses no such movements. If this work is sanctioned, many would be attracted by these speculative schemes that could not in any other way be led away from the work of presenting the solemn truths that must be given to the people at this time.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 234, 235.

“Work is a blessing, not a curse. Diligent labor keeps many, young and old, from the snares of him who ‘finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.’ Let no one be ashamed of work; for honest toil is ennobling. While the hands are engaged in the most common tasks, the mind may be filled with high and holy thoughts.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, February 27, 1902.

- b. Why is it that people are often tempted to engage in speculative financial ventures? Proverbs 27:20.
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“It is a dangerous experiment for our people to engage in speculation. They thereby place themselves on the enemy’s ground, subject to great temptations, disappointments, trials, and losses. Then comes a feverish unrest, a longing desire to obtain means more rapidly than present circumstances will admit. Their surroundings are accordingly changed, in hope of making more money. But frequently their expectations are not realized, and they become discouraged and go backward rather than forward. . . . They are backsliding from God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 617.

3. KNOW THE ENEMY'S STRATEGY

- a. Even in the fast-paced era in which we live, what does God mercifully provide—and why? Ecclesiastes 3:1.
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“The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it. Life is too short to be trifled away. We have but a few days of probation in which to prepare for eternity. We have no time to waste, no time to devote to selfish pleasure, no time for the indulgence of sin. . . .

“Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 342.

- b. What factors should we take into consideration as we plan our use of time? James 4:13–15.
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- c. In seeking to advance God's work, what must we realize? 1 Peter 5:8.
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“We have no time to lose. The powers of darkness are working with intense energy, and with stealthy tread Satan is advancing to take those who are now asleep, as a wolf taking his prey. We have warnings now which we may give, a work now which we may do, but soon it will be more difficult than we imagine. God help us to keep in the channel of light, to work with our eyes fastened upon our Leader, and patiently, perseveringly press on till the victory is gained.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 12, 1914.

- d. What does Inspiration teach about the struggle before us? Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 24:12, 13.
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“With intensified zeal and energy we are to carry forward the work of the Lord till the close of time.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 548.

4. BE USEFUL

- a. **Instead of engaging in speculative get-rich-quick schemes, what should we do with the talents entrusted to us? Luke 19:13.**
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“The Lord bids us all, ‘Occupy till I come’ [Luke 19:13]. By His own wisdom He has given us direction for the use of His gifts. The talents of speech, memory, influence, property, are to accumulate for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom. He will bless the right use of His gifts.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 116.

“However large, however small the possessions of any individual, let him remember that it is his only in trust. For his strength, skill, time, talents, opportunities, and means, he must render an account to God. This is an individual work; God gives to us, that we may become like Him, generous, noble, beneficent, by giving to others. Those who, forgetful of their divine mission, seek only to save or to spend in the indulgence of pride or selfishness, may secure the gains and pleasures of this world; but in God’s sight, estimated by their spiritual attainments, they are poor, wretched, miserable, blind, naked.

“When rightly employed, wealth becomes a golden bond of gratitude and affection between man and his fellowmen, and a strong tie to bind his affections to his Redeemer.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 16, 1882.

- b. **What can we learn from the experience of Solomon? Ecclesiastes 2:10, 11.**
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“We must turn away from a thousand topics that invite attention. There are matters that consume time and arouse inquiry but end in nothing. The highest interests demand the close attention and energy that are so often given to comparatively insignificant things.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 456.

“The energy now concentrated on cheap, perishable goods should be enlisted in the work that is to enlighten the world. Let every energy God has given be used in the work which bears with it the blessed satisfaction that it is for time and for eternity.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 267.

“Let none waste time in deploring the scantiness of their visible resources. The outward appearance may be unpromising, but energy and trust in God will develop resources.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 243.

5. A PURCHASED POSSESSION

- a. **Why is the attitude of the rich and fool man with the barns a warning for us? Luke 12:16–21.**

“There is a sad withholding from God on the part of His professed people. The means and efforts that should be given to Christ are devoted to self-pleasing. God is robbed of time, money, and service. Self-love, self-gratification, exclude the love of Jesus from the soul, and this is why there is not in the church greater zeal and more fervent love for Him who first loved us. So many indulge selfish ease, while souls for whom Christ died are perishing.

“This is why the Lord cannot impart to His church the fullness of His blessing as He longs to do. . . . His blessing cannot be bestowed in its fullness while they are so corrupted with the spirit and practices of the world.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 22, 1890.

- b. **When considering the price paid for our redemption, what should always remain foremost in our mind? 1 Corinthians 3:23; 6:20.**

“Whether or not we give mind, soul, and strength to God, it all belongs to Him. God speaks to each human being, saying: ‘I have a claim on you. Give me your zeal, your capabilities, your energy, your means.’ He has a right to ask this; for we are His, redeemed by His boundless love and by the agony of the cross of Calvary from the service of sin. On no account are we to devote our powers to self-serving. Day by day we are to return to the Lord that which He has entrusted to us.”—*Ibid.*, January 2, 1901.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **What will be the result of participating in get-rich-quick schemes?**
2. **How should we gain our wealth?**
3. **What should give us incentive to work for Christ?**
4. **Name some ways by which we can be more faithful stewards of our finances.**
5. **What is too often excluding the love of Christ from my heart?**

Using and Multiplying Talents

MEMORY TEXT: “His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:23).

“God has committed to each of us sacred trusts, for which He holds us accountable. It is His purpose that we so educate the mind as to be able to exercise the talents He has given us in such a manner as to accomplish the greatest good and reflect the glory to the Giver.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 32.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 165–170.

Sunday

August 14

1. GOD’S GIFTS

- a. What does the Lord Himself give to every Christian steward? 1 Corinthians 12:8–11.

“The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit. [1 Corinthians 12:8–11 quoted.] All men do not receive the same gifts, but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 327.

- b. What does the Giver expect from His stewards? Luke 19:23.

“God bestows various talents and gifts upon men, not that they may lie useless, nor that they may be employed in amusements or selfish gratification, but that they may be a blessing to others by enabling men to do earnest, self-sacrificing missionary work. God grants man time for the purpose of promoting His glory.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, November 6, 1902.

“Our heavenly Father requires no more nor less than He has given us ability to do. He lays upon His servants no burdens that they are not able to bear. ‘He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust’ (Psalm 103:14). All that He claims from us we through divine grace can render.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 362.

