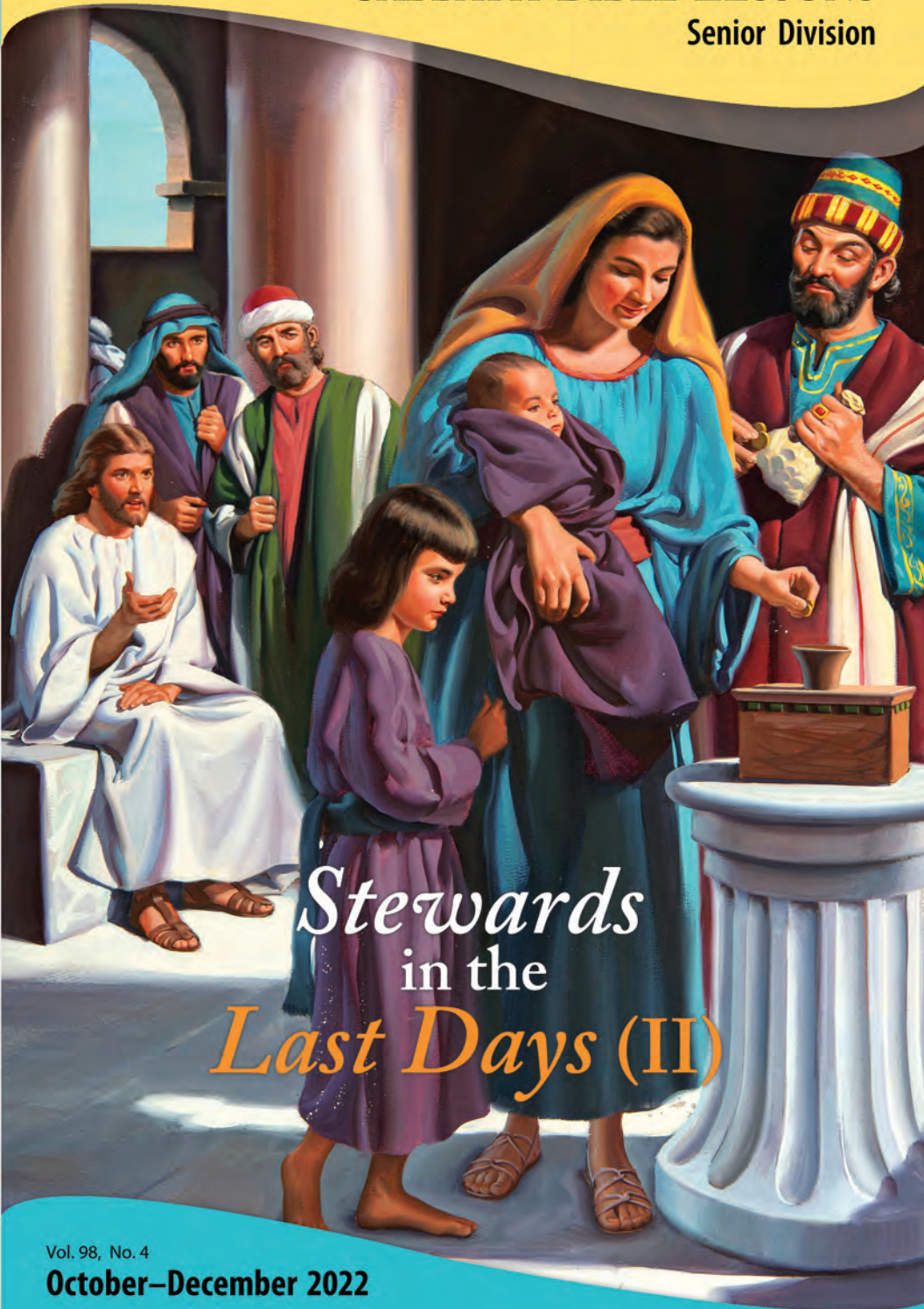


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

Senior Division



Stewards in the *Last Days (II)*

Vol. 98, No. 4

October–December 2022

Contents

1. The Creator and Owner.....	5
2. The Supreme Donor.....	10
3. All on the Altar	15
4. As Unto the Lord.....	20
5. Time and Eternity	25
6. The Love of Money.....	31
7. Treasure in Heaven	36
8. The Tithe and Firstfruits	41
9. Offerings of Gratitude and Care for the Poor.....	46
10. God's Storehouse: His Church	51
11. Financing God's Work.....	57
12. Biblical Principles of Finance.....	62
13. Finishing the Work	67
14. Our Last Opportunity!	72

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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Sabbath Bible Lessons (USPS 005-118), Vol. 98, No. 4, October–December 2022. Published quarterly by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference, Sabbath School Department. Copyright © 2022 printed, and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association, 5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke, Virginia 24019–5048, U.S.A. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022–9993.

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Foreword

We are running out of time! For nearly 180 years, this old planet has been ripe for Christ's return in the clouds of glory. What should be our focus at this late hour? Surely the heavenly Canaan—and how to prepare ourselves and others to be there.

Our topic of study for this quarter is a continuation of *Stewards in the Last Days*. While on earth, Jesus met a man who claimed to have kept all Ten Commandments from his youth. "Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21).

Are we laying up treasure in heaven? Or, like the rich young ruler, may we be outwardly keeping the Ten Commandments while lacking true heart service for the Master? All that God has given us belongs to Him, and we must make provision for this before our probation closes. Yet, "without obedience and unselfish love, the richest offerings are too meager to be presented to the Possessor of all things" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 57). It is God's purpose that His children overcome selfishness and fulfill His plan for the evangelization of the earth. He is now preparing a people to do this work—and it will be done whether or not everyone takes hold of the privilege of being involved.

"God calls for men to give the warning to the world that is asleep, dead in trespasses and sins. He calls for freewill offerings from those whose hearts are in the work, who have a burden for souls, that they shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Satan is playing the game of life for the souls of men. He is seeking to secure means, that he may bind it up, so that it shall not be used in advancing the missionary enterprises. Shall we be ignorant of his devices? Shall we allow him to stupefy our senses?"—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 446.

"For what shall we hoard up treasures? To be swept away by the flames of the last day? Shall we lay up gold and silver, to be a witness against us in the Judgment—to eat our flesh as it were fire? Shall we cling to our possessions till they fall into the hands of our enemies? The time is coming when commandment keepers can neither buy nor sell. Of what use will houses and lands, bank stock and merchandise, be to us then? Now is the time to place our treasures where they will be eternally secure. . . . That which we give to the cause of God becomes our own forever. Says Christ, 'Lay up for *yourselves* treasures in heaven' [Matthew 6:20]. These alone, of all that we possess, are really ours. All that we lay up on earth, we must leave at last. It is only what we give for Christ that we can take with us into the eternal world."—*The Review and Herald*, December 6, 1887. [Author's italics.]

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for the Bolivian Union Headquarters

Bolivia is a landlocked nation in the central-western region of South America, bordered on the north and east by Brazil, on the south by Paraguay and Argentina, and on the west by Chile and Peru. While situated in a tropical area, Bolivia has a wide range of temperatures due to the varied altitudes found here—with temperatures ranging from those typically found in the equatorial lowlands all the way to arctic cold.

There are over 11.5 million inhabitants living here in an area of 5,479 square miles (1,099 million km²).

The population of Bolivia is multicultural; the main language spoken is Spanish (88.4%) as the mother tongue, followed by the second languages of some among the indigenous peoples: Quechua (25%), Aymara (11%), Guaraní (1%) and others (4%)—including 34 additional indigenous languages.

Bolivia is currently a secular state that guarantees its people freedom of worship. The SDARM message arrived here in the 1940's. The work developed rapidly over the years, as part of the Southern South American Union together with Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

By 1994, the work in Bolivia had grown sufficiently to form a distinct Union—the Bolivian Union—which began operations in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. As the work has continued to advance, we now see the need to build a new headquarters in the city of Cochabamba. With this goal in mind, the brethren together with the Bolivian Union Council, have acquired a large parcel of land that one of our brethren generously donated specifically for this purpose.

In order to build, we will need the kind help of our brethren worldwide. We thank you in advance for your kind contribution toward the development of the cause of God here in Bolivia. They are among those of whom it is written, “in the Catholic lands of Europe and of South America, in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 188, 189.

Please extend your helping hand today. May the Lord bless you!

Your brothers and sisters of the Bolivian Union



The Creator and Owner

MEMORY TEXT: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

“Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

Suggested Reading: *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 290–295.

Sunday

September 25

1. CREATOR AND MAINTAINER

- a. What should we realize in gazing upon the magnificent splendor of creation? Psalm 19:1–3; Isaiah 40:18, 21, 22, 26.

“[Psalm 19:1–3 quoted.] Some may suppose that these grand things in the natural world are God. They are not God. All these wonders in the heavens are only doing the work appointed them. They are the Lord’s agencies. God is the superintendent, as well as the Creator, of all things.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 293, 294.

- b. What aspect of God’s omnipotence touches us daily? Acts 17:24–29.

“The physical organism of man is under the supervision of God; but it is not like a clock, which is set in operation, and must go of itself. The heart beats, pulse succeeds pulse, breath succeeds breath, but the entire being is under the supervision of God. . . . Each heartbeat, each breath, is the inspiration of Him who breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life—the inspiration of the ever-present God, the great I AM.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 294, 295.

2. WORTHY OF REVERENCE

- a. **What facts show that God is unique in deserving our continual worship? Psalm 33:6–9; Jeremiah 10:9–13.**
-

“God’s claim to reverence and worship, above the gods of the heathen, is based upon the fact that He is the Creator, and that to Him all other beings owe their existence.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 336.

“The Divine Being is engaged in upholding the things that He has created. The same hand that holds the mountains and balances them in position, guides the worlds in their mysterious march around the sun. . . .

“God furnishes the matter and the properties with which to carry out His plans. He employs His agencies that vegetation may flourish. He sends the dew and the rain and the sunshine, that verdure may spring forth, and spread its carpet over the earth; that the shrubs and fruit trees may bud and blossom and bring forth.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 294.

- b. **What questions should inspire us with reverence for God? Job 11:7; 38:1–7. In what way can reverence for our Creator impact our salvation?**
-

“Divine inspiration asks many questions which the most profound scholar cannot answer. These questions were not asked, supposing that we could answer them, but to call our attention to the deep mysteries of God, and to make men know that their wisdom is limited; that in the common things of daily life there are mysteries past the comprehension of finite minds; that the judgment and purposes of God are past finding out, His wisdom unsearchable. If He reveals Himself to man, it is by shrouding Himself in the thick cloud of mystery.

“God’s purpose is to conceal more of Himself than He makes known to man. Could men fully understand the ways and works of God, they would not then believe Him to be the infinite One. He is not to be comprehended by man in His wisdom, and reasons, and purposes. ‘His ways are past finding out’ (Romans 11:33). His love can never be explained upon natural principles. If this could be done, we would not feel that we could trust Him with the interests of our souls. Skeptics refuse to believe, because with their finite minds they cannot comprehend the infinite power by which God reveals Himself to men. Even the mechanism of the human body cannot be fully understood; it presents mysteries that baffle the most intelligent.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1141.

3. TRUE OWNERSHIP

- a. What has God always wanted us to understand regarding the ownership of property? Psalm 50:7, 10–12.
-

“The Lord sought to teach Israel that in everything He must be first. Thus they were reminded that God was the proprietor of their fields, their flocks, and their herds; that it was He who sent them the sunshine and the rain that developed and ripened the harvest. Everything that they possessed was His.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 337.

“Our bodies belong to God. He paid the price of redemption for the body as well as the soul. ‘Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.’ 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. ‘The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.’ Verse 13. The Creator watches over the human machinery, keeping it in motion. Were it not for His constant care, the pulse would not beat, the action of the heart would cease, the brain would no longer act its part.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 586.

- b. How extensive is God’s property? Psalm 24:1, 2; Deuteronomy 10:14. What does this mean to us? Revelation 4:11.
-

“Consider that there is only one Proprietor of the universe, and that every man, with his time, his intellect, his resources, belongs to the One who has paid the ransom for the soul. God has a righteous claim to constant service and supreme affection. God’s will, not your pleasure, is to be your criterion.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 137.

“We should not forget that we are in the service of God, and that he owns us, and he owns the world. Though we are all poor and unable to do large things, the Lord calls upon every soul to practice self-denial in this time of scarcity, and be able to give, not grudgingly nor of necessity, but with cheerful gratitude for God’s unspeakable gift.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 21, 1894.

“Those who have a constant realization that they stand in this relation to God will not place in the stomach food which pleases the appetite, but which injures the digestive organs. They will not spoil the property of God by indulging improper habits of eating, drinking, or dressing. They will take great care of the human machinery, realizing that they must do this in order to work in copartnership with God. He wills that they shall be healthy, happy, and useful. But in order for them to be this, they must place their wills on the side of His will.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 399.

4. WHO HAS DOMINION?

- a. To whom did God entrust dominion over His earthly goods? Genesis 1:26–28. Why is this an honor to humanity? Psalm 8:1–9.
-

“He who set the starry worlds on high and tinted with delicate skill the flowers of the field, who filled the earth and the heavens with the wonders of His power, when He came to crown His glorious work, to place one in the midst to stand as ruler of the fair earth, did not fail to create a being worthy of the hand that gave him life. The genealogy of our race, as given by inspiration, traces back its origin, not to a line of developing germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator. Though formed from the dust, Adam was ‘the son of God’ [Luke 3:38].”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

- b. Because of Adam’s fall, what did the deceiver boast to Christ? Luke 4:5, 6.
-

- c. When is Christ’s dominion over this planet to be fully recovered? Daniel 7:13, 14, 26, 27; Micah 4:8; Revelation 11:15.
-

“When Satan declared to Christ, The kingdom and glory of the world are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it, he stated what was true only in part, and he declared it to serve his own purpose of deception. Satan’s dominion was that wrested from Adam, but Adam was the vicegerent of the Creator. His was not an independent rule. The earth is God’s, and He has committed all things to His Son. Adam was to reign subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan’s hands, Christ still remained the rightful King. Thus the Lord had said to King Nebuchadnezzar, ‘The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will’ (Daniel 4:17). Satan can exercise his usurped authority only as God permits.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 129, 130.

“Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, ‘dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;’ He will receive the New Jerusalem, the capital of His kingdom, ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband’ (Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2). Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to ‘sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,’ at His table in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 427.

5. STEWARDSHIP ENTRUSTED

- a. Whenever any degree of dominion—great or small—is entrusted to us, what admonition are we to heed? Deuteronomy 8:11–18.
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“We should regard ourselves as stewards of the Lord’s property and God as the supreme proprietor, to whom we are to render His own when He shall require it.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 480, 481.

- b. What message bears special force in these final days, just before our Lord’s return? Luke 19:11–13.
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“God calls us servants, which implies that we are employed by Him to do a certain work and bear certain responsibilities. He has lent us capital for investment. It is not *our* property, and we displease God if we hoard up our Lord’s goods or spend them as we please. . . .

“Every talent which returns to the Master will be scrutinized. The doings and trusts of God’s servants will not be considered an unimportant matter. Every individual will be dealt with personally and will be required to give an account of the talents entrusted to him, whether he has improved or abused them. The reward bestowed will be proportionate to the improvement of the talents. The punishment awarded will be according as the talents have been abused. . . .

“The talents are in our hands. Shall we use them to God’s glory, or shall we abuse them? We may trade with them today, but tomorrow our probation may end and our account be forever fixed.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 668. [Author’s Italics.]

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What facts reveal that our Creator is also our Sustainer?
2. Why is God alone worthy to be worshipped?
3. How should we respond when we consider that God owns everything, and that he has entrusted dominion of the earth to humans?
4. What should we understand about Satan’s usurped authority?
5. What temptation comes when we are entrusted with goods?

The Supreme Donor

MEMORY TEXT: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

“God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 77.

Suggested Readings: *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 72;
God’s Amazing Grace, p. 62.

Sunday

October 2

1. DISTINCTIONS OF GOD’S CHARACTER

- a. After bestowing life upon humanity, what else did God provide? Genesis 2:7, 15. Why is this a blessing for us? Ecclesiastes 5:12, 18.

“Adam was not to be idle. No sooner was he created than his work was given him. He was to find employment and happiness in tending the things that God had created, and in response to his labor his wants were to be abundantly supplied from the fruits of the Garden of Eden.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 273, 274.

- b. What daily evidences reveal God’s abundant love for us? Psalm 36:5–9; Lamentations 3:22, 23; Acts 14:17.

“We are indebted to [God] for every moment of existence, and for all the comforts of life.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 17.

“The Lord has given His life to the trees and vines of His creation. His word can increase or decrease the fruit of the land. If men would open their understanding to discern the relation between nature and nature’s God, faithful acknowledgments of the Creator’s power would be heard. Without the life of God, nature would die. His creative works are dependent upon Him. He bestows life-giving properties on all that nature produces. We are to regard the trees laden with fruit as the gift of God, just as much as though He placed the fruit in our hands.”—*Lift Him Up*, p. 62.

2. THE GREATEST GIFT

- a. What is the greatest of God's gifts? John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-7.

"The treasure of the gospel, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, was among [the Jewish people], but they rejected the greatest gift that Heaven could bestow."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 105.

"The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 21.

"Christ has purchased us by the price of His own blood. He has paid the purchase money for our redemption, and if we will lay hold upon the treasure, it is ours by the free gift of God."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 245.

- b. When we follow Christ, what gift does the Father promise to His Son? John 6:37-39; 17:24. Why should this fact encourage all? James 1:17, 18.

"How much God loves human beings, we never can compute. The universe is filled with proofs of His measureless benevolence.

"Christ has a claim on all in this world. 'All things are delivered unto Me of My Father,' He said [Luke 10:22]. 'All things that the Father hath are mine.' 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth' [John 16:15; Matthew 28:18]. All in heaven and in earth is at His service. The great gift of heavenly love was not to be shut up in the bosom of the Father. It was to Christ, to give to needy human beings.

"Christ is full of grace and truth. He is all and in all. Then let no human being take glory to himself. The glory is to be given to the Son of God. Now and forever He is to receive all praise."—*Battle Creek Letters*, p. 65.

"Because we are the gift of His Father, and the reward of His work, Jesus loves us. He loves us as His children. Reader, He loves you. Heaven itself can bestow nothing greater, nothing better."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 483.

"It is your privilege to trust in the love of Jesus for salvation, in the fullest, surest, noblest manner; to say, He loves me, He receives me; I will trust Him, for He gave His life for me. Nothing so dispels doubt as coming in contact with the character of Christ."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 517.

3. WHO IS CHRIST?

- a. As we reverence the heavenly Father as Creator, what should we also understand about Jesus Christ? Hebrews 1:1–3; John 1:1–3.
-

“If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.”—*Lift Him Up*, p. 16.

“Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, and in purpose—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. By Christ the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. ‘By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, . . . whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers’ (Colossians 1:16); and to Christ, equally with the Father, all heaven gave allegiance.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 493.

- b. Upon what basis is Christ entitled to our worship and discipleship? Ephesians 3:9; Philippians 2:5–10.
-

“The greatest gift that God could bestow upon men was bestowed in the gift of His beloved Son. The apostle says, ‘He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?’ (Romans 8:32). There was nothing held in reserve. No second probation will ever be provided. If the unspeakable gift of God does not lead man to repentance, there is nothing that ever will move his heart. There is no power held in reserve to act upon his mind, and arouse his sensibilities. The whole character of God was revealed in His Son, the whole range of the possibilities of heaven is displayed for the acceptance of man in the Son of the Infinite One. The way for man’s return to God and heaven has no barriers. The matchless depths of the Saviour’s love have been demonstrated; and if this manifestation of God’s love for the children of men does not prevail to draw men to Himself, there is nothing that ever will.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889.

“The apostle Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declares of Christ that ‘all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together’ (Colossians 1:16, 17, RV, margin). The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.”—*Education*, p. 132.

4. A HEAVENLY PRINCIPLE

- a. What fundamental concept should we learn from the example of Christ's earthly life? Luke 22:27 (last part); Hebrews 5:8; 12:2, 3.

“The foundation of the plan of salvation was laid in *sacrifice*. Jesus left the royal courts and became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. All who share this salvation, purchased for them at such an infinite sacrifice by the Son of God, will follow the example of the true Pattern. Christ was the chief Cornerstone, and we must build upon this Foundation. Each must have a spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice. The life of Christ upon earth was unselfish; it was marked with humiliation and sacrifice. And shall men, partakers of the great salvation which Jesus came from heaven to bring them, refuse to follow their Lord and to share in His self-denial and sacrifice?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 387. [Author's Italics.]

- b. In what sense are we to gladly follow Christ's example of sacrifice? 1 Peter 2:21; Romans 12:1, 2.

“Christ sacrificed everything for man in order to make it possible for him to gain heaven. Now it is for fallen man to show what he will sacrifice on his own account for Christ's sake, that he may win immortal glory. Those who have any just sense of the magnitude of salvation and of its cost will never murmur that their sowing must be in tears and that conflict and self-denial are the Christian's portion in this life.”—*Ibid.*, p. 481.

“[Christ] laid aside His glory, His dominion, His riches, and sought after those who were perishing in sin. He humbled Himself to our necessities, that He might exalt us to heaven. Sacrifice, self-denial, and disinterested benevolence characterized His life. He is our pattern. Have you . . . imitated the Pattern?”—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 549.

“The words, ‘Ye are not your own,’ ‘ye are bought with a price’ [1 Corinthians 6:19, 20], should be hung in memory's hall, that we may ever recognize God's right to our talents, our property, our influence, our individual selves. We are to learn how to treat this gift of God, in mind, in soul, in body, that as Christ's purchased possession we may do Him healthful savory service.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 276.

5. GRACE GRANTED

- a. What is grace—and why is it essential for our salvation? Romans 5:6–9; Ephesians 2:8, 9.

“Grace is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his own, without any claim to offer to God. He is justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who stands in the courts of heaven as the sinner’s substitute and surety.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 398.

“[The Saviour’s] grace is sufficient to subdue sin.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 87.

- b. How should we respond to God’s bountiful grace? Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:11–14.

“Are good works of no real value? Is the sinner who commits sin every day with impunity, regarded of God with the same favor as the one who through faith in Christ tries to work in his integrity? The Scripture answers, ‘We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.’

“In His divine arrangement, through His unmerited favor, the Lord has ordained that good works shall be rewarded. We are accepted through Christ’s merit alone; and the acts of mercy, the deeds of charity, which we perform, are the fruits of faith; and they become a blessing to us; for men are to be rewarded according to their works.

“It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God, and it is grace that enables us to do the works for which He rewards us.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 199, 200.

“All your good works cannot save you; but it is nevertheless impossible for you to be saved without good works. Every sacrifice made for Christ will be for your eternal gain.”—*Ibid.*, p. 147.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name some simple gifts of God bestowed from the days of Eden.
2. How does God’s greatest gift involve a reciprocal relationship?
3. Why is it important for us to understand who Christ really is?
4. What fundamental principle underlies the entire plan of salvation?
5. How does grace from God impact our preparation for Heaven?

All on the Altar

MEMORY TEXT: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment” (Mark 12:30).

“The whole being—heart, soul, mind, and strength—is to be used in God’s service. What is there left that is not devoted to God?”—*The Review and Herald*, November 6, 1900.

Suggested Reading: *Early Writings*, pp. 266–269.

Sunday

October 9

1. MOTIVE FOR SERVICE

- a. What aspects of discipleship are often overlooked by many who profess to follow Christ? Mark 8:34; John 15:19, 20.

“Few are willing to imitate [Christ’s] amazing privations, to endure His sufferings and persecutions, and to share His exhausting labor to bring others to the light. But few will follow His example in earnest, frequent prayer to God for strength to endure the trials of this life and perform its daily duties. Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and by His own sufferings and sacrifice He has given an example to all His followers that watchfulness and prayer, and persevering effort, were necessary on their part if they would rightly represent the love which dwelt in His bosom for the fallen race.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 664.

- b. What contrast exists between true and false service? Job 31:24–28; 29:11–16. Why must we reexamine our motives?

“With many, the rubbish of the world has clogged the channels of the soul. Selfishness has controlled the mind and warped the character. Were the life hid with Christ in God, His service would be no drudgery. If the whole heart were consecrated to God, all would find something to do, and would covet a part in the work. They would sow beside all waters, praying and believing that the fruit would appear.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 19, 1878.

2. THE KEYNOTE OF CHRIST'S TEACHINGS

- a. **What unfortunate contrast exists between Christ Himself and many of His professed followers today? Philippians 2:5–8, 21.**
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“The plan of salvation was laid in a sacrifice so broad and deep and high that it is immeasurable. Christ did not send His angels to this fallen world, while He remained in heaven; but He Himself went without the camp, bearing the reproach. He became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; Himself took our infirmities, and bore our weaknesses. And the absence of self-denial in His professed followers, God regards as a denial of the Christian name. Those who profess to be one with Christ, and indulge their selfish desires for rich and expensive clothing, furniture, and food, are Christians only in name. To be a Christian is to be Christlike.

“And yet how true are the words of the apostle: ‘For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s’ [Philippians 2:21]. Many Christians do not have works corresponding to the name they bear. They act as if they had never heard of the plan of redemption wrought out at infinite cost. The majority aim to make a name for themselves in the world; they adopt its forms and ceremonies, and live for the indulgence of self. They follow out their own purposes as eagerly as do the world, and thus they cut off their power to help in establishing the kingdom of God.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 54.

- b. **What heavenly principle does Christ enjoin upon all of His followers today? Why? Matthew 16:24–26.**
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“Those who would gain the blessing of sanctification must first learn the meaning of self-sacrifice. The cross of Christ is the central pillar on which hangs the ‘far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory’ (2 Corinthians 4:17). [Matthew 16:24 quoted.] It is the fragrance of our love for our fellow men that reveals our love for God. It is patience in service that brings rest to the soul.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 560.

“We are to practice the same self-sacrifice that led [Christ] to give Himself up to the death of the cross, to make it possible for human beings to have eternal life. In all our expenditure of means we are to strive to fulfill the purpose of Him who is the alpha and omega of all Christian effort.

“We are to place in the Lord’s treasury all the means that we can spare. For this means, needy, unworked fields are calling.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 49.

3. LEARNING FROM THE APOSTLES

- a. What was the secret of the apostle Paul's fervent love for the souls of men and women? 2 Corinthians 4:15–18; 5:14, 15.
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“How can those for whom Christ has sacrificed so much, continue to enjoy His gifts selfishly? His love and self-denial are without a parallel; and when this love enters into the experience of His followers, they will identify their interests with those of their Redeemer. Their work will be to build up the kingdom of Christ. They will consecrate themselves and their possessions to Him, and use both as His cause may require. . . .

“The love of Jesus in the soul will be revealed in word and deed. The kingdom of Christ will be paramount. Self will be laid a willing sacrifice on the altar of God. Everyone who is truly united with Christ will feel the same love for souls that caused the Son of God to leave His royal throne, His high command, and for our sake become poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 55.

- b. Of what tendency does the apostle John warn believers—and how may this apply to us? 1 John 2:15–17.
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“As professed Christians, what are we doing? Souls all around us, close beside our homes, and those afar off, are perishing in their sins, unwarned, uncared for. Every day we pass by those who are without hope and without God in the world, and never open our lips to tell them of Christ and His love. A worldly infatuation keeps men and women spellbound. . . . Soldiers of the cross of Christ should be moving heaven with their prayers for God to work, for His power to cooperate with the human agent to reach men where they are.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 95.