2. DEVELOPING YOUR TALENTS (I)

- a. **How should Christian stewards discover, develop, and use their talents? Proverbs 1:7; 2:3–9; James 1:5.**
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“Many apparently unpromising youth are richly endowed with talents that are put to no use. Their faculties lie hidden because of a lack of discernment on the part of their educators. In many a boy or girl outwardly as unattractive as a rough-hewn stone, may be found precious material that will stand the test of heat and storm and pressure. The true educator, keeping in view what his pupils may become, will recognize the value of the material upon which he is working.”—*Education*, p. 232.

“God has a great work to be done in a short time. He has committed to the young talents of intellect, time, and means, and He holds them responsible for the use they make of these good gifts. He calls upon them to come to the front, to resist the corrupting, bewitching influences of this fast age, and to become qualified to labor in His cause. They cannot become fitted for usefulness without putting heart and energy into the work of preparation.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, May 7, 1884.

“If with a humble heart you seek divine guidance in every trouble and perplexity, His word is pledged that a gracious answer will be given you. And His word can never fail. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His word will never pass away. Trust in the Lord, and you will never be confounded or ashamed.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 427.

- b. **How are the talents of the Christian steward increased? 2 Corinthians 9:6.**
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“Talents used are talents multiplied. Success is not the result of chance or of destiny; it is the outworking of God’s own providence, the reward of faith and discretion, of virtue and persevering effort. The Lord desires us to use every gift we have; and if we do this, we shall have greater gifts to use.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 353.

“Some of the youth have been diligent and persevering, and they are now making their mark and are occupying important positions in the cause of God. We often hear persons speak of the talents and ability of these youth as though God had bestowed upon them special gifts; but this is a mistake. It is the use we make of the talents given us that makes us strong. There are many who might be well qualified to engage in the work of the Lord, who fail to improve upon the ability God has given them.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 25, 1880.

3. DEVELOPING YOUR TALENTS (II)

- a. What should be understood by those who feel that they have the least amount of talent? Luke 19:20–24.
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“Many of the youth repine because they have not ability to do some large work, and they covet talents by which they might do some wonderful things; but while they are spending their time in vain desires, they are making a failure of life. They are overlooking opportunities which they might improve in doing deeds of love in the path of life in which their feet are set.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, March 2, 1893.

- b. How does the Lord evaluate the use of our talents? 2 Corinthians 5:10; Luke 12:47, 48.
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“When the Lord takes account of His servants, the return from every talent will be scrutinized. The work done reveals the character of the worker.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 360.

“Those who might have exerted an influence to save souls had they stood in the counsel of God, yet failed to do their duty through selfishness, indolence, or because they were ashamed of the cross of Christ, will not only lose their own souls, but will have the blood of poor sinners upon their garments. Such will be required to render an account for the good that they could have done had they been consecrated to God, but did not do because of their unfaithfulness. Those who have really tasted the sweets of redeeming love will not, cannot, rest until all with whom they associate are made acquainted with the plan of salvation.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 511.

“We shall individually be held responsible for doing one jot less than we have ability to do. The Lord measures with exactness every possibility for service. The unused capabilities are as much brought into account as are those that are improved. For all that we might become through the right use of our talents God holds us responsible. We shall be judged according to what we ought to have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God. Even if we do not lose our souls, we shall realize in eternity the result of our unused talents. For all the knowledge and ability that we might have gained and did not, there will be an eternal loss.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 363.

4. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

- a. What are some of the talents the Christian steward should cultivate, and why? 1 John 2:14; Romans 15:1.

“The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable [of the talents (Matthew 25:13–32)]. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ’s service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellowmen.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 328.

“The power of speech is a talent that should be diligently cultivated. Of all the gifts we have received from God, none is capable of being a greater blessing than this. With the voice we convince and persuade, with it we offer prayer and praise to God, and with it we tell others of the Redeemer’s love. How important, then, that it be so trained as to be most effective for good.”—*Ibid.*, p. 335.

“Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time.

“The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it. Life is too short to be trifled away. We have but a few days of probation in which to prepare for eternity.”—*Ibid.*, p. 342.

“Parents should teach their children the value and right use of time. Teach them that to do something which will honor God and bless humanity is worth striving for. Even in their early years they can be missionaries for God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 345.

“God also entrusts men with means. He gives them power to get wealth. He waters the earth with the dews of heaven and with the showers of refreshing rain. He gives the sunlight, which warms the earth, awakening to life the things of nature and causing them to flourish and bear fruit. And He asks for a return of His own.”—*Ibid.*, p. 351.

“Our money has not been given us that we might honor and glorify ourselves. As faithful stewards we are to use it for the honor and glory of God. Some think that only a portion of their means is the Lord’s. When they have set apart a portion for religious and charitable purposes, they regard the remainder as their own, to be used as they see fit. But in this they mistake. All we possess is the Lord’s, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it. In the use of every penny it will be seen whether we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 310.

5. STEWARDS FOR THE KINGDOM

- a. What should be the energetic focus of all our various talents? Philippians 3:7–14.
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“You are a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men. . . . Make the most of the golden moments, putting to use the talents God has given, that you may accumulate something for the Master and be a blessing to all around you. Let the heavenly angels look down with joy upon you because you are loyal and true to Jesus Christ.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, July 12, 1894.

“It is the wise improvement of your opportunities, the cultivation of your God-given talents, that will make you men and women that can be approved of God, and a blessing to society. Let your standard be high, and with indomitable energy, make the most of your talents and opportunities, and press to the mark.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 87.

“Are you going to give yourselves to the Lord? Are you ready to engage in the work He has left you to do? Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ [Mark 16:15]. In the face of this command, will you appropriate your time and your energies as inclination may dictate, instead of following the counsel of God?”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 273.

“Here, in this world, in these last days, persons will show what power affects their hearts and controls their actions. If it is the power of divine truth, it will lead to good works. . . .

“Young and old, God is now testing you. You are deciding your own eternal destiny.”—*Maranatha*, p. 43.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can specific talents best be cultivated for the Master?
2. How does the church benefit from careful stewardship of our talents?
3. What should I, personally, be considering more seriously about those talents entrusted to me individually?
4. What must I realize about my accountability before God for my talents?
5. Describe the responsibility of all Christians, regardless of age or ability.

Motivated by Love

MEMORY TEXT: “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2).

“Learn that Christlike love is of heavenly birth, and that without it all other qualifications are worthless.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 21, 1904.

Suggested Reading: *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 20–23.

Sunday

August 21

1. A CHAPTER FOR TODAY

- a. How is the Christian steward affected by prayerful study and meditation on 1 Corinthians 13? 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 4:19–21.

“The Lord desires me to call the attention of His people to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Read this chapter every day, and from it obtain comfort and strength.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 21, 1904.