“While many are waiting to have every obstacle removed, souls are dying without hope and without God in the world. Many, very many, for the sake of worldly advantage, for the sake of acquiring knowledge of the sciences, will venture into pestilential regions, and will go into countries where they think they can obtain commercial advantage; but where are the men and women who will change their location, and move their families into regions that are in need of the light of the truth, in order that their example may tell upon those who shall see in them the representatives of Christ?”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 56.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH

- a. As servants of Christ, what should characterize our faith? Why? Ephesians 6:6–8.
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“Is there not danger that the precious, immortal inheritance may be eclipsed by the valueless treasure of earth? There is danger that your usefulness may be destroyed, your faith weakened, your soul-temple defiled with buyers and sellers.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 19, 1888.

- b. Why did Christ reiterate the tenth commandment during His ministry? Exodus 20:17; Luke 12:15. What is God’s remedy to enable us to overcome the terrible sin of selfishness? Hebrews 12:2, 3.
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“Christ is our example. He gave His life as a sacrifice for us, and He asks us to give our lives as a sacrifice for others. Thus we may cast out the selfishness which Satan is constantly striving to implant in our hearts. This selfishness is death to all piety, and can be overcome only by manifesting love to God and to our fellow men. Christ will not permit one selfish person to enter the courts of heaven. No covetous person can pass through the pearly gates; for all covetousness is idolatry.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 26.

“Constant, self-denying benevolence is God’s remedy for the cankering sins of selfishness and covetousness. God has arranged systematic benevolence to sustain His cause and relieve the necessities of the suffering and needy. He has ordained that giving should become a habit, that it may counteract the dangerous and deceitful sin of covetousness. Continual giving starves covetousness to death. Systematic benevolence is designed in the order of God to tear away treasures from the covetous as fast as they are gained and to consecrate them to the Lord, to whom they belong. . . .

“Riches make men selfish, and hoarding feeds covetousness; and these evils strengthen by active exercise. God knows our danger and has hedged us about with means to prevent our own ruin. He requires the constant exercise of benevolence, that the force of habit in good works may break the force of habit in an opposite direction.

“By exercise, benevolence constantly enlarges and strengthens, until it becomes a principle and reigns in the soul. It is highly dangerous to spirituality to allow selfishness and covetousness the least room in the heart.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 548, 549.

5. FULL SUBMISSION

- a. How can we be encouraged by the example of the early Christians in Macedonia? 2 Corinthians 8:1–5.
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“Nearly all the Macedonian believers were poor in this world’s goods, but their hearts were overflowing with love for God and His truth, and they gladly gave for the support of the gospel. When general collections were taken up in the Gentile churches for the relief of the Jewish believers, the liberality of the converts in Macedonia was held up as an example to other churches.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 343.

- b. How does Christ summarize our duty as believers? Mark 12:29–31. What happens as we put this principle into daily practice? Matthew 7:24, 25.
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“The whole being is to be consecrated to the service of the Master.”—*The General Conference Bulletin*, April 16, 1901.

“No one can be truly united with Christ, practicing His lessons, submitting to His yoke of restraint, without realizing that which he can never express in words. New, rich thoughts come to him. Light is given to the intellect, determination to the will, sensitiveness to the conscience, purity to the imagination. The heart becomes more tender, the thoughts more spiritual, the service more Christlike. In the life there is seen that which no words can express—true, faithful, loving devotion of heart, mind, soul, and strength to the work of the Master.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 476, 477.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did the life of Job reflect the Spirit of Christ?
2. What common tendency must we overcome if we would be victorious?
3. What do Paul and John teach us about cultivating eternal values?
4. Why is covetousness so detrimental to our souls?
5. How is wholehearted service rewarded, even in this earthly life?

As Unto the Lord

MEMORY TEXT: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:19).

“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: *Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 154, 155.

Sunday

October 16

1. A NEW ATTITUDE NEEDED

- a. **What should we learn from Christ’s warning against murmuring and half-hearted service? Matthew 25:14, 15, 18, 24–30.**

“How many feel as did the servant with the one talent, that the Lord is an austere man, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strewn. This view of the matter is a delusion of the wicked one; for what have we that we did not receive? ‘All things come of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee’ [1 Chronicles 29:14], should be the language of our grateful hearts.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 12, 1888.

- b. **What admonitions of Christ apply with special force in these last days of earth’s history? Matthew 24:12; Revelation 2:4.**

“The members of the church should each have a jealous care that the enemies of our faith have no occasion to triumph over their lifeless, backslidden state. Some have wasted their influence, when with a little self-denial, earnestness, and zeal, they might have been a power on the side of good. This zeal will not come without effort, without earnest struggles.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 287.

2. ZEAL: A QUALITY TO SEEK

- a. How does the Bible depict the vital importance of zeal for God? Psalms 42:1; 84:2. If this quality is lacking in us, how can we acquire it? Jeremiah 29:13.
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“There are many who give no decided evidence that they are true to their baptismal vows. Their zeal is chilled by formality, worldly ambition, pride, and love of self. Occasionally their feelings are stirred, but they do not fall on the Rock, Christ Jesus. They do not come to God with hearts that are broken in repentance and confession. Those who experience the work of true conversion in their hearts will reveal the fruits of the Spirit in their lives.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 155.

“There is need of fasting, humiliation, and prayer over our decaying zeal and languishing spirituality.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 535, 536.

- b. What promise is for all who yearn to become Christlike? Matthew 5:6. Why is Jacob’s experience so valuable to us? Genesis 32:24–30.
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“God is looking for piety, self-denial, self-sacrifice, compassion for man, and zeal for God. He longs to see in man a deep yearning of soul to save his fellowman from unbelief and ruin.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 15, 1899.

“With the great truth we have been privileged to receive, we should, and under the Holy Spirit’s power we could, become living channels of light. We could then approach the mercy seat; and seeing the bow of promise, kneel with contrite hearts, and seek the kingdom of heaven with a spiritual violence that would bring its own reward. We would take it by force, as did Jacob. Then our message would be the power of God unto salvation.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 217.

“Go to your closet, and there alone plead with God: ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me’ [Psalm 51:10]. Be in earnest, be sincere. Fervent prayer availeth much. Jacob-like, wrestle in prayer. Agonize. Jesus in the garden sweat great drops of blood; you must make an effort. Do not leave your closet until you feel strong in God; then watch, and just as long as you watch and pray you can keep these evil besetments under, and the grace of God can and will appear in you.”—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 131, 132.

3. ZEAL IN ACTION

- a. **What can we learn from the struggles endured and the victories won by faithful witnesses for God? Jeremiah 20:8–11; Acts 4:14–20.**
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“So strong was the opposition against Jeremiah’s message, so often was he derided and mocked, that he said, ‘I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name’ [Jeremiah 20:9]. Thus it has ever been. Because of the bitterness, hatred, and opposition manifested against the word of God spoken in reproof, many other messengers of God have decided to do as Jeremiah decided. But what did this prophet of the Lord do after his decision? Try as much as he would, he could not hold his peace. As soon as he came into the assemblies of the people, he found that the Spirit of the Lord was stronger than he was.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1156.

“Zeal for God and His cause moved the disciples to bear witness to the gospel with mighty power. Should not a like zeal fire our hearts with a determination to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified? It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600.

- b. **What type of experience must be echoed in us? Psalm 119:137–140; 1 John 3:1–3.**
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“Elder Loughborough was a zealous worker in the cause. His whole heart had been in the work. He entered . . . [a] new field of labor, and he was willing to place himself in the humblest position, endure any and every privation, economize, live cheap and poor, labor early and late for the infant cause. . . .”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 246.

“If the church will put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness, withdrawing from all allegiance with the world, there is before her the dawn of a bright and glorious day. God’s promise to her will stand fast forever. He will make her an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Truth, passing by those who despise and reject it, will triumph. Although at times apparently retarded, its progress has never been checked. When the message of God meets with opposition, He gives it additional force, that it may exert greater influence. Endowed with divine energy, it will cut its way through the strongest barriers and triumph over every obstacle.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 601.

4. AVOIDING MISGUIDED ZEAL

- a. **What are some ways in which we may be in danger of going astray through misguided zeal? Romans 10:1–3; 1 Corinthians 10:23.**
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“When some who lack the Spirit and power of God enter a new field, they commence denouncing other denominations, thinking that they can convince the people of the truth by presenting the inconsistencies of the popular churches. It may seem necessary on some occasions to speak of these things, but in general it only creates prejudice against our work and closes the ears of many who might otherwise have listened to the truth. If these teachers were connected closely with Christ, they would have divine wisdom to know how to approach the people.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 536.

- b. **What was wrong with the false zeal of Jehu? 2 Kings 10:16–19, 28–31.**
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“There are many whose religion consists in activities. They want to be engaged in, and have the credit of doing, some great work while the little graces that go to make up a lovely Christian character are entirely overlooked. The busy, bustling service, which gives the impression that one is doing some wonderful work, is not acceptable to God. It is a Jehu spirit, which says, ‘Come, see my zeal for the Lord.’ It is gratifying to self; it feeds a self-complacent feeling; but all the while the soul may be defiled with the plague-spot of unsubdued, uncontrolled selfishness.”—*The Signs of the Times*, November 20, 1884.

“Christian zeal is controlled by principle and is not spasmodic. It is earnest, deep, and strong, engaging the whole soul and arousing to exercise the moral sensibilities. The salvation of souls and the interests of the kingdom of God are matters of the highest importance. . . . Christian zeal will not exhaust itself in talk, but will feel and act with vigor and efficiency. Yet Christian zeal will not act for the sake of being seen. Humility will characterize every effort and be seen in every work. Christian zeal will lead to earnest prayer and humiliation, and to faithfulness in home duties. In the family circle will be seen the gentleness and love, benevolence and compassion, which are ever the fruits of Christian zeal.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 232, 233.

5. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

- a. How was the psalmist's prophecy of godly zeal fulfilled in Christ? Psalm 69:9; John 2:13–17; 4:34. What factors should we learn from Christ's zeal? 1 Corinthians 2:2–4.

"[Christ] lived the law. His purity and beneficence, His devotion to the truth, and His zeal for God's glory reveal the perfection of the law."—*The Review and Herald*, February 26, 1901.

"Christ declared that it was His meat and drink to do His Father's will. The zeal that comes through such sanctification of the truth makes the believer in the truth powerful, for he is the repository of sacred truth, and as he partakes of the truth he will be a helpful Christian. Zeal should always be uniform, manifesting a holiness of character."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, p. 131.

- b. What appeal does Christ make to each one living in the lukewarm era of Laodicea? Revelation 3:19.

"When it comes to the service of God, do men manifest the same zeal for His work as they formerly manifested in the service of the world?"—*The Review and Herald*, June 12, 1888.

"At this time, when the end of all things is at hand, should not the zeal of the church exceed even that of the early church? Zeal for the glory of God moved the disciples to bear witness to the truth with mighty power. Should not this zeal fire our hearts with a longing to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified? Should not the power of God be even more mightily revealed today than in the time of the apostles?"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 33.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What warning should we heed from the parable of the talents?
2. Which aspect of Jacob's experience is also to be ours—and why?
3. What can we learn from Jeremiah, David, and the early apostles?
4. How might we be manifesting symptoms of misguided zeal?
5. What characterizes genuine zeal?

Time and Eternity

MEMORY TEXT: “As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7).

“Because time is short, we should work with diligence and double energy.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 159.

Suggested Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 342–346.

Sunday

October 23

1. A TALENT FOR EVERYONE

- a. Even in the fast-paced era in which we live, what does God mercifully provide—and why? Ecclesiastes 3:1.

“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. . . .

“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. It is now that we are to form characters for the future, immortal life. It is now that we are to prepare for the searching judgment.”—*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.

“The shortness of time demands an energy that has not been aroused among those who claim to believe the present truth.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 506.

“If all would use their time to the best account, very much means would be saved to the cause of truth. When the heart is in the work, it will be done with earnestness, energy, and dispatch.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 451.

2. PRUDENCE AND VIGILANCE

- a. In seeking to advance God's work, what must we realize? 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:12.
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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."—*Evangelism*, p. 218.

"Oh! we must be terribly in earnest to impress upon every soul that there is a heaven to win and a hell to shun. Every energy of the soul must be aroused to force their passage and seize the kingdom by force. Satan is active, and we must be active too. Satan is untiring and persevering, and we must be the same. There is no time to make excuses and blame others for our backslidings; no time now to flatter the soul [that] if circumstances had only been more favorable, how much better, how much easier [it would be] for us to work the works of God. We must tell even those who profess to believe in Christ, that they must cease to offend God by sinful excuses."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 336.

- b. What does Inspiration teach about the struggle before us? Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 24:13.
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"In consideration of the shortness of time we as a people should watch and pray, and in no case allow ourselves to be diverted from the solemn work of preparation for the great event before us. Because the time is apparently extended, many have become careless and indifferent in regard to their words and actions. They do not realize their danger and do not see and understand the mercy of our God in lengthening their probation, that they may have time to form characters for the future, immortal life. Every moment is of the highest value. Time is granted them, not to be employed in studying their own ease and becoming dwellers on the earth, but to be used in the work of overcoming every defect in their own characters and in helping others, by example and personal effort, to see the beauty of holiness."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 306, 307.

"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.

3. RESOURCES MADE USEFUL

- a. What are some points that our Master wants us to understand about the various talents entrusted to us? Luke 19:13.
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“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.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 22.

“I cannot find an instance in the life of Christ where He devoted time to play and amusement. He was the great educator for the present and the future life; yet I have not been able to find one instance where He taught the disciples to engage in amusement in order to gain physical exercise. The world’s Redeemer gives to every man his work and bids him, ‘Occupy till I come’ (Luke 19:13). In doing this, the heart warms to the enterprise. All the powers of the being are enlisted in the effort to obey. We have a high and holy calling.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 309.

- b. What should we learn from Solomon’s experience? 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.

“Let the people see that you have a mind for usefulness and duty, and that to the saving of the soul. The amusements that consume time, just to gratify self, do not pay.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 82.

“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.

4. A PURCHASED POSSESSION

- a. Why is the attitude of the foolish rich man a warning for us? Luke 12:16–21.
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“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.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 22, 1890.

“Men act as though they were bereft of their reason. They are buried up in the cares of this life. They have no time to devote to God, no time to serve Him. Work, work, work, is the order of the day. All about them are required to labor upon the high-pressure plan, to take care of large farms. To tear down and build greater is their ambition, that they may have wherewith to bestow their goods. Yet these very men who are weighed down with their riches pass for Christ’s followers. They have the name of believing that Christ is soon to come, that the end of all things is at hand; yet they have no spirit of sacrifice. They are plunging deeper and deeper into the world. They allow themselves but little time to study the word of life and to meditate and pray. Neither do they give others in their family, or those who serve them, this privilege. Yet these men profess to believe that this world is not their home, that they are merely pilgrims and strangers upon the earth, preparing to move to a better country. The example and influence of all such is a curse to the cause of God. Hollow hypocrisy characterizes their professed Christian lives. They love God and the truth just as much as their works show, and no more. A man will act out all the faith he has.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 662, 663.

- b. What should always be foremost in our mind? 1 Corinthians 3:23; 6:20.
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“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.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1901.

5. PREPARING FOR THE LATTER RAIN

- a. What realization should awaken each one to action? 2 Corinthians 6:2; Matthew 10:7.
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“We need greater earnestness in the cause of Christ. The solemn message of truth should be given with an intensity that would impress unbelievers that God is working with our efforts, that the Most High is our living source of strength. . . .

“Is this indifference to continue from year to year? Is Satan always to triumph, and Christ to be disappointed in the servants whom He has redeemed at an infinite price? We are looking forward to the time when the latter rain will be poured out, confidently hoping for a better day, when the church shall be endued with power from on high, and thus fitted to do more efficient work for God. But the latter rain will never refresh and invigorate indolent souls, that are not using the power God has already given them. Spiritual laziness will not bring us nearer to God. There must be energy and zeal as well as devotion and personal piety, woven into all our works.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 9, 1886.

- b. What is God’s call for us today? Isaiah 60:1, 2; Matthew 5:14–16.
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“A working church is a living church. Church members, let the light shine forth. Let your voices be heard in humble prayer, in witness against the intemperance, the folly, and the amusements of this world, and in the proclamation of the truth for this time. Your voice, your influence, your time—all these are gifts from God and are to be used in winning souls to Christ. Visit your neighbors and show an interest in the salvation of their souls. Arouse every spiritual energy to action. Tell those whom you visit that the end of all things is at hand.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 332.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is time so valuable?
2. What common trap may be preventing us from laboring for Christ?
3. What tendency could be stagnating us in a Laodicean condition?
4. What should give us incentive to labor for Christ?
5. Why will many miss out on receiving the latter rain?

First Sabbath Offering for Literature for Needy Fields

What is the opposite of confusion? Clarity! The multitudes on Earth are confused—hence the prophetic reference to “Babylon,” *i.e.*, confusion. People’s discernment, perception, and understanding all are foggy. They need clarity. Distinct truths need to be taught.

Will they listen? A few will; many will not—but they might look. They may take a moment to read something that catches their eye, and what they see may speak to the mind and enlighten the understanding.

“The way to dispel darkness is to admit light. The best way to deal with error is to present truth. It is the revelation of God’s love that makes manifest the deformity and sin of the heart centered in self.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 498. When they see the sin, they’ll long for the Saviour.

This wonderful revelation of God’s love can come through the printed pages, by means of many topics, for example:

“There should be more earnest efforts made to enlighten the people upon the great subject of health reform. Tracts of four, eight, twelve, sixteen, and more pages, containing pointed, well-written articles on this great question, should be scattered like the leaves of autumn.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 466.

“Thousands of dollars which are now sacrificed upon the altar of hurtful lust will flow into the Lord’s treasury, multiplying publications in different languages to be scattered like the leaves of autumn. Missions will be established in other nations.”—*Confrontation*, p. 60.

In autumn, the leaves that fall from the trees are so numerous, it’s nearly impossible to count them. Yes, that’s how many tracts, pamphlets, magazines, and booklets containing present truth are needed. These are vital tools in the proclamation of the everlasting gospel. The production of such materials incurs an expense that, sadly, many cannot afford to pay, either in their own behalf or to share with others. Therefore, entrusted as we all are with the task of bearing the truth to others, we each have a duty and privilege to help them receive it.

The First Sabbath Offering today is for literature for needy countries. Your generous—even sacrificial—offering can go a long way to help others learn of and prepare for the Lord’s return.

Thank you for colaboring with Christ!

The General Conference Publishing Department



The Love of Money

MEMORY TEXT: “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:8).

“In all our expenditure of means we are to strive to fulfill the purpose of Him who is the alpha and omega of all Christian effort.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 49.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 148–157; *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 99, 652–662.

Sunday

October 30

1. HEARTS REVEALED

- a. How does our use of money reveal the depth of our consecration to God? Matthew 6:21.

“There is one thing in which we must be deeply in earnest, and that is in the service of God. There is no danger of having too much zeal here. If we would only work with an eye single to the glory of God, the mists would roll away, and our views of right and wrong would become clear. We should consecrate our property. The language of our hearts would be, ‘Lord, here is the means for which Thou hast made me responsible; what wilt Thou have me do with it?’ ”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 7, 1886.

“Money is a trust from God. It is not ours to expend for the gratification of pride or ambition.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 287.

- b. How does David’s devotion to God stand as an inspiration as well as a rebuke to many of us? 1 Chronicles 29:3–5.

“Is gratitude dead in the heart? Does not the cross of Christ put to shame a life of selfish ease and indulgence? . . . We are reaping the fruits of this infinite self-sacrifice; and yet, when labor is to be done, when our money is wanted to aid the work of the Redeemer in the salvation of souls, we shrink from duty and pray to be excused.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 21.

2. BEING AWARE OF THE ENEMY'S PLAN

- a. How are we warned of a sinister plot against Sabbathkeepers? Matthew 20:1–9.
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“Those who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour were thankful for an opportunity to work. Their hearts were full of gratitude to the one who had accepted them; and when at the close of the day the householder paid them for a full day’s work, they were greatly surprised. They knew they had not earned such wages. And the kindness expressed in the countenance of their employer filled them with joy. They never forgot the goodness of the householder or the generous compensation they had received. Thus it is with the sinner who, knowing his unworthiness, has entered the Master’s vineyard at the eleventh hour. His time of service seems so short, he feels that he is undeserving of reward; but he is filled with joy that God has accepted him at all. He works with a humble, trusting spirit, thankful for the privilege of being a coworker with Christ. This spirit God delights to honor.

The Lord desires us to rest in Him without a question as to our measure of reward. When Christ abides in the soul, the thought of reward is not uppermost. This is not the motive that actuates our service. It is true that in a subordinate sense we should have respect to the recompense of reward. God desires us to appreciate His promised blessings. But He would not have us eager for rewards nor feel that for every duty we must receive compensation. We should not be so anxious to gain the reward as to do what is right, irrespective of all gain. Love to God and to our fellow men should be our motive.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 397–399.

- b. Why are we specifically warned against covetousness? Luke 12:15.
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“Selfishness and covetousness lurking in the human heart are most powerful passions, and the outcome of the conflict is not a mere conjecture. Unless the soul is daily living upon Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood, the godly element will be overcome by the satanic. Selfishness and covetousness will bear away the victory. A self-confident, independent spirit will never enter into the kingdom of God. It is only those who are partakers with Christ in His self-denial and sacrifice that will be partakers with Him in His glory.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 216.

3. A SERIOUS MATTER

- a. How does the love of money deteriorate our spiritual life—and what is the cure for it? 1 Timothy 6:9, 10.
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“Christ offered Himself, an infinite sacrifice. This, in and of itself, bears directly against covetousness and exalts benevolence.

“Constant, self-denying benevolence is God’s remedy for the cankering sins of selfishness and covetousness. God has arranged systematic benevolence to sustain His cause and relieve the necessities of the suffering and needy. He has ordained that giving should become a habit, that it may counteract the dangerous and deceitful sin of covetousness. Continual giving starves covetousness to death. Systematic benevolence is designed in the order of God to tear away treasures from the covetous as fast as they are gained and to consecrate them to the Lord, to whom they belong.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 548.

“Self-sacrifice is the keynote of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because God sees that there is no other way to save man than to cut away from his life the selfishness which, if retained, would degrade the whole being.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 49.

“That which is eating out the vitals of God’s people is the love of money and friendship with the world.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 657.

- b. Where does God want us to focus our attention, and why? Colossians 3:1.
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“Selfishness is a soul-destroying sin. Under this head comes covetousness, which is idolatry. All things belong to God. All the prosperity we enjoy is the result of divine beneficence. God is the great and bountiful giver. If He requires any portion of the liberal supply He has given us, it is not that He may be enriched by our gifts, for He needs nothing from our hand; but it is that we may have an opportunity to exercise self-denial, love, and sympathy for our fellow men, and thus become highly exalted. In every dispensation, from Adam’s time to ours, God has claimed the property of man, saying: I am the rightful owner of the universe; therefore consecrate to Me thy first fruits, bring a tribute of loyalty, surrender to Me My own, thus acknowledging My sovereignty, and you shall be free to retain and enjoy My bounties, and My blessing shall be with you.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 476, 477.

4. A COVENANT BY SACRIFICE

- a. In view of the shortness of time before us, what should each consider in managing personal finances? Haggai 2:8.

“With many the possession of wealth has proved a snare. In their desire to follow the fashions of the world, they have lost their zeal for the truth, and they are in peril of losing eternal life.”—*This Day With God*, p. 349.

“Some close their ears to the calls made for money to be used in sending missionaries to foreign countries and in publishing the truth and scattering it like autumn leaves all over the world. Such excuse their covetousness by informing you that they have made arrangements to be charitable at death. They have considered the cause of God in their wills. Therefore they live a life of avarice, robbing God in tithes and in offerings, and in their wills return to God but a small portion of that which He has lent them, while a very large proportion is appropriated to relatives who have no interest in the truth at death.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 479, 480.

“Dying legacies are a miserable substitute for living benevolence. The servants of God should be making their wills every day, in good works and liberal offerings to God. They should not allow the amount given to God to be disproportionately small when compared with that appropriated to their own use. In making their wills daily, they will remember those objects and friends that hold the largest place in their affections.

“Their best friend is Jesus. He did not withhold His own life from them, but for their sakes became poor, that through His poverty they might be made rich. He deserves the whole heart, the property, all that they have and are. But many professed Christians put off the claims of Jesus in life, and insult Him by giving Him a mere pittance at death.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 326, 327.

- b. What specific warning concerning stewardship does Christ issue to parents? Matthew 10:37.

“Believing parents have frequently transferred their property to their unbelieving children, thus putting it out of their power to render to God the things that are His. By so doing they lay off that responsibility which God has laid upon them, and place in the enemy’s ranks means which God has entrusted to them to be returned to Him by being invested in His cause when He shall require it of them. It is not in God’s order that parents who are capable of managing their own business should give up the control of their property, even to children who are of the same faith.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 528, 529.

5. THE SAFEST DEPOSIT BOX

- a. What comforting assurance does Christ offer all who make a covenant with Him through sacrifice? Matthew 6:28–33.

“Open your hearts to receive [God’s] kingdom and make its service your highest interest. Though it is a spiritual kingdom, fear not that your needs for this life will be uncared for. If you give yourself to God’s service, He who has all power in heaven and earth will provide for your needs. . . .

“Jesus, while He dwelt on earth, dignified life in all its details by keeping before men the glory of God, and by subordinating everything to the will of His Father. If we follow His example, His assurance to us is that all things needful in this life ‘shall be added.’ Poverty or wealth, sickness or health, simplicity or wisdom—all are provided for in the promise of His grace.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 99.

“Every act of self-sacrifice for the good of others will strengthen the spirit of beneficence in the giver’s heart, allying him more closely to the Redeemer of the world.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 20.

- b. What is the most fruitful way to preserve our wealth? Proverbs 3:9, 10.

“Would you make your property secure? Place it in the hand that bears the nail prints of the crucifixion. Retain all in your possession, and it will be to your eternal loss. Give it to God, and from that moment it bears His inscription. It is sealed with His immutability.”—*Ibid.*, p. 49.

“We are to make investments in heavenly interests and always work with heaven in view, laying our treasure up in the bank of heaven.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 4, 1895.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why can money be a talent that reveals much about our heart?
2. Describe one strategy that Satan is plotting against Sabbathkeepers.
3. How are we blessed by overcoming a love for money?
4. What should be our consideration as the end of time draws nearer?
5. What promise is given those who lay up their treasure in heaven?

Treasure in Heaven

MEMORY TEXT: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19–21).

“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.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 374.

Suggested Reading: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 367–380.

Sunday

November 6

1. THE RESULT OF GRATITUDE

- a. **What vital expressions should repeatedly resonate in our hearts?** Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31; John 14:1–3.

“Let it be understood that the love of God alone can keep His people true in the self-denial and self-sacrifice that they are called to endure for Christ’s sake. Repeat often the first three verses of the fourteenth chapter of John. This scripture is a panacea for trouble, disappointment, and affliction. A conviction that the hope of eternal life is sure causes the heart to overflow with gratitude and thanksgiving.”—*The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters*, p. 5.

- b. **As we give of our means to the Lord, what should we ever keep in mind?** Psalm 29:1, 2.

“To give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man. Those who for Christ’s sake sacrifice their life in this world will keep it unto life eternal.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 623, 624.