“In the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians the apostle Paul defines true Christlike love. . . . This chapter is an expression of the obedience of all who love God and keep His commandments. It is brought into action in the life of every true believer.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1091.

- b. What should be deeply considered by all who profess the present truth in these last days and seek to share it? 2 Peter 1:10–12.

“How careful we should be, that our words and actions are all in harmony with the sacred truth that God has committed to us! The people of the world are looking to us, to see what our faith is doing for our characters and lives. They are watching to see if it is having a sanctifying effect on our hearts, if we are becoming changed into the likeness of Christ. They are ready to discover every defect in our lives, every inconsistency in our actions. Let us give them no occasion to reproach our faith.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 5, 1888.

2. OVERCOMING SELFISHNESS

- a. Why is a knowledge of the truth—along with a polished ability to express it—insufficient to glorify Christ? 1 Corinthians 13:1.
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“If the knowledge of the truth produces no beauty in the soul, if it does not subdue, soften, and recreate the man after God’s own image, it is of no benefit to the receiver; it is as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1181.

“It is not the ready speaker, the sharp intellect, that counts with God. It is the earnest purpose, the deep piety, the love of truth, the fear of God, that has a telling influence. A testimony from the heart, coming from lips in which is no guile, full of faith and humble trust, though given by a stammering tongue, is accounted of God as precious as gold; while the smart speech, the eloquent oratory, of the one to whom is entrusted large talents, but who is wanting in truthfulness, in steadfast purpose, in purity, in unselfishness, are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. He may say witty things, he may relate amusing anecdotes, he may play upon the feelings; but the spirit of Jesus is not in it. All these things may please unsanctified hearts, but God holds in His hands the balances that weigh the words, the spirit, the sincerity, the devotion, and He pronounces it altogether lighter than vanity.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 1091.

- b. What warning is given against a self-centered employment of God’s blessings? Malachi 2:2; James 2:15, 16.
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“The sin which is indulged to the greatest extent, and which separates us from God and produces so many contagious spiritual disorders, is selfishness. There can be no returning to the Lord except by self-denial. Of ourselves we can do nothing; but, through God strengthening us, we can live to do good to others, and in this way shun the evil of selfishness. We need not go to heathen lands to manifest our desire to devote all to God in a useful, unselfish life. We should do this in the home circle, in the church, among those with whom we associate and with whom we do business. Right in the common walks of life is where self is to be denied and kept in subordination.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 132.

3. A TRAP FOR THE CHRISTIAN STEWARD

- a. **Although scriptural doctrines, accurate prophetic understanding, and uncompromising courage are essential, what is the warning to all who believe the present truth? 1 Corinthians 13:2, 3.**
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“No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men is not a true disciple of Christ. Though he should possess great faith and have power even to work miracles, yet without love his faith would be worthless. He might display great liberality; but should he, from some other motive than genuine love, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, the act would not commend him to the favor of God. In his zeal he might even meet a martyr’s death, yet if not actuated by love, he would be regarded by God as a deluded enthusiast or an ambitious hypocrite.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 318, 319.

- b. **What dangers can beset even the most zealous adherents to the threefold message? Revelation 3:17; Isaiah 65:5.**
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“A legal religion has been thought quite the correct religion for this time. But it is a mistake. The rebuke of Christ to the Pharisees is applicable to those who have lost from the heart their first love. A cold, legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion. When fastings and prayers are practiced in a self-justifying spirit, they are abominable to God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposed sacrifice—all proclaim to the world the testimony that the doer of these things considers himself righteous. These things call attention to the observer of rigorous duties, saying, This man is entitled to heaven. But it is all a deception. Works will not buy for us an entrance into heaven. The one great Offering that has been made is ample for all who will believe. . . . Look up to God, look not to men. God is your heavenly Father who is willing patiently to bear with your infirmities and to forgive and heal them.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 20, 1894.

“There is nothing that can so weaken the influence of the church as the lack of love. . . . If we are to meet opposition from our enemies, who are represented as wolves, let us be careful that we do not manifest the same spirit among ourselves.”—*Ibid.*, June 5, 1888.

4. DRAWING FROM A PURE FOUNTAIN

- a. **What type of service is unacceptable to God, and why? Jeremiah 2:13; Isaiah 58:4, 5. How can we overcome this problem? Isaiah 58:6–8.**

“Watch unto prayer. In this way alone can you put your whole being into the Lord’s work. Self must be put in the background. Those who make self prominent gain an education that soon becomes second nature to them; and they will soon fail to realize that instead of uplifting Jesus they uplift themselves, that instead of being channels through which the living water can flow to refresh others, they absorb the sympathies and affections of those around them. This is not loyalty to our crucified Lord.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 560.

“It is the daily dying to self in the little transactions of life that makes us overcomers. We should forget self in the desire to do good to others.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 132.

- b. **Describe the result of true religion. James 1:27.**

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- c. **How are we to bear these living fruits? John 7:37, 38.**

“The pure religion of Jesus is the fountain from which flow streams of charity, love, self-sacrifice.

“A Christian is a Christlike man, a Christlike woman, who is active in God’s service, who is present at the social meeting, whose presence will encourage others also. Religion does not consist in works, but religion works; it is not dormant.

“Many seem to feel that religion has a tendency to make its possessor narrow and cramped, but genuine religion does not have a narrowing influence; it is the lack of religion that cramps the faculties and narrows the mind. When a man is narrow, it is an evidence that he needs the grace of God, the heavenly anointing; for a Christian is one whom the Lord, the God of hosts, can work through, that he may keep the ways of the Lord of the earth and make manifest His will to men.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 935.

5. POWER FOR GENUINE STEWARDSHIP

- a. What is the highest rung of the ladder of Christian development? 2 Peter 1:4–7. What must we realize in seeking to cultivate all the qualities of a true Christian?
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“We are to add to faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. You are not to think that you must wait until you have perfected one grace, before cultivating another. No; they are to grow up together, fed continually from the fountain of charity; every day that you live, you can be perfecting the blessed attributes fully revealed in the character of Christ; and when you do this, you will bring light, love, peace, and joy into your homes.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 29, 1890.

- b. Explain how we can become imbued with new spiritual life and right motives. Ezekiel 37:1–14; Mark 2:22.
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“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.’ (Psalm 51:17). Man must be emptied of self before he can be, in the fullest sense, a believer in Jesus. When self is renounced, then the Lord can make man a new creature. New bottles can contain the new wine. The love of Christ will animate the believer with new life. In him who looks unto the Author and Finisher of our faith the character of Christ will be manifest.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 280.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why should the Christian steward study 1 Corinthians 13 daily?
2. In what ways can any of us be in danger of being as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal?
3. Why could a martyr professing Christ be lost?
4. When will our attitude and work be pleasing to God?
5. How does charity operate with the other qualities in 2 Peter 1:4–7?