“The recording angel makes a faithful record of every offering dedicated to God and put into the treasury and also of the final result of the means thus bestowed. The eye of God takes cognizance of every farthing devoted to His cause and of the willingness or reluctance of the giver. The motive in giving is also chronicled.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 368.

2. DIFFERENT THAN MIGHT BE EXPECTED

- a. What principle given by Jesus is a secret to a happier life? Acts 20:35.
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“The principle of worldlings is to get all they can of the perishable things of this life. Selfish love of gain is the ruling principle in their lives. But the purest joy is not found in riches nor where covetousness is always craving, but where contentment reigns and where self-sacrificing love is the ruling principle. There are thousands who are passing their lives in indulgence and whose hearts are filled with repining. They are victims of selfishness and discontent in the vain effort to satisfy their minds with indulgence. But unhappiness is stamped upon their very countenances, and behind them is a desert, because their course is not fruitful in good works.

“In proportion as the love of Christ fills our hearts and controls our lives, covetousness, selfishness, and love of ease will be overcome, and it will be our pleasure to do the will of Christ, whose servants we claim to be. Our happiness will then be proportionate to our unselfish works, prompted by the love of Christ.

“Divine wisdom has appointed, in the plan of salvation, the law of action and reaction, making the work of beneficence, in all its branches, twice blessed. He that gives to the needy blesses others, and is blessed himself in a still greater degree. God could have reached His object in saving sinners without the aid of man; but He knew that man could not be happy without acting a part in the great work in which he would be cultivating self-denial and benevolence.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 382.

- b. With what appeal does the Lord bid us align our priorities in life? Matthew 6:19, 20.
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“[God] has ordained that giving should become a habit, that it may counteract the dangerous and deceitful sin of covetousness. Continual giving starves covetousness to death.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 370.

“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. . . .

“To those who have squandered His goods, Christ still gives opportunity to secure lasting riches. . . .

“Let your property go beforehand to heaven. Lay up your treasures beside the throne of God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 374, 375.

3. A BASIC REQUIREMENT

- a. **What must every one of us keep in mind in the process of genuine self-denying surrender to Christ in preparation for the kingdom of Heaven? 1 Corinthians 15:31.**
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“The life of the apostle Paul was a constant conflict with self. He said, ‘I die daily.’ 1 Corinthians 15:31. His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did God’s will, however crucifying to his nature.

“At the close of his life of conflict, looking back over its struggles and triumphs, he could say, ‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.’ 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

“The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this warfare there is no release; the effort must be continuous and persevering. It is by unceasing endeavor that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. Christian integrity must be sought with resistless energy and maintained with a resolute fixedness of purpose.

“No one will be borne upward without stern, persevering effort in his own behalf. All must engage in this warfare for themselves; no one else can fight our battles. Individually we are responsible for the issues of the struggle.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 452, 453.

“‘Will ye shun the seven last plagues? Will ye go to glory and enjoy all that God has prepared for those who love Him and are willing to suffer for His sake? If so, ye must die that ye may live. Get ready, get ready, get ready. Ye must have a greater preparation than ye now have, for the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. Sacrifice all to God. Lay all upon His altar—self, property, and all, a living sacrifice. It will take all to enter glory. Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where no thief can approach or rust corrupt. Ye must be partakers of Christ’s sufferings here if ye would be partakers with Him of His glory hereafter.’

“Heaven will be cheap enough, if we obtain it through suffering. We must deny self all along the way, die to self daily, let Jesus alone appear, and keep His glory continually in view. I saw that those who of late have embraced the truth would have to know what it is to suffer for Christ’s sake, that they would have trials to pass through that would be keen and cutting, in order that they may be purified and fitted through suffering to receive the seal of the living God, pass through the time of trouble, see the King in His beauty, and dwell in the presence of God and of pure, holy angels.”—*Early Writings*, pp. 66, 67.

4. A GOOD HABIT FROM A YOUNG AGE

- a. How does the concept of self-denial apply even to children and youth? Proverbs 20:11.
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“Children of two to four years of age should not be encouraged to think that they must have everything that they ask for. Parents should teach them lessons of self-denial and never treat them in such a way as to make them think they are the center, and that everything revolves about them.

“Many children have inherited selfishness from their parents, but parents should seek to uproot every fiber of this evil tendency from their natures. Christ gave many reproofs to those who were covetous and selfish. Parents should seek, on the first exhibition of selfish traits of character, whether in their presence, or when in association with other children, to restrain and uproot these traits from the character of their children.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 132.

“If, while traveling, our youth will keep an exact account of the money they expend, item by item, their eyes will be opened to see the leaks. While they may not be called upon to deprive themselves of warm meals, as the early workers did in their itinerant life, they may learn to supply their real wants with less expense than they now think necessary. There are persons who practice self-denial in order to give means to the cause of God; then let the workers in the cause also practice self-denial by limiting their expenses.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 400.

- b. Give an example of how early training in economy was put into practice. 1 Corinthians 11:1.
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“When I was only twelve years old, I knew what it was to economize. With my sister I learned a trade, and although we would earn only twenty-five cents a day, from this sum we were able to save a little to give to missions. We saved little by little until we had thirty dollars. Then when the message of the Lord’s soon coming came to us, with a call for men and means, we felt it a privilege to hand over the thirty dollars to father, asking him to invest it in tracts and pamphlets to send the message to those who were in darkness. . . .

“With the money that we had earned at our trade, my sister and I provided ourselves with clothes. We would hand our money to mother, saying, ‘Buy so that, after we have paid for our clothing, there will be something left to give for missionary work.’ And she would do this, thus encouraging in us a missionary spirit.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 384.

5. CONTINUING AS WE AGE

- a. **Just as the young should lay up treasure in heaven, how also should the older ones? Psalm 116:14, 15; Luke 12:33, 34.**

“To the aged, who are losing their hold on this life, I appeal to make a right disposition of your Lord’s goods before you fall asleep in Jesus. Remember that you are God’s stewards. Give back to the Lord His own while you live. Do not fail of attending to this while you have your reason. As age comes upon us, it is our duty to make a disposition of our means to the instrumentalities that God has established. Satan is using every device to divert from the Lord’s cause the means so much needed. Many are binding up their talent of means in worldly enterprises, when the cause of God needs every dollar to advance His truth and glorify His name. I ask: Shall we not lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, in bags that wax not old? I would especially urge the aged who are soon to make a disposal of their means to remember those who have ministered faithfully in word and doctrine. Place your means where, should health and life fail, they can be invested in the cause of God. Thus they will be put out to the exchangers and be constantly accumulating. . . .

“Let your hearts be true to Jesus. Although you may feel that you are the least of all saints, yet you are members of Christ’s body, and through Him you are identified with all His human agencies and with the excellence and power of the heavenly intelligences. None of us liveth to himself. To each is assigned a post of duty, not for his own narrow, selfish interests, but that the influence of each may be a strength to all. If we really believed that we were individually a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men, would we not as a church manifest a very different spirit from that which we now manifest? Would we not be a living, working church?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 295, 296.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When we consider God’s goodness to us, how should it cause us to respond?
2. In what specific ways should I exercise greater self-denial for the good of others?
3. In what aspects of life do I need to reflect more effectively the apostle’s dying daily?
4. How can children be taught the joy of self-denial?
5. As we advance in years, what appeal continually echoes down to us?

The Tithe and Firstfruits

MEMORY TEXT: “The tenth shall be holy unto the Lord” (Leviticus 27:32).

“The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 93.

Suggested Reading: *Gospel Workers*, pp. 222–228.

Sunday

November 13

1. FROM THE DAYS OF GENESIS

- a. By what means did God reserve for Himself a portion of the garden of Eden? Genesis 2:16, 17. How does this compare to the tithe? Malachi 3:7, 8.

“The Lord created every tree in Eden pleasant to the eyes and good for food, and He bade Adam and Eve freely enjoy His bounties. But He made one exception. Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they were not to eat. This tree God reserved as a constant reminder of His ownership of all. Thus He gave them opportunity to demonstrate their faith and trust in Him by their perfect obedience to His requirements.

“So it is with God’s claims upon us. He places His treasures in the hands of men but requires that one tenth shall be faithfully laid aside for His work. He requires this portion to be placed in His treasury. It is to be rendered to Him as His own; it is sacred and is to be used for sacred purposes, for the support of those who carry the message of salvation to all parts of the world.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 386.

- b. What was the practice of the early patriarchs regarding the tenth portion of their income? Genesis 14:18–20; 28:20–22.

“The tithing system did not originate with the Hebrews. From the earliest times the Lord claimed a tithe as His, and this claim was recognized and honored.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

2. IN THE HEBREW ECONOMY

- a. **What specific instruction was given to the early Hebrew nation regarding the tithe? Leviticus 27:30–32. How is this principle emphasized in all ages? Malachi 3:10.**

“In the Hebrew economy one tenth of the income of the people was set apart to support the public worship of God. . . .

“As the Israelites were about to be established as a nation, the law of tithing was reaffirmed as one of the divinely ordained statutes upon obedience to which their prosperity depended. . . .

“ ‘The tithe . . . is the Lord’s’ [Leviticus 27:30]. Here the same form of expression is employed as in the law of the Sabbath. ‘The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God’ (Exodus 20:10). God reserved to Himself a specified portion of man’s time and of his means, and no man could, without guilt, appropriate either for his own interests.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 525, 526. [Author’s Italics.]

- b. **What was required before the tithe could be reserved? Exodus 22:29; 34:26 (first part); 2 Chronicles 31:5, 6.**

“Even before the tithe could be reserved there had been an acknowledgment of the claims of God. The first that ripened of every product of the land was consecrated to Him. The first of the wool when the sheep were shorn, of the grain when the wheat was threshed, the first of the oil and the wine, was set apart for God. So also were the firstborn of all animals; and a redemption price was paid for the firstborn son. The first fruits were to be presented before the Lord at the sanctuary, and were then devoted to the use of the priests.

“Thus the people were constantly reminded that God was the true proprietor of their fields, their flocks, and their herds; that He sent them sunshine and rain for their seedtime and harvest, and that everything they possessed was of His creation, and He had made them stewards of His goods.

“As the men of Israel, laden with the first fruits of field and orchard and vineyard, gathered at the tabernacle, there was made a public acknowledgment of God’s goodness.”—*Ibid.*, p. 526.

“Besides the tithe the Lord demands the firstfruits of all our increase. These He has reserved in order that His work in the earth may be amply sustained. The Lord’s servants are not to be limited to a meager supply.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 384.

3. PERPETUAL PRINCIPLES

- a. What was included among the reformations made in the days of Nehemiah? Nehemiah 10:34–37; 12:44.
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- b. What practice of the Pharisees met with Christ's approval? Matthew 23:23. Why does the tithing principle apply also in the New Testament era? Hebrews 7:1–5, 8, 20, 21.
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“The New Testament does not reenact the law of the tithe, as it does not that of the Sabbath; for the validity of both is assumed, and their deep spiritual import explained.

“God has made an absolute reservation of a specified portion of our time and our means. To ignore these claims is to rob God.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 16, 1882.

“The tithe should be consecrated to God. His requirements come first. We are not doing His will if we consecrate to Him what is left after all our wants have been supplied. Before any part of our income is consumed, we should take out and present to Him that portion which He claims as His. When this is done, the remainder will be sanctified and blessed to our own use. But when we withhold that which He says is His, the curse rests upon the whole, and we are recorded in the books of heaven as guilty of robbery. God gives man nine-tenths, but the one-tenth He claims for sacred purposes—as He has given man six days for His own work and has reserved the seventh day to Himself.”—*Pacific Union Recorder*, October 10, 1901.

“While we as a people are seeking faithfully to give to God the time which He has reserved as His own, shall we not also render to Him that portion of our means which He claims? . . .

“A tithe of all our increase is the Lord's. He has reserved it to Himself to be employed for religious purposes. It is holy. Nothing less than this has He accepted in any dispensation.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 66, 67.

“The small and the larger streams of beneficence should ever be kept flowing. God's providence is far ahead of us, moving onward much faster than our liberalities. The way for the advancement and upbuilding of the cause of God is blocked by selfishness, pride, covetousness, extravagance, and love of display. The whole church is charged with a solemn responsibility to lift in every branch of the work. If its members follow Christ, they will deny the inclination for display, the love of dress, the love of elegant houses and costly furniture. There must be far greater humility.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 296.

4. WARNINGS FOR US

- a. How does the tithing principle relate to the eighth commandment? Exodus 20:15; Malachi 3:8, 9.
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“God lays His hand upon all man’s possessions, saying: I am the owner of the universe, and these goods are Mine. The tithe you have withheld I reserve for the support of My servants in their work of opening the Scriptures to those who are in the regions of darkness, who do not understand My law. In using My reserve fund to gratify your own desires you have robbed souls of the light which I made provision for them to receive. You have had opportunity to show loyalty to Me, but you have not done this. You have robbed Me; you have stolen My reserve fund. ‘Ye are cursed with a curse’ (Malachi 3:9).”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 387.

- b. What must we never forget about the tithe? 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14.
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“The tithe is set apart for a special use. It is not to be regarded as a poor fund. It is to be especially devoted to the support of those who are bearing God’s message to the world; and it should not be diverted from this purpose.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 103.

“Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord’s work.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 225.

“A very plain, definite message has been given to me for our people. I am bidden to tell them that they are making a mistake in applying the tithe to various objects, which, though good in themselves, are not the object to which the Lord has said that the tithe should be applied. Those who make this use of the tithe are departing from the Lord’s arrangement. God will judge for these things.

“One reason that the tithe may be applied to school purposes. Still others reason that canvassers and colporteurs should be supported from the tithe. But a great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn from the object for which it is to be used—the support of the ministers. There should be today in the field one hundred well-qualified laborers where now there is but one.”—*Ibid.*, p. 226.

5. OUR FIRST FINANCIAL PRIORITY

a. What is the key to spiritual and temporal prosperity? Matthew 6:33.

“Not only does the Lord claim the tithe as His own, but He tells us *how* it should be reserved for Him. He says, ‘Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the *firstfruits* of all thine increase’ [Proverbs 3:9]. This does not teach that we are to spend our means on ourselves and bring to the Lord the remnant, even though it should be otherwise an honest tithe. Let God’s portion be first set apart. The directions given by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in regard to gifts present a principle that applies also to tithing: ‘On the first day of the week let *every one* of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him’ [1 Corinthians 16:2]. Parents and children are here included. Not only the rich, but the poor are addressed.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 10, 1896. [Author’s Italics.]

b. What does God declare to us about that which is His? Malachi 3:10.

“Let the Lord’s people pay a faithful tithe, and let them, also, from parents to children, lay aside for the Lord the money that is so often spent for self-gratification. The Lord has made us His stewards. He has placed His means in our hands for faithful distribution. He asks us to render to Him His own. He has reserved the tithe as His portion, to be used in sending the gospel to all parts of the world. My brethren and sisters, confess and forsake your selfishness, and bring to the Lord your gifts and offerings. Bring Him also the tithe that you have withheld. Come confessing your neglect. Prove the Lord as He has invited you to do.”—*Ibid.*, November 23, 1905.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What object lesson from Eden illustrates the tithing principle?
2. How were the Hebrews to acknowledge God’s claims before returning their tithe to God’s storehouse?
3. Why is the tithing system applicable in the New Testament era?
4. What would happen if every Christian paid a faithful tithe?
5. How does faithful tithing benefit everyone?

Offerings of Gratitude and Care for the Poor

MEMORY TEXT: “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?” (Psalm 116:12).

“Our self-denying benevolence, our willing offerings, are to give evidence that the truth has been doing its work upon our hearts.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 14, 1904.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 390–399; *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 462–476.

Sunday

November 20

1. THE CREATOR OWNS ALL

- a. Of what are we reminded when we consider the ownership of the world? Psalm 95:3–5; Proverbs 3:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19 (last part), 20.

“God has laid His hand upon all things, both man and his possessions; for all belong to Him. He says, I am the owner of the world; the universe is Mine, and I require you to consecrate to My service the first-fruits of all that I, through My blessing, have caused to come into your hands.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 72.

“Money is not ours; houses and grounds, pictures and furniture, garments and luxuries, do not belong to us. We are pilgrims, we are strangers. We have only a grant of those things that are necessary for health and life. . . . Our temporal blessings are given us in trust, to prove whether we can be entrusted with eternal riches. If we endure the proving of God, then we shall receive that purchased possession which is to be our own—glory, honor, and immortality.

“If our own people would only put into the cause of God the money that has been lent them in trust, that portion which they spend in selfish gratification, in idolatry, they would lay up treasure in heaven, and would be doing the very work God requires them to do. But like the rich man in the parable, they live sumptuously. The money God has lent them in trust, to be used to His name’s glory, they spend extravagantly. They do not stop to consider their accountability to God. They do not stop to consider that there is to be a reckoning day not far hence, when they must give an account of their stewardship.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 367.

2. THANK, FREEWILL, AND TRESPASS OFFERINGS

- a. What does the Bible teach us about giving? Psalms 50:14; 116:12.
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“Jacob felt that God had claims upon him which he must acknowledge, and that the special tokens of divine favor granted him demanded a return. So does every blessing bestowed upon us call for a response to the Author of all our mercies. . . .

“Our time, our talents, our property, should be sacredly devoted to Him who has given us these blessings in trust. Whenever a special deliverance is wrought in our behalf, or new and unexpected favors are granted us, we should acknowledge God’s goodness, not only by expressing our gratitude in words, but, like Jacob, by gifts and offerings to His cause. As we are continually receiving the blessings of God, so we are to be continually giving.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 187, 188.

- b. Why did Hezekiah see a need for reformation in Judah? 2 Chronicles 29:1–7, 27–33. What reformation do we also need today?
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“There has been a great neglect of duty. Many have withheld means which God claims as His, and in so doing they have committed robbery toward God. Their selfish hearts have not given the tenth of all their increase, which God claims. Neither have they come up to the yearly gatherings with their freewill offerings, their thank offerings, and their trespass offerings. Many have come before the Lord empty-handed. ‘Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings’ [Malachi 3:8].”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 510.

“Bring in your trespass offerings, your thank offerings, and your free-will offerings; humble your hearts before the Lord, and He will be found ever ready to receive and pardon.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 8, 1880.

“[The Lord’s] messengers should not be handicapped in their work of holding forth the word of life. As they teach the truth they should have means to invest for the advancement of the work, which must be done at the right time in order to have the best and most saving influence. Deeds of mercy must be done; the poor and suffering must be aided. Gifts and offerings should be appropriated for this purpose. Especially in new fields, where the standard of truth has never yet been uplifted, this work must be done.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 384, 385.

3. LEVITICAL LIBERALITY

- a. How has God combined duty and blessing? Proverbs 11:24, 25.
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“The Levitical dispensation was distinguished in a remarkable manner by the sanctification of property. When we speak of the tithe as the standard of the Jewish contributions to religious purposes, we do not speak understandingly. The Lord kept His claims paramount, and in almost every article they were reminded of the Giver by being required to make returns to Him. . . .

“A conscientious few made returns to God of about one third of all their income for the benefit of religious interests and for the poor. These exactions were not from a particular class of the people, but from *all*, the requirement being proportioned according to the amount possessed.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 467, 468. [Author’s Italics.]

“Whenever God’s people, in any period of the world, have cheerfully and willingly carried out His plan in systematic benevolence and in gifts and offerings, they have realized the standing promise that prosperity should attend all their labors just in proportion as they obeyed His requirements.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 395.

- b. In making monetary pledges and vows, what must we never forget? Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5; Psalm 66:13, 14.
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“God would have the members of His church consider their obligations to Him as binding as their indebtedness to the merchant or the market. Let everyone review his past life and see if any unpaid, unredeemed pledges have been neglected, and then make extra exertions to pay the ‘uttermost farthing,’ for we must all meet and abide the final issue of a tribunal where nothing will stand the test but integrity and veracity.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 476.

“God has made an absolute reservation of a specified portion of our time and our means. To ignore these claims is to rob God. Christians boast that their privileges far exceed those of the Jewish age. Shall we then be content to give less to the cause of God than did His ancient people? The tithe was but a part of their liberalities. Numerous other gifts were required besides the freewill offering, or offering of gratitude, which was then, as now, of perpetual obligation.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 16, 1882.

4. THE SECOND TITHE

- a. In the Hebrew economy, what was the second tithe—and what was its purpose? Deuteronomy 14:22, 23, 27–29; 26:12, 13.
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“To promote the assembling of the people for religious service, as well as to provide for the poor, a second tithe of all the increase was required. Concerning the first tithe, the Lord had declared, ‘I have given the children of Levi *all the tenth* in Israel’ (Numbers 18:21). But in regard to the second He commanded, ‘Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always’ (Deuteronomy 14:23, 29; 16:11–14). This tithe, or its equivalent in money, they were for two years to bring to the place where the sanctuary was established. After presenting a thank offering to God, and a specified portion to the priest, the offerers were to use the remainder for a religious feast, in which the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow should participate. Thus provision was made for the thank offerings and feasts at the yearly festivals, and the people were drawn to the society of the priests and Levites, that they might receive instruction and encouragement in the service of God.

“Every third year, however, this second tithe was to be used at home, in entertaining the Levite and the poor, . . . [Deuteronomy 26:12 quoted.] This tithe would provide a fund for the uses of charity and hospitality.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 530.

- b. How did the second tithe benefit the giver in a spiritual sense, and in what ways can it be a blessing today? Proverbs 19:17.
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“The consecration to God of a tithe of all increase, whether of the orchard and harvest field, the flocks and herds, or the labor of brain or hand, the devotion of a second tithe for the relief of the poor and other benevolent uses, tended to keep fresh before the people the truth of God’s ownership of all, and of their opportunity to be channels of His blessings. It was a training adapted to kill out all narrowing selfishness and to cultivate breadth and nobility of character.”—*Education*, p. 44.

“There will be an abundance of places to use the second tithe in doing earnest missionary work in new places.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 139.

5. GIVING IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT

- a. What should we realize in giving to God's cause? Mark 12:41–44. How can we determine the amount of first fruits and other offerings? Deuteronomy 16:17.

“ ‘How much owest thou unto my lord?’ (Luke 16:5). It is impossible to tell. All that we have is from God. He lays His hand upon our possessions, saying: ‘I am the rightful owner of the whole universe; these are My goods. Consecrate to Me the tithes and offerings. As you bring these specified goods as a token of your loyalty and your submission to My sovereignty, My blessing shall increase your substance, and you will have abundance.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 245.

“The contributions required of the Hebrews for religious and charitable purposes amounted to fully one fourth of their income. So heavy a tax upon the resources of the people might be expected to reduce them to poverty; but, on the contrary, the faithful observance of these regulations was one of the conditions of their prosperity.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 527.

- b. What attitude would the Lord have each of us manifest when giving? 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7; Matthew 6:1–4.

“The Lord does not need our offerings. We cannot enrich Him by our gifts. Says the psalmist: ‘All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee’ [1 Chronicles 29:14]. Yet God permits us to show our appreciation of His mercies by self-sacrificing efforts to extend the same to others. This is the only way in which it is possible for us to manifest our gratitude and love to God. He has provided no other.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 18, 19.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why does the Lord require us to render our firstfruits unto Him?
2. What types of offerings does the Lord still specify for us today?
3. What can we learn from the Hebrews' example in giving?
4. For what purposes might the second tithe be used in our days?
5. How is the value of a gift measured in God's sight?

First Sabbath Offering for a Chapel in Castellón, Spain

Spain, also known as the Kingdom of Spain, is a sovereign member of the European Union. Its form of government is a parliamentary monarchy. This sunny, climatically diverse country shares the Iberian Peninsula with Portugal. The nation covers an area of 195,364 square miles (504,645 km²) with a population of over 47 million. Castilian or Spanish is the official language. Around 96% profess to be Roman Catholic, yet only around 20% of those claim to be practicing their faith.



In 1958, the first Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement group was organized in the city of Barcelona. Back then, there was no freedom of conscience in our country, yet today, we are thankful to enjoy this blessing. The city of Malaga soon became the center of our work, and later Madrid, the capital city. The development of the church was slow, but with God's guidance, a sure foundation was laid.

Beginning in the year 2000, Spain opened its doors to immigration, and brethren from Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, and the Americas began to arrive. It was beautiful to see fellow believers from different countries and languages coming here to earn their livelihood. Proclaiming the present truth was a treasure borne in their hearts in this Catholic land.

We soon faced the problem of finding adequate space for all the worshippers. Renting a premise was the first solution, but it was soon overtaken by the continued arrival of dozens and even hundreds of brethren, especially in the capital city. We faced challenging times.

Then, in 2019, the officers of the Spanish Field, in full harmony with the church of Castellón de la Plana—a city on the east coast—decided to buy a property that adapts to and solves the present and future needs of the church. This property has already been purchased, but it needs to be extensively remodeled—which costs a lot of money—and our resources are limited. We therefore appeal to our brothers, sisters and friends who are members of the Sabbath School from around the world kindly to make a generous offering for the chapel in Castellón.

“There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth” (Proverbs 11:24). We thank you in advance.

Your brothers and sisters from Spain

God's Storehouse: His Church

MEMORY TEXT: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

"The church of Christ is very precious in His sight. It is the case which contains His jewels, the fold which encloses His flock."—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 280.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 9–16.

Sunday

November 27

1. A FOLD FOR CHRIST'S FLOCK

a. Why does God have a church on earth? 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places,' the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

b. What characteristics are essential in God's true church? Revelation 14:12; Ephesians 4:4–6.

"We are to unify but not on a platform of error."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 259.

2. A SAFE HAVEN

- a. Since only the presence of Christ (John 15:4, 5) in our heart can make us one in the truth, what example of the early disciples should we never forget? Acts 1:13, 14; 2:46; 4:32.
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“[The twelve apostles] were brought together, with their different faults, all with inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil; but in and through Christ they were to dwell in the family of God, learning to become one in faith, in doctrine, in spirit. They would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissension. His love would lead to love for one another; the lessons of the Master would lead to the harmonizing of all differences, bringing the disciples into unity, till they would be of one mind and one judgment.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 296.

- b. What responsibility comes to each of us when we commit our life to Christ? 1 Timothy 3:15.
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“Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He the bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the head, and the church the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church.

“The church is organized for service; and in a life of service to Christ, connection with the church is one of the first steps. Loyalty to Christ demands the faithful performance of church duties.”—*Education*, pp. 268, 269.

- c. What privilege is extended to every member of God’s true church? 1 John 1:7; Hebrews 10:24, 25.
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“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].”—*Evangelism*, p. 352.

3. CALLED TO SERVE

a. What duty of the believers is often neglected? Psalm 60:4.

“In many of our organized churches the banner of truth is trailing in the dust because the members are not doing service to God but are serving their own pleasure. They work through the influences that surround the soul. By precept and example, in self-indulgence, in their worldly habits of dress, in their words and actions, they testify against the truth, against self-denial, against the meekness of Christ. They are cold spiritually, and far separated from Christ. If they followed in the footsteps of Christ, they would be partakers of His self-denial, of His self-sacrifice, that they might lift up and save the souls that are ready to perish.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 173.

b. What is the calling of every follower of Christ? 2 Timothy 2:1–4.

“The church of Christ is organized for service. Its watchword is ministry. Its members are soldiers, to be trained for conflict under the Captain of their salvation. Christian ministers, physicians, teachers, have a broader work than many have recognized. They are not only to minister to the people, but to teach them to minister. They should not only give instruction in right principles, but educate their hearers to impart these principles. Truth that is not lived, that is not imparted, loses its life-giving power, its healing virtue. Its blessing can be retained only as it is shared.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 148, 149.

c. What helps to unify the church? Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 4:1–3.