First Sabbath Offering for a Chapel and Headquarters in Saint Lucia

Saint Lucia is a sovereign island nation within the West Indies in the eastern Caribbean Sea, north/northeast of Saint Vincent, north-west of Barbados and south of Martinique, covering a land area of 617 km² (238 square miles) with a population of over 183,000.

The island has been under British rule at times, and French at others, with the British gaining definitive control in 1814. On February 22, 1979, Saint Lucia became an independent state and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Today, its economy centers around tourism, manufacturing, banana production, and banking.

The official language is English. Saint Lucian French Creole (Kwéyòl), which is colloquially referred to as Patois (“Patwa”), is also spoken by 95% of the population.

About 61.5% of the people are Roman Catholic; 25.5% are Protestant (Seventh-day Adventist 10.4%; Pentecostal 8.9%; Baptist 2.2%; Anglican 1.6%; Church of God 1.5%, and other 0.9%). About 1.9% of the population adheres to the Rastafari movement. Other religions include Jehovah’s Witnesses, Islam, Baha’i Faith, Judaism, and Buddhism.

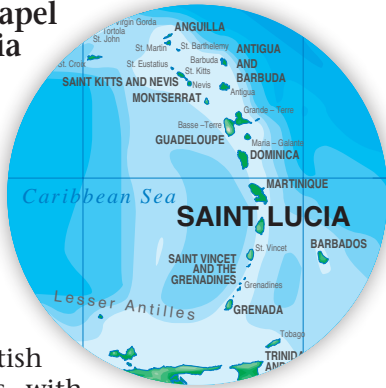
In the year 1994, in answer to the earnest prayers of souls seeking revival and reformation, a *Sabbath Bible Lesson* reached the island, followed by visits from the SDARM.

In 2000, five precious souls were baptized. Although the enemy has tried in various ways to destroy the work, the Lord has prevailed. In 2017, a pastor and his family were sent here to support and develop the mission. Now we see the great need for a chapel and headquarters to rightly represent the Lord’s work here.

“As a people we must practise self-denial and economy. . . . Time is short, and every dollar not necessary to be used in supplying positive wants, should be brought in as a thank offering to God. It is the Lord’s, and the Lord has presented to me that houses of worship, and schoolhouses should be erected through this country, and in the islands of the sea.”—*Pastoral Ministry*, pp. 244, 245.

That is why we appeal to you to support us in this noble cause, and we heartily thank you in advance.

Your brothers and sisters from Saint Lucia



Pure Motives Only!

MEMORY TEXT: “[Charity] doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

“The road to paradise is not one of self-exaltation, but of repentance, confession, humiliation, of faith and obedience.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 23, 1890.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 50–60.

Sunday

August 28

1. WATCHING OUR BEHAVIOR

- a. Name one characteristic of charity, as far as general behavior is concerned. 1 Corinthians 13:5 (first part).

- b. Give a few examples of unseemly behavior that we should recognize as a warning. Galatians 2:11–13; James 2:1–4, 8, 9.

- c. How is the Christian steward warned against another common type of unseemly behavior? Proverbs 14:29; 18:23 (second part).

“One class have come up without self-control; they have not bridled the temper or the tongue; and some of these claim to be Christ’s followers, but they are not. Jesus has set them no such example. When they have the meekness and lowliness of the Saviour, they will not act out the promptings of the natural heart, for this is of Satan. Some are nervous, and if they begin to lose self-control in word or spirit under provocation, they are as much intoxicated with wrath as the inebriate is with liquor. They are unreasonable and not easily persuaded or convinced. They are not sane; Satan for the time has full control. Every one of these exhibitions of wrath weakens the nervous system and the moral powers, and makes it difficult to restrain anger on another provocation. With this class there is only one remedy—positive self-control under all circumstances.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, November 10, 1886.

2. CHARITABLE PRUDENCE

- a. How are we exhorted to develop a Christlike demeanor, especially toward those who may provoke us unjustly? James 1:19–21; Proverbs 15:1; 19:11.
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“[Christ] was wrongfully accused, yet He opened not His mouth to justify Himself. How many now, when accused of that of which they are not guilty, feel that there is a time when forbearance ceases to be a virtue, and losing their temper, speak words which grieve the Holy Spirit.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1148.

“If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties. Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the hours which have been spent in justifying self.”—*Early Writings*, p. 119.

- b. Give examples of how a Christian steward might display charitable prudence. Acts 9:36–39.
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“At Joppa, which was near Lydda, there lived a woman named Dorcas, whose good deeds had made her greatly beloved. She was a worthy disciple of Jesus, and her life was filled with acts of kindness. She knew who needed comfortable clothing and who needed sympathy, and she freely ministered to the poor and the sorrowful. Her skillful fingers were more active than her tongue.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 131.

“Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. God’s Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience, to go to them, not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, to speak unto them words that are ‘like apples of gold in pictures of silver’ [Proverbs 25:11]. . . .

“It is the duty of God’s children to be missionaries for Him, to become acquainted with those who need help. If one is staggering under temptation, his case should be taken up carefully and managed wisely; for his eternal interest is at stake, and the words and acts of those laboring for him may be a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 69.

3. SELFLESS LOVE: A REMEDY AGAINST “SELF”

- a. **When does true love for others become rare—and how is this problem to be overcome? Matthew 24:12; Revelation 2:2–4; Hebrews 12:2–4.**

“The love of God has been waning in the church, and as a result, the love of self has sprung up into new activity. With the loss of love for God there has come the loss of love for the brethren.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 20, 1894.

“Let this life, so stormy with conflicts and worries, be brought into connection with Christ, and then self will no longer clamor for the supremacy.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1161.

“Pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 661.

- b. **What is a great reason that makes the Christian steward shine in this world? 1 Corinthians 10:24.**

“Unselfishness, the principle of God’s kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God’s principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan’s claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name.

“It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity. And all who accept this principle are to be workers together with Him in demonstrating it in practical life. To choose the right because it is right; to stand for truth at the cost of suffering and sacrifice—‘this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord’ (Isaiah 54:17).”—*Education*, pp. 154, 155.

“In heaven none will think of self, nor seek their own pleasure; but all, from pure, genuine love, will seek the happiness of the heavenly beings around them. If we wish to enjoy heavenly society in the earth made new, we must be governed by heavenly principles here.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 132, 133.