“Never can the church reach the position that God desires it to reach until it is bound up in sympathy with its missionary workers. Never can the unity for which Christ prayed exist until spirituality is brought into missionary service, and until the church becomes an agency for the support of missions. The efforts of the missionaries will not accomplish what they should until the church members in the home field show, not only in word, but in deed, that they realize the obligation resting on them to give these missionaries their hearty support.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 47, 48.

4. GROWING AND DEVELOPING

- a. How does Inspiration depict the growth and development of the believer and of the church? Ephesians 2:19–22; 4:14–16; 1 Corinthians 3:9–13.
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“God is testing every soul that claims to believe in Him. All are entrusted with talents. The Lord has given men His goods upon which to trade. He has made them His stewards and has placed in their possession money, houses, and lands. All these are to be regarded as the Lord’s goods and used to advance His work, to build up His kingdom in the world. In trading with the Lord’s goods, we are to seek Him for wisdom, that we may not use His sacred trust to glorify ourselves or to indulge selfish impulses. The amount entrusted varies, but those who have the smallest gifts must not feel that because their talent of means is small, they can do nothing with it.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 245, 246.

“Our work was not sustained by large gifts or legacies; for we have few wealthy men among us. What is the secret of our prosperity? We have moved under the orders of the Captain of our salvation. God has blessed our united efforts. The truth has spread and flourished. Institutions have multiplied. The mustard seed has grown to a great tree. The system of organization has proved a grand success. Systematic benevolence was entered into according to the Bible plan. The body has been ‘compacted by that which every joint supplieth’ [Ephesians 4:16].”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 27.

- b. What enables talents and funds to be utilized most efficiently among believers? 1 Corinthians 1:10; 14:40. On the other hand, what causes much to be lost among many Sabbathkeepers?
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“Oh, how Satan would rejoice to get in among this people and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of regulation and order. In this way license shall not be given to disorderly elements to control the work at this time. We are living in a time when order, system, and unity of action are most essential.”—*Ibid.*, p. 228.

5. OPTIMUM SERVICE AND CREDIBILITY

- a. Describe the condition that must exist among Christ's followers to ensure success in our missionary endeavors. John 10:16; 13:35; 17:18–23.

“As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 26.

“[Said the angel,] ‘The church must flee to God’s Word and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected.’ This is indispensably necessary in order to bring the church into the unity of the faith.”—*Early Writings*, p. 100.

“Jesus has prayed that His disciples all might be one. . . . It is through this unity that we are to convince the world of the mission of Christ, and bear our divine credentials to the world.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 11, 1890.

“If there have been difficulties brethren and sisters—if envy, malice, bitterness, evil surmisings, have existed, confess these sins, not in a general way, but go to your brethren and sisters personally. Be definite. If you have committed one wrong and they twenty, confess that one as though you were the chief offender. Take them by the hand, let your heart soften under the influence of the Spirit of God, and say, ‘Will you forgive me? I have not felt right toward you. I want to make right every wrong, that naught may stand registered against me in the books of heaven. I must have a clean record.’ Who, think you, would withstand such a movement as this?”—*Ibid.*, December 16, 1884.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can we identify God’s true church?
2. Why is church membership important for the individual believer?
3. In what way may we be in danger of testifying against the truth?
4. Name some factors that will foster unity in the church.
5. How are we to bear our divine credentials to the world?

Financing God's Work

MEMORY TEXT: "We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

"God has made men His stewards. The property which He has placed in their hands is the means that He has provided for the spread of the gospel."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 529.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 571–575, 645, 646.

Sunday

December 4

1. SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

- a. What is God's method of perfecting and uniting His scattered sheep? Ephesians 4:11–16.

"In sending forth His ministers our Saviour gave gifts unto men, for through them He communicates to the world the words of eternal life. This is the means which God has ordained for the perfecting of the saints in knowledge and true holiness."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 237.

- b. How does this involve a duty and a privilege for every believer? 1 Corinthians 3:7, 8.

"The Lord has made the proclamation of the gospel dependent on the consecrated ability and the voluntary gifts and offerings of His people. While He has called men to preach the Word, He has made it the privilege of the whole church to share in the work by contributing of their means to its support."—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 303.

2. WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT

- a. How do many today repeat the sin of Nadab and Abihu? Leviticus 10:1, 2.
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“Where, in God’s directions for the support of His work, do we find any mention of bazaars, concerts, fancy fairs, and similar entertainments? Must the Lord’s cause be dependent upon the very things He has forbidden in His word—upon those things that turn the mind away from God, from sobriety, from piety and holiness?

“And what impression is made upon the minds of unbelievers? The holy standard of the word of God is lowered into the dust. Contempt is cast upon God and upon the Christian name. The most corrupt principles are strengthened by this un-Scriptural way of raising means. And this is as Satan would have it. Men are repeating the sin of Nadab and Abihu. They are using common instead of sacred fire in the service of God. The Lord accepts no such offerings.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 204, 205.

- b. What can we learn from the way Moses raised funds—and from the Israelites’ response? Exodus 35:4, 5, 21, 29; 36:3–7.
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“The plan of Moses to raise means for the building of the tabernacle was highly successful. No urging was necessary. Nor did he employ any of the devices to which churches in our day so often resort. He made no grand feast. He did not invite the people to scenes of gaiety, dancing, and general amusement; neither did he institute lotteries, nor anything of this profane order, to obtain means to erect the tabernacle for God. The Lord directed Moses to invite the children of Israel to bring their offerings. He was to accept gifts from everyone that gave willingly, from his heart. And the offerings came in so great abundance that Moses bade the people cease bringing, for they had supplied more than could be used.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 529.

“Have you brought to God your gifts and offerings out of the abundance He has bestowed upon you? Have you given Him that which He claims as His own? If not, it is not yet too late for you to make the wrong right. The Spirit of Jesus can melt the icy selfishness that pervades the soul.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 13, 1896.

3. PRACTICAL COUNSEL

a. How may we risk receiving the curse placed on Meroz? Judges 5:23.

“[Judges 5:23 quoted.] What had Meroz done? Nothing. This was their sin. The curse of God came upon them for what they had not done.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 284.

“The fruits of selfishness always reveal themselves in a neglect of duty, and in a failure to use God’s entrusted gifts for the advancement of His work.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 26.

“Only a small amount of means flows into the Lord’s treasury to be appropriated to the saving of souls, and it is with hard labor that even this is obtained. If the eyes of all could be opened to see how prevailing covetousness has hindered the advancement of the work of God, and how much more might have been done had all acted up to God’s plan in tithes and offerings, there would be a decided reform on the part of many; for they would not dare to hinder the work of advancing the cause of God as they have done.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 483.

b. What does Scripture teach about personal economy? Proverbs 21:20; John 6:12.

c. In what way do the Macedonian cries of today require something from each of us, and how are we blessed in heeding them? Acts 16:9, 10.

“Each one should strive to do for Jesus all that it is possible for him to do, by personal effort, by gifts, by sacrifices. There should be meat in the house of the Lord, and that means a full treasury, that responses may be made to Macedonian cries coming from every land. How pitiful it is that we are obliged to say to these who cry for help, ‘We cannot send you men or money. We have an empty treasury.’ ” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 298.

“We are to place in the Lord’s treasury all the means that we can spare. For this means, needy, unworked fields are calling. From many lands is sounding the cry, ‘Come over, . . . and help us’ [Acts 16:9]. Our church members should feel a deep interest in home and foreign missions. Great blessings will come to them as they make self-sacrificing efforts to plant the standard of truth in new territory. The money invested in this work will bring rich returns.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 49.

4. OUR PART IN GOD'S PLAN

- a. **How do our tithes and offerings relate to the opening of new fields? 1 Timothy 5:17, 18.**

“The tithe is the Lord’s, and those who meddle with it will be punished with the loss of their heavenly treasure, unless they repent. Let the work no longer be hedged up because the tithe has been diverted into various channels other than the one to which the Lord has said it should go. Provision is to be made for these other lines of work. They are to be sustained but not from the tithe. God has not changed; the tithe is still to be used for the support of the ministry. The opening of new fields requires more ministerial efficiency than we now have, and there must be means in the treasury.”—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 227, 228.

“The preaching of the gospel is God’s appointed way for converting the souls of men. Men must hear in order to be saved. They cannot hear without a preacher, and the preacher must be sent. This makes it necessary to have funds in the treasury in order to provide means whereby the missionary may reach destitute fields. In the light of this fact, how can those who profess to follow Christ, rob God of His own intrusted talents in tithes and offerings? Is it not refusing bread to starving souls? To withhold the means which God has claimed as His own, whereby He has made provision that souls shall be saved, will surely bring a curse upon those who thus rob God. Souls for whom Christ has died, are denied the privilege of hearing the truth, because men refuse to carry out the measures which God has provided for the enlightenment of the lost.

“Money is not to be furnished for the carrying out of the work of the gospel in some mysterious way, and through unseen, mysterious agencies. God will not shower money from the windows of heaven to do His appointed work, to spread the truth in our world, and to save souls unto eternal life. He has made His people stewards of His means to be used for His glory in blessing humanity. . . . God will not pour out gold and silver from the windows of heaven, but that which is of infinitely greater value. He says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon you.’ ”
—*The Home Missionary*, April 1, 1895.

- b. **How does David encourage us to be liberal givers? 1 Chronicles 29:10–14.**

“Should means flow into the treasury in accordance with this divinely appointed plan—a tenth of all the increase, and liberal offerings—there would be an abundance for the advancement of the Lord’s work.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 75.

5. A RESPONSIBILITY AND A PRIVILEGE

- a. How do God's people hasten or delay Christ's return in the clouds of glory? 2 Peter 3:11, 12.
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“Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 633, 634.

“The work of God, which should be going forward with tenfold its present strength and efficiency, is kept back, like a spring season held by the chilling blast of winter, because some of God's professed people are appropriating to themselves the means that should be dedicated to His service. Because Christ's self-sacrificing love is not interwoven in the life practices, the church is weak where it should be strong. By its own course it has put out its light and robbed millions of the gospel of Christ.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 54.

- b. What privilege is extended to every believer? 1 Corinthians 3:9.
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“God has made men His almoners, copartners with Himself in the great work of advancing His kingdom on the earth; but they may pursue the course pursued by the unfaithful servant, and by so doing lose the most precious privileges ever granted to men. For thousands of years God has worked through human agencies, but at His will He can drop out the selfish, the money-loving, and the covetous. He is not dependent upon our means, and He will not be restricted by the human agent. He can carry on His own work though we act no part in it. But who among us would be pleased to have the Lord do this?”—*Ibid.*, pp. 198, 199.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is one way we can help to perfect and unite God's people?
2. How do wrong methods of raising funds contrast with God's way?
3. How can little personal expenditures hinder God's work?
4. What would happen if all cultivated the magnanimity of David?
5. How may we be hastening or delaying our Lord's return?

Biblical Principles of Finance

MEMORY TEXT: “All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 28:2).

“No man can lay up treasure in heaven without finding his life on earth thereby enriched and ennobled.”—*Education*, p. 145.

Suggested Readings: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 70–76;
Education, pp. 135–145.

Sunday

December 11

1. PERSONAL FINANCES

- a. What may result now and eternally from neglecting the Lord’s cause? Haggai 1:5–11.

“Those who are selfishly withholding their means need not be surprised if God’s hand scatters. That which should have been devoted to the advancement of the work and cause of God, but which has been withheld, may be entrusted to a reckless son, and he may squander it. A fine horse, the pride of a vain heart, may be found dead in the stable. Occasionally a cow may die. Losses of fruit or other crops may come. God can scatter the means He has lent to His stewards, if they refuse to use it to His glory. Some, I saw, may have none of these losses to remind them of their remissness in duty, but their cases may be the more hopeless.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 661, 662.

“The neglect to confess Christ in your account books cuts you off from the great privilege of having your name registered in the Lamb’s book of life.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 192.

- b. What should be considered by all who habitually tend to ask help, instead of offering it? Deuteronomy 28:12, 13.

“Those who share in Christ’s glory must share also in His ministry, helping the weak, the wretched, and the despondent.”—*Counsels for the Church*, p. 60.

2. CONDITIONAL PROMISES

- a. **What does God desire for His people even today? Deuteronomy 28:1–6.**
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“The word comes to every believer, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’ [Isaiah 40:3]. Economize in your expenditure of means upon yourself. The first step of self-denial is generally the most difficult but begin without delay. Your self-denying offerings shall be used in this field to supply workers to give the last message of mercy to a fallen world.”—*The General Conference Bulletin*, April 1, 1899.

“It is not God’s purpose that Christians, whose privileges far exceed those of the Jewish nation, shall give less freely than they gave. ‘Unto whomsoever much is given,’ the Saviour declared, ‘of him shall be much required.’ Luke 12:48. The liberality required of the Hebrews was largely to benefit their own nation; today the work of God extends over all the earth. In the hands of His followers, Christ has placed the treasures of the gospel, and upon them He has laid the responsibility of giving the glad tidings of salvation to the world. Surely our obligations are much greater than were those of ancient Israel.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 337, 338.

- b. **What promises are assured to all who follow God’s financial plan? Malachi 3:11, 12.**
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“All may feel that they can act a part in carrying forward the precious work of salvation. Every man, woman, and youth may become a treasurer for the Lord, and may be an agent to meet the demands upon the treasury. Says the apostle, ‘Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him’ (1 Corinthians 16:2).

“Great objects are accomplished by this system. If one and all would accept it, each would be made a vigilant and faithful treasurer for God; and there would be no want of means with which to carry forward the great work of sounding the last message of warning to the world. The treasury will be full if all adopt this system, and the contributors will not be left the poorer. Through every investment made, they will become more wedded to the cause of present truth.”—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 304, 305.