4. PRIORITIZING WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT

- a. What should the Christian steward consider in choosing priorities? 1 John 2:15–17.
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“If all the money that is used extravagantly, for needless things, were placed in the treasury of God, we should see men and women and youth giving themselves to Jesus, and doing their part to cooperate with Christ and angels. The richest blessing of God would come into our churches, and many souls would be converted to the truth.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 23, 1890.

“When the cases of all come in review before God, the question, What did they profess? will not be asked, but, What have they done? Have they been doers of the word? Have they lived for themselves, or have they been exercised in works of benevolence, in deeds of kindness and love, preferring others before themselves, and denying themselves that they might bless others? . . . Christ has been grieved and wounded by your marked selfish love and your indifference to the woes and needs of others.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 525.

“If all who profess to be followers of Christ were truly sanctified, their means, instead of being spent for needless and even hurtful indulgences, would be turned into the Lord’s treasury, and Christians would set an example of temperance, self-denial, and self-sacrifice. Then they would be the light of the world.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 475.

- b. As stewards in the last days, what attitudes should we avoid—or, on the other hand, adopt? Isaiah 58:2–4, 10–12; Proverbs 21:3.
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“In our work we shall find a high profession of piety and much outward exactness bond up with great inward wickedness. The people represented in Isaiah 58 complain that the Lord allows their services to go unnoticed. This complaint is the expression of hearts unsubdued by grace, rebellious against the truth.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, pp. 1148, 1149.

“Many receive applause for virtues which they do not possess. The Searcher of hearts weighs the motives, and often deeds highly applauded by men are recorded by Him as springing from selfishness and base hypocrisy. Every act of our lives, whether excellent and praiseworthy, or deserving of censure, is judged by the Searcher of hearts according to the motives which prompted it.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 275.

5. FOLLOWING CHRIST IN SELF-DENIAL

- a. What principle is basic to genuine Christian service? Acts 20:35.

“There is a work to be done in our cities—work to be done in every place. God will take men from the plow, from the sheepfold, from the vineyard, and will put them in the place of those who think that they must have the highest wages. Those who grasp for high wages will find in the money they get all the reward they will ever receive. Such ones cannot be expected to feel a burden for the salvation of perishing souls. The Lord cannot use such ones in His work. Until they banish selfishness from their hearts, their efforts are worthless.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 15, 1904.

“The heavenly intelligences can cooperate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 436.

- b. What should inspire the Christian steward with pure, fresh motivation for service? 2 Corinthians 8:8, 9.

“Jesus left His home in glory, clothed His divinity with humanity, and came to a world marred and polluted by the curse of sin. He might have remained in His heavenly home, and received the adoration of angels; but He came to earth to seek and save the lost, the perishing. ‘For your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich’ [2 Corinthians 8:9]. He, the Majesty of heaven, who was one with the Father, denied Himself, made every possible sacrifice, in order that man might not perish, but have everlasting life. Christ lived not to please Himself. If He had pleased Himself, where would we be today?”—*The Review and Herald*, December 23, 1890.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How might I be guilty of behaving unseemly?
2. What can we learn about charity from Christ and His followers?
3. How is a vibrant love for Christ to be manifested in us?
4. Why must we always examine our own priorities and motives?
5. What should we do to more fervently promote God’s work?

Practical Stewardship

MEMORY TEXT: “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts” (Psalm 10:4).

“Let your spirit be cleansed from all earthliness, all unholy, uncharitable thoughts. Let your words be clean, sanctified, vivifying and refreshing all with whom you associate. Be not easily provoked.” —*Our High Calling*, p. 174.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 707–709.

Sunday

September 4

1. DEVELOPING NOBLE QUALITIES

a. What should characterize our attitude toward everyone—and what can help us consistently maintain such an attitude? 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15, 23; 1 Corinthians 9:25.

b. How is advancement seen in the life of the Christian steward, and by what means is this gained? Colossians 3:8–10, 13; James 3:17, 18.

“When you have little difficulties to bear which seem hard, think of Jesus the dear Saviour, how He suffered and endured to save sinful mortals.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, p. 124.

“You will be misunderstood. Leave with God the wrongs which you think exist. Be easily entreated, and be not easily provoked. Do not speak angry words because of something you have heard. This hurts your influence. May the grace of God help you to have patience.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 19, p. 149.

“We must cherish love, not that which is falsely called charity, which would lead us to love sin and cherish sinners, but Bible charity and Bible wisdom, that is first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 558.

2. HOME AND COMMUNITY STEWARDS

- a. **What principles must be combined in the training of our children? Psalm 85:10.**
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“Disobedience and rebellion must be punished; but remember that the punishment is to be given in the spirit of Christ. Require obedience, never with a storm of angry words, but firmly and kindly. And when called upon to discipline your child, remember your own relation to your heavenly Father. Have you walked perfectly before Him? Are you not wayward and disobedient? Do you not grieve Him continually? But does He deal with you in anger? Remember, too, that it is from you that your children have received their tendencies to wrong. Remember how often you act like grown-up children. In spite of your years of Christian experience, in spite of your many opportunities for self-discipline, how easily you are provoked to anger. Deal gently, then, with your children, remembering that they have not had the opportunities you have had to gain self-control.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 8, 1902.

- b. **What way of acting gives credibility and life to our missionary efforts in the community? Luke 6:28–30.**
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“In all our associations with unbelievers, be careful to give them no occasion to misjudge your faith, or to reproach the cause of truth which you advocate. Many hedge up the way by their own course of action. There is some indiscretion on their part. They are easily provoked. Little difficulties arise in trade or in some other temporal matter, which lead them to think themselves misjudged or wronged by their neighbors. These things are allowed to create coldness or ill feeling, and thus to close the door of access to those who might be reached by the truth. We should never allow matters of temporal interest to quench our love for souls. Brethren, be kind and courteous on all occasions. Never be sharp, critical, or exacting in your deal. If there is any advantage to be gained, give it to your neighbor, whom you are required to love as you love yourself. With the patience and love of Jesus, watch for opportunities to do him a kindness. Let him see that the religion which we profess does not close up nor freeze over the avenues of the soul, making us unsympathizing and exacting.”—*Ibid.*, May 22, 1888.

3. EXERCISING CHARITY

- a. **How does bitterness toward our brethren or sisters affect our standing before the world? Hebrews 12:15.**
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“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another’ [John 13:34, 35]. These words are not the words of man, but the words of our Redeemer; and how important it is that we fulfill the instruction that He has given! There is nothing that can so weaken the influence of the church, as the lack of love. Christ says, ‘Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves’ [Matthew 10:16]. If we are to meet opposition from our enemies, who are represented as wolves, let us be careful that we do not manifest the same spirit among ourselves. The enemy well knows that if we do not have love one for another, he can gain his object, and wound and weaken the church, by causing differences among brethren. He can lead them to surmise evil, to speak evil, to accuse, condemn, and hate one another. In this way the cause of God is brought into dishonor, the name of Christ is reproached, and untold harm is done to the souls of men.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 5, 1888.

- b. **What will happen as we daily cultivate charity? Matthew 12:35 (first part); Colossians 3:12–15.**
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“If you have love in your heart, you will seek to establish and build up your brother in the most holy faith. If a word is dropped that is detrimental to the character of your friend or brother, do not encourage this evilspeaking. It is the work of the enemy. Kindly remind the speaker that the word of God forbids that kind of conversation. We are to empty the heart of everything that defiles the soul temple, that Christ may dwell within. Our Redeemer has told us how we may reveal Him to the world. If we cherish His Spirit, if we manifest His love to others, if we guard one another’s interests, if we are kind, patient, forbearing, the world will have an evidence by the fruits we bear, that we are the children of God. It is the unity in the church that enables it to exert a conscious influence upon unbelievers and worldlings.”—*Ibid.*

4. A TYPICAL PROBLEM

- a. Name one evil commonly found in the church. Leviticus 19:16 (first part); Jeremiah 20:10; Proverbs 16:17–20.
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“Floating rumors are frequently the destroyers of unity among brethren. There are some who watch with open mind and ears to catch flying scandal. They gather up little incidents which may be trifling in themselves, but which are repeated and exaggerated until a man is made an offender for a word. Their motto seems to be, ‘Report, and we will report it.’ These tale bearers are doing the devil’s work with surprising fidelity, little knowing how offensive their course is to God. If they would spend half the energy and zeal that is given to this unholy work in examining their own hearts, they would find so much to do to cleanse their souls from impurity that they would have no time or disposition to criticize their brethren, and they would not fall under the power of this temptation. The door of the mind should be closed against ‘they say’ or ‘I have heard.’ Why should we not, instead of allowing jealousy or evil surmising to come into our hearts, go to our brethren, and, after frankly but kindly setting before them the things we have heard detrimental to their character and influence, pray with and for them?”—*The Review and Herald*, June 3, 1884.

- b. How can we escape the gossip habit? Proverbs 14:15; 25:9, 10.
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- c. If we find that a brother or a sister is indeed guilty of some wrong, what is our personal duty? Galatians 6:1; James 5:19, 20.
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“When we see errors in others, let us remember that we have faults graver, perhaps, in the sight of God, than the fault we condemn in our brother. Instead of publishing his defects, ask God to bless him, and to help him to overcome his error. Christ will approve of this spirit and action, and will open the way for you to speak a word of wisdom that will impart strength and help to him who is weak in the faith.”—*Ibid.*, June 5, 1888.

5. LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR

- a. What changes are seen when we are not easily provoked and think no evil (1 Corinthians 13:5)? Ephesians 4:23–25; 5:9–12.
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“The person who cultivates the precious plant of love will be self-denying in spirit, and will not yield self-control even under provocation. He will not impute wrong motives and evil intentions to others, but will feel deeply over sin when discovered in any of the disciples of Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 123.

“Love is unsuspecting, ever placing the most favorable construction upon the motives and acts of others. Love will never needlessly expose the faults of others. It does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but rather seeks to bring to mind some good qualities of the one defamed.”—*Ibid.*, p. 169.

- b. How can the world see in our life a daily growth in Christ? Titus 2:7, 8, 11–14.
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“Let each ask himself: Do I possess the grace of love? Have I learned to suffer long and to be kind? Talents, learning, and eloquence, without this heavenly attribute, will be as meaningless as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”—*Ibid.*

“While we cannot love and fellowship those who are the bitter enemies of Christ, we should cultivate that spirit of meekness and love that characterized our Master—a love that thinketh no evil and is not easily provoked.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 3, 1884.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe the reformation cited in Colossians 3:8–10, 13.
2. How can we better represent Christ in temporal matters?
3. How can we overcome the common problem plaguing many churches?
4. What is wrong with “they say” and “I have heard”?
5. Describe some ways by which stewardship of God’s love can be manifested in behalf of others.

An Unfailing Virtue

MEMORY TEXT: “Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:8).

“Never should we pass by one suffering soul without seeking to impart to him of the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 505.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 133–136.

Sunday

September 11

1. A POWERFUL MOTIVATION

- a. What can the Christian steward learn from the apostle Paul’s motivation? 1 Corinthians 9:16–19; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.

- b. What exhortations are given to motivate us in turn? 1 Peter 1:22, 23.

“ ‘Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them’ [Matthew 7:12]. Blessed results would appear as the fruit of such a course. ‘With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again’ [verse 2]. Here are strong motives which should constrain us to love one another with a pure heart, fervently. Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions. We are not commanded to do to *ourselves* what we wish others to do unto us; we are to *do unto others* what we wish them to do to us under like circumstances. The measure we mete is always measured to us again. Pure love is simple in its operations and is distinct from any other principle of action. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life and frequently a blameless conversation. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions, acknowledge the present truth, and express humility and affection in an outward manner, yet the motives may be deceptive and impure; the actions that flow from such a heart may be destitute of the savor of life and the fruits of true holiness, being destitute of the principles of pure love. Love should be cherished and cultivated, for its influence is divine.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 136. [Emphasis in italics in original source.]

2. THE FRUIT OF CHARITY

- a. **How did Paul's unselfish love bear fruit under the most forbidding circumstances? Philippians 1:12–14; 2:15–17.**
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“Not by Paul's sermons, but by his bonds, was the attention of the court attracted to Christianity. It was as a captive that he broke from so many souls the bonds that held them in the slavery of sin. Nor was this all. He declared: ‘Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear’ (Philippians 1:14).

“Paul's patience and cheerfulness during his long and unjust imprisonment, his courage and faith, were a continual sermon. His spirit, so unlike the spirit of the world, bore witness that a power higher than that of earth was abiding with him. And by his example, Christians were impelled to greater energy as advocates of the cause from the public labors of which Paul had been withdrawn. In these ways were the apostle's bonds influential, so that when his power and usefulness seemed cut off, and to all appearance he could do the least, then it was that he gathered sheaves for Christ in fields from which he seemed wholly excluded.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 464.

- b. **How can we all be inspired and strengthened by Paul's courage? 2 Corinthians 4:5–10; 11:24–28.**
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“Patience as well as courage has its victories. By meekness under trial, no less than by boldness in enterprise, souls may be won to Christ. The Christian who manifests patience and cheerfulness under bereavement and suffering, who meets even death itself with the peace and calmness of an unwavering faith, may accomplish for the gospel more than he could have effected by a long life of faithful labor. Often when the servant of God is withdrawn from active duty, the mysterious providence which our shortsighted vision would lament is designed by God to accomplish a work that otherwise would never have been done.

“Let not the follower of Christ think, when he is no longer able to labor openly and actively for God and His truth, that he has no service to render, no reward to secure. Christ's true witnesses are never laid aside. In health and sickness, in life and death, God uses them still.”—*Ibid.*, p. 465.

3. VICTORIOUS CHARITY

- a. How can the Christian steward gain the victory over wrong words and attitudes? James 3:2, 10–12; Ezekiel 36:25, 26.
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“The most careful cultivation of the outward proprieties and courtesies of life has not sufficient power to shut out all fretfulness, harsh judgment, and unbecoming speech. The spirit of genuine benevolence must dwell in the heart. Love imparts to its possessor grace, propriety, and comeliness of deportment. Love illuminates the countenance and subdues the voice; it refines and elevates the entire man. It brings him into harmony with God, for it is a heavenly attribute.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 559, 560.

- b. Through what experiences can we learn the unfailing power of love? 2 Corinthians 8:1–5; 1 John 5:1–4.
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“The opposition we meet may prove a benefit to us in many ways. If it is well borne, it will develop virtues which would never have appeared if the Christian had nothing to endure. And faith, patience, forbearance, heavenly mindedness, trust in Providence, and genuine sympathy with the erring, are the results of trial well borne. These are the graces of the Spirit, which bud, blossom, and bear fruit amid trials and adversity. Meekness, humility, and love always grow on the Christian tree. If the word is received into good and honest hearts, the obdurate soul will be subdued, and faith, grasping the promises, and relying upon Jesus, will prove triumphant. ‘This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith’ [1 John 5:4].”—*The Review and Herald*, June 28, 1892.

“Unexpected disappointments will come. Jesus was often grieved at the hardness of heart of the people, and you will have a similar experience. Your prayers, your tears, your entreaties, may fail to awaken a response. Hearts are dead in trespasses and sins. There seems to be no penitence, but only indifference and opposition, and from some even contempt, when you looked for certain victory. But you are not to relax your efforts. If one refuses, turn to another. Have faith that the Comforter will do the work which it is impossible for you to do. Have faith in all the blessed promises which Christ has given you. Work with charity and invincible courage, for you must do this if you would succeed. ‘Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not’ [Galatians 6:9].”—*The Signs of the Times*, November 30, 1891.

4. ENDURING LOVE

- a. **What is unique about the plant of charity? 1 Corinthians 13:8 (first part).**
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“We are to see in our fellowman the purchase of the blood of Christ. If we have this love one for another, we shall be growing in love for God and the truth. We have been pained at heart to see how little love is cherished in our midst. Love is a plant of heavenly origin, and if we would have it flourish in our hearts, we must cultivate it daily. Mildness, gentleness, long-suffering, not being easily provoked, bearing all things, enduring all things—these are the fruits upon the precious tree of love.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 5, 1888.

“In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which ‘seeketh not her own’ has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 20.

- b. **What should encourage the Christian steward in laboring for souls purchased by the blood of Christ? Galatians 5:1.**
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“[In the school of the hereafter] all who have wrought with unselfish spirit will behold the fruit of their labors. The outworking of every right principle and noble deed will be seen. Something of this we see here. But how little of the result of the world’s noblest work is in this life manifest to the doer! How many toil unselfishly and unweariedly for those who pass beyond their reach and knowledge! . . . So gifts are bestowed, burdens are borne, labor is done. Men sow the seed from which, above their graves, others reap blessed harvests. They plant trees, that others may eat the fruit. They are content here to know that they have set in motion agencies for good. In the hereafter the action and reaction of all these will be seen.

“Of every gift that God has bestowed, leading men to unselfish effort, a record is kept in heaven. To trace this in its wide-spreading lines, to look upon those who by our efforts have been uplifted and ennobled, to behold in their history the outworking of true principles—this will be one of the studies and rewards of the heavenly school.”—*Education*, pp. 305, 306.

5. THE BOND OF PERFECTION

- a. Why is charity necessary in order for us to perfect Christian character? Colossians 3:14; 1 John 4:7–12.

“In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammelled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found—witnessing, and ever as we witness learning anew ‘the riches of the glory of this mystery;’ ‘which is Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27).”—*Education*, p. 309.

- b. What is the greatest illustration of unfailling charity that will shine on throughout eternity? Zechariah 13:6.

“Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought. Says the prophet, beholding Christ in His glory: ‘He had bright beams coming out of His side: and there was the hiding of His power’ (Habakkuk 3:4, margin). That pierced side whence flowed the crimson stream that reconciled man to God—there is the Saviour’s glory, there ‘the hiding of His power.’ ‘Mighty to save,’ (Isaiah 63:1), through the sacrifice of redemption, He was therefore strong to execute justice upon them that despised God’s mercy. And the tokens of His humiliation are His highest honor; through the eternal ages the wounds of Calvary will show forth His praise and declare His power.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 674.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How should the Christian steward understand Matthew 7:12?
2. What results can charity achieve, even amidst difficulties?
3. How are we to benefit from trials?
4. Why is loving service never lost?
5. Where is life’s greatest joy and highest education found?

Mission Accomplished!

MEMORY TEXT: “[Charity] rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6).

“Charity loves the sinner but hates the sin, and will warn him faithfully of his danger, pointing him to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Sin is not to be cloaked, but to be taken away.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 217.

Suggested Reading: *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 339–350.

Sunday

September 18

1. SELF-EXAMINATION

- a. Though we may profess to be rejoicing solely in God, what must we as Christian stewards realize? Proverbs 28:14.

“Bible charity is not sentimentalism, but love in active exercise. To heal the hurt of the daughter of My people, slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace; when there is no peace’ (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11), is called charity. To confederate together, to call sin holiness and truth, is called charity; but it is the counterfeit article. The false and the spurious are in the world, and we should closely examine our hearts that we may know whether or not we possess the genuine charity. Genuine charity will not create distrust and evil work. It will not blunt the sword of the spirit so that it does no execution. Those who would cover evil under false charity, say to the sinner, ‘It shall be well with thee.’ Thank God there is a charity that will not be corrupted; there is a wisdom that cometh from above, that is (mark it) first pure, then peaceable, and without hypocrisy, and the fruits of righteousness is sown of them that make peace. This is a description of heaven-born, heaven-bred charity.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 217.

- b. What should characterize the daily experience of the Christian steward? Psalm 139:23, 24.

2. IMPROPER REJOICING (I)

- a. **How is the Christian steward to respond to iniquity? 1 Corinthians 13:6 (first part).**

“Satan’s work is directly opposed to the work of God. The enemy of all good, he stands as the general of the forces drawn up to hurt the souls of men. He looks on with fiendish triumph as he sees the professed followers of Christ biting and devouring one another. He stands ever ready to mar the lives of those who are trying to serve God. Heavenly angels marvel that men should aid Satanic agencies in their work, discouraging hearts, making God’s people weak, strengthless, faithless.”—*Spalding and Magan Collection*, pp. 345, 346.

“If we would be overcomers, we must search our hearts to be sure that we are not cherishing anything that is offensive to God.”—*Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 138.

- b. **How does the Christian steward avoid rejoicing in evil? 1 Peter 5:8, 9.**

“When we talk discouragement and gloom, Satan listens with fiendish joy; for it pleases him to know that he has brought you into his bondage. Satan cannot read our thoughts, but he can see our actions, hear our words; and from his long knowledge of the human family, he can shape his temptations to take advantage of our weak points of character. And how often do we let him into the secret of how he may obtain the victory over us. Oh, that we might control our words and actions! How strong we would become if our words were of such an order that we would not be ashamed to meet the record of them in the day of judgment. How different will they appear in the day of God from what they seem when we utter them.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 19, 1891.

- c. **What admonitions are to strengthen us against the temptations mentioned above? Psalm 141:3; Ephesians 4:29, 30.**

“When you are associated together, be guarded in your words. Let your conversation be of such a nature that you will have no need of repentance.”—*Ibid.*, June 5, 1888.

3. IMPROPER REJOICING (II)

- a. **How is the Christian steward warned against delighting in the sins and frailty of others? Ephesians 5:11, 12.**
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“While many are neglecting their own souls, they eagerly watch for an opportunity to criticize and condemn others. All have defects of character, and it is not hard to find something that jealousy can interpret to their injury. ‘Now,’ say these self-constituted judges, ‘we have facts. We will fasten upon them an accusation from which they cannot clear themselves.’ They wait for a fitting opportunity and then produce their bundle of gossip and bring forth their tidbits. . . .

“True Christians will not exult in exposing the faults and deficiencies of others. They will turn away from vileness and deformity, to fix the mind upon that which is attractive and lovely. To the Christian every act of faultfinding, every word of censure or condemnation, is painful.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 95, 96.

- b. **What are some examples of how the Christian steward must refrain from rejoicing in iniquity? Proverbs 24:17, 18.**
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“Instead of finding fault with others, let us be critical with ourselves. The question with each one of us should be, Is my heart right before God? Will this course of action glorify my Father which is in heaven? If you have cherished a wrong spirit, let it be banished from the soul. It is your duty to eradicate from your heart everything that is of a defiling nature; every root of bitterness should be plucked up, lest others be contaminated by its baleful influence. Do not allow one poisonous plant to remain in the soil of your heart. Root it out this very hour, and plant in its stead the plant of love. Let Jesus be enshrined in the soul.

“Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions, and we are commanded to follow in His steps. Let us remember that God sent His only begotten Son to this world of sorrow, to ‘redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works’ [Titus 2:14]. Let us seek to comply with the requirement of God and fulfill His law. ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law’ [Romans 13:10], and He who died that we might live has given us this commandment, that we should love one another as He has loved us; and the world will know that we are His disciples, if we have this love one for another.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 5, 1888.

4. WITH OUR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

- a. **What teaching and experience of the early disciples is to be ours? James 5:16; Philippians 2:1, 2.**
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“We should be often in prayer. The outpouring of the Spirit of God came in answer to earnest prayer. . . . [The disciples] were not assembled to relate tidbits of scandal. They were not seeking to expose every stain they could find on a brother’s character. They felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction to help them in overcoming their own infirmities, and to fit them for the work of saving others. They prayed with intense earnestness that the love of Christ might be shed abroad in their hearts. This is our great need today in every church in our land. For ‘if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new’ [2 Corinthians 5:17]. That which was objectionable in the character is purified from the soul by the love of Jesus. All selfishness is expelled, all envy, all evil-speaking, is rooted out, and a radical transformation is wrought in the heart.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 22, 1890.

- b. **What factors must all Christian stewards bear in mind in their interaction with those whom they profess to love? Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.**
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“Let not the common, cheap, earthly things engross the mind that the presence of Jesus shall be withdrawn. The life of the church is communicated from Christ, and we help the church when we work in harmony with the life-giving power, losing sight of ourselves, and seeking to build one another up in the most holy faith.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, p. 265.

“There is a sympathy for sin and sinners that is dangerous to the prosperity of the church at the present day. You must have charity is the cry. But that sentiment that would excuse wrong and shield the guilty is not the charity of the Bible. The friendship of the wicked is more dangerous than their enmity; for none can prevail against the servants of the living God, except by tempting them to disobedience.

“The offensive character of sin can be estimated only in the light of the cross. When men urge that God is too merciful to punish the transgressors of His law, let them look to Calvary; let them realize that it was because Christ took upon Himself the guilt of the disobedient, and suffered in the sinners’ stead, that the sword of justice was awakened against the Son of God.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 6, 1881.

5. PROPER REJOICING

- a. How does the Christian steward reveal true charity? 1 Corinthians 13:6 (last part); Psalm 119:140–144, 172.
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“ ‘You must have charity,’ is the cry heard everywhere, especially from those who profess sanctification. But true charity is too pure to cover an unconfessed sin. While we are to love the souls for whom Christ died, we are to make no compromise with evil. We are not to unite with the rebellious and call this charity.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 554, 555.

- b. What is the ultimate goal of the Christian steward? 1 Corinthians 2:2.
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“The years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. . . .

“From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is self-examination a key in developing faithful stewardship?
2. When might we be perilously liable to please the enemy instead of pleasing Christ?
3. How might we be in danger of inwardly rejoicing in iniquity?
4. What are the symptoms of false charity?
5. How can the Christian steward manifest true charity?

First Sabbath Offerings



JULY 2
for Winchester,
Kentucky, USA
(see p. 4.)

AUGUST 6
for the GC Education
Department
(see p. 30.)



SEPTEMBER 3
for a Chapel and Headquarters
in Saint Lucia
(see p. 51.)