3. LESSONS FROM THE DAYS OF CHRIST

- a. How can the wise men's devotion to the Child of Bethlehem serve as an encouragement to us? Matthew 2:1, 2, 11.
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"The magi had been among the first to welcome the Redeemer. Their gift was the first that was laid at His feet. And through that gift, what privilege of ministry was theirs! The offering from the heart that loves, God delights to honor, giving it highest efficiency in service for Him. If we have given our hearts to Jesus, we also shall bring our gifts to Him. Our gold and silver, our most precious earthly possessions, our highest mental and spiritual endowments, will be freely devoted to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 65.

- b. What should we learn from Mary's anointing of Jesus? Mark 14:3.
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"In determining the proportion to be given to the cause of God, be sure to exceed, rather than fall short, of the requirements of duty. Consider for whom the offering is to be made. This recollection will put covetousness to flight. Only consider the great love wherewith Christ has loved us, and our richest offerings will seem unworthy of His acceptance. When Christ is the object of our affections, those who have received His pardoning love will not stop to calculate the value of the alabaster box of precious ointment. Covetous Judas could do this; but the receiver of the gift of salvation will only regret that the offering has not a richer perfume and greater value."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 485.

- c. How can those who are habitually dependent on charity become—like Mary—givers of charity? Acts 20:35.
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"If those who have not made life a success were willing to be instructed, they could train themselves to habits of self-denial and strict economy, and have the satisfaction of being distributors, rather than receivers, of charity. There are many slothful servants. If they would do what it is in their power to do they would experience so great a blessing in helping others that they would indeed realize that 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' [Acts 20:35]."—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 400, 401.

4. IN THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES

- a. In proclaiming the gospel, what intensity of purpose should we share with the early Christians? Acts 4:32–37.
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“[Acts 4:34, 35 quoted.] This liberality on the part of the believers was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit. The converts to the gospel were ‘of one heart and of one soul’ [verse 32]. One common interest controlled them—the success of the mission entrusted to them; and covetousness had no place in their lives. Their love for their brethren and the cause they had espoused, was greater than their love of money and possessions. Their works testified that they accounted the souls of men of higher value than earthly wealth.

“Thus it will ever be when the Spirit of God takes possession of the life. Those whose hearts are filled with the love of Christ, will follow the example of Him who for our sake became poor, that through His poverty we might be made rich. Money, time, influence—all the gifts they have received from God’s hand, they will value only as a means of advancing the work of the gospel. Thus it was in the early church; and when in the church of today it is seen that by the power of the Spirit the members have taken their affections from the things of the world, and that they are willing to make sacrifices in order that their fellow men may hear the gospel, the truths proclaimed will have a powerful influence upon the hearers.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 70, 71.

- b. What can we learn from Ananias and Sapphira’s artful deceit and its dire consequence? Acts 5:1–11.
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“Desiring to gain a reputation for self-sacrifice, liberality, and devotion to the Christian faith, Ananias and Sapphira sold their property, and laid part of the proceeds at the feet of the apostles, pretending they had given it all. They had not been urged to give all they had to the cause. God would have accepted part. But they desired it to be thought that they had given all. Thus they thought to gain the reputation they coveted, and at the same time keep back part of their money. They thought they had been successful in their scheme; but they were cheating the Lord, and He dealt summarily with this, the first case of deception and falsehood in the newly formed church. He slew them both, as a warning to all of the danger of sacrificing truth to gain favor.”—*Medical Ministry*, pp. 126, 127.

5. SYSTEMATIC SELF-DENIAL

- a. **What must we realize in the operation and financial sustenance of God's cause in this earth? 1 Corinthians 14:33.**

"[God] desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 96.

- b. **What must we learn from the ways in which God's faithful people have exemplified self-denial? Hebrews 11:8–10, 24–26, 37–40.**

"There was a time when there were but few who listened to and embraced the truth, and they had not much of this world's goods. Then it was necessary for some to sell their houses and lands, and obtain cheaper, while their means were freely lent to the Lord to publish the truth, and otherwise aid in advancing the cause of God. These self-sacrificing ones endured privations; but if they endure unto the end, great will be their reward.

"God has been moving upon many hearts. The truth for which a few sacrificed so much has triumphed, and multitudes have laid hold of it. In the providence of God, those who have means have been brought into the truth, that, as the work increases, the wants of His cause may be met. God does not now call for the houses His people need to live in; but if those who have an abundance do not hear His voice, cut loose from the world, and sacrifice for God, He will pass them by and will call for those who are willing to do anything for Jesus, even to sell their homes to meet the wants of the cause. God will have freewill offerings. Those who give must esteem it a privilege to do so."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 215.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can a receiver of charity become its distributor?
2. How should our benevolence compare to that of the ancient Jews?
3. What examples of generosity in Christ's day should inspire us?
4. What can we learn from the spirit of the early Christian church?
5. How can the self-denial of the pioneers of present truth be revived today?

Finishing the Work

MEMORY TEXT: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

“Those who rejoice in the precious light of truth should feel a burning desire to have it sent everywhere.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 42.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 51–60; *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 382–385.

Sunday

December 18

1. ANSWERING THE MACEDONIAN CRY

- a. Although literature is a powerful missionary tool, what steps must follow in order to complete the gospel commission? Matthew 28:18–20. How can this need for diligent gospel workers be fulfilled? Isaiah 52:7, 8.

“This work of faithfully bringing in all the tithes, that there may be meat in the house of God, would supply laborers for both home and foreign fields. Although books and publications upon present truth are pouring out their treasures of knowledge to all parts of the world, yet missionary posts must be established at different points. The living preacher must proclaim the words of life and salvation. There are open fields inviting workers to enter. The harvest is ripe, and the earnest Macedonian cry for laborers is heard from every part of the world.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 39.

- b. What urgent work needs to be done? Mark 16:15.

“The magnitude of our work calls for willing liberality on the part of the people of God. In Africa, in China, in India, there are thousands, yes, millions, who have not heard the message of the truth for this time. They must be warned. The islands of the sea are waiting for a knowledge of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 51.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S TITHE

- a. How does Inspiration emphasize the personal, human element in soul-saving? Romans 10:13–15. How can we all be involved? Revelation 22:17.
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“The preaching of the gospel is God’s appointed way for converting the souls of men. Men must hear in order to be saved. They cannot hear without a preacher, and the preacher must be sent. This makes it necessary to have funds in the treasury in order to provide means whereby the missionary may reach destitute fields. In the light of this fact, how can those who profess to follow Christ, rob God of His own entrusted talents in tithes and offerings? Is it not refusing bread to starving souls? To withhold the means which God has claimed as His own, whereby He has made provision that souls shall be saved, will surely bring a curse upon those who thus rob God.”—*The Home Missionary*, April 1, 1895.

- b. What does God require if we neglect to return His tithe on time? Leviticus 27:31. What experience of a local church in the year 1889 can encourage all today?
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“The last Sabbath of the old year, we invited those who felt that they must make confession, to go into one of the vestries, and here a special opportunity was given them. I had spoken upon the last chapter of Malachi: ‘Will a man rob God?’ ‘Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.’ Many confessions were made upon this point. . . .

“Some of those who had not been dealing justly with God, and consequently had been separating themselves from Him, began to restore that which they had withheld. One brother had not paid tithes for two years. He gave his note to the secretary of the conference for the tithe he had withheld and the interest on it, amounting to \$571.50. I thank the Lord that he had the courage to do this. Another gave his note for \$300. Another man who had backslidden from God so far that but little hope was cherished that he would ever turn his feet into the path of righteousness again, gave his note for \$1,000. It was proposed that these long-withheld tithes and offerings be devoted to the Central European Mission; so with these and the Christmas donations, nearly \$6,000 has come into the treasury from this church to be applied to the missionary cause.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 643, 644.

3. LEARNING FAITHFUL FORESIGHT

- a. What objection was made against Mary's generosity towards Jesus? John 12:3-6. How did Christ commend Mary, and how are we warned against making similar objections today? Mark 14:7-9.
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"We make progressive movements; but at every step prejudice and false ideas must be removed. This has been the case with every reformatory movement the world has ever seen. To some of small faith and selfish, money-loving disposition, each advance move has portended general disaster and an extravagant outlay of means. They have felt as did that poor man Judas when the ointment was poured upon the head of Jesus. Why this great waste? said he; this ought to have been sold, and the money given to the poor. Again and again, when some advance step has been taken, the selfish, cautious ones have thought that everything was going to ruin; but when the battle has been fought against all odds, they have hailed the victory as a token that God was in the movement. When it has been so fully demonstrated that the work was of God that unbelief has had to yield, the men who led out, whose foresight was greater than that of others, who worked against all opposition, are hailed as men raised up for the time, and led by the Spirit of God. Do those men who blocked the way realize the work they have done? Do they see that the addition of their money, their strength, their faith, and courage, might have made the work stronger and more influential, and that their neglect to do what they could is sin? . . .

"Would that we lived so near the cross that we could see as God sees, and work as He would have us work."—*The Review and Herald*, February 5, 1884.

- b. To what realities should we now awaken? John 4:35, 36.
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"Money is not to be furnished for the carrying out of the work of the gospel in some mysterious way, and through unseen, mysterious agencies. God will not shower money from the windows of heaven to do His appointed work, to spread the truth in our world, and to save souls unto eternal life. He has made His people stewards of His means to be used for His glory in blessing humanity."—*The Home Missionary*, April 1, 1895.

4. SAVORY SALT

- a. **What exhortations come to all who seek to honor Christ? Matthew 5:13.**
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“How much more eager will every faithful steward be to enlarge the proportion of gifts to be placed in the Lord’s treasure house, than to decrease his offering one jot or tittle. Whom is he serving? For whom is he preparing an offering?—For the One upon whom he is dependent for every good thing which he enjoys. Then let not one of us who is receiving the grace of Christ give occasion for the angels to be ashamed of us, and for Jesus to be ashamed to call us brethren. . . .

“Those who are recipients of His grace, who contemplate the cross of Calvary, will not question concerning the proportion to be given, but will feel that the richest offering is all too meager, all disproportionate to the great gift of the only-begotten Son of the infinite God. Through self-denial, the poorest will find ways of obtaining something to give back to God.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 200.

- b. **How is the present truth to be spread throughout the earth? Ecclesiastes 11:1, 6.**
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“The waste places of the earth are to be cultivated. In humble dependence upon God, families are to go forth and settle in the unworked places of His vineyard. As the reward of their self-sacrifice in order to sow the seeds of truth, they will reap a rich harvest.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 26, 1902.

- c. **What is the most urgent call of today, and why? Matthew 9:36–38.**
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“Who is to blame for the loss of the souls who know not God, and who have had no opportunity for hearing the reasons of our faith? What obligation rests upon the church in reference to a world that is perishing without the gospel? Unless there is more decided self-denial on the part of those who claim to believe the truth, unless there is more decided faithfulness in bringing all the tithes and offerings into the treasury, unless broader plans are laid than have yet been carried into execution, we shall not fulfill the gospel commission to go into all the world and preach Christ to every creature.”—*The Home Missionary*, April 1, 1895.

5. ENLIGHTENING EVERY CORNER

- a. What will be the glorious result of the gospel commission, and how can we be blessed by taking part in it? Revelation 18:1.
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“All heaven is looking with intense interest upon the church, to see what her individual members are doing to enlighten those who are in darkness. The field is the world, and the openings are so many, the work has so enlarged, that it is beyond the proportion of the means on hand to supply the necessary demands. For years the Lord has been warning His people to bind about their wants, to incur no needless outlay of means. But notwithstanding the counsel of Him who knows the end from the beginning, how needlessly has money been expended. The cautions given have been lightly esteemed, and the minds of men have misinterpreted, turned aside, or wrested the counsel of God, in order that they might follow their own ambitious projects, although by so doing, the very means by which God might have been glorified and honored in extending His truth, is lost to the cause. The Lord has graciously honored man, employing him as the human agent to cooperate with heavenly intelligences, that the light of truth may shine in all parts of the earth. The Lord has His agents who will act a part in the mightiest conflict which the world has ever seen. If the workers remain humble, learning daily, in the school of Christ, meekness and lowliness of heart, the Lord Jesus will work with them. He who is a coworker with Christ will realize that in conferring heavenly benefits on others, he himself will be benefited. He will know that ‘he that watereth shall be watered also himself’ [Proverbs 11:25].”—*The Review and Herald*, February 27, 1894.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In what sense is literature limited in its soul-saving ability?
2. What reveals the importance of punctuality in tithing?
3. How may we be in danger of repeating the sin of Judas?
4. What should we consider when deciding how much to give for Christ?
5. How will the world be enlightened—with us or without us?

Our Last Opportunity!

MEMORY TEXT: “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

“We are nearing the end of this earth’s history, and the different departments of God’s work are to be carried forward with much more self-sacrifice than has yet been practiced.”—*Evangelism*, p. 631.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 476–485; *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 445–453.

Sunday

December 25

1. BEFORE LIFE EXPIRES

- a. To what realities are we all subject? Hebrews 9:27. What should this make each of us consider—whether old, young, sick, or healthy? Romans 12:11.

“It often happens that an active businessman is cut down without a moment’s warning and on examination his business is found to be in a most perplexing condition. In the effort to settle his estate the lawyers’ fees eat up a large share, if not all, of the property, while his wife and children and the cause of Christ are robbed. Those who are faithful stewards of the Lord’s means will know just how their business stands, and, like wise men, they will be prepared for any emergency. Should their probation close suddenly, they would not leave such great perplexity upon those who are called to settle their estate.

“Many are not exercised upon the subject of making their wills while they are in apparent health. But this precaution should be taken by our brethren. They should know their financial standing and should not allow their business to become entangled. They should arrange their property in such a manner that they may leave it at any time.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 482.

- b. In planning our wills, what should we consider? Isaiah 38:1.

2. PREPARING FOR THE END

- a. **Since thousands of dollars are lost because people die without making a legal will, what need should be brought to the attention of the believers? 1 Corinthians 4:2.**
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“Some wills are made in so loose a manner that they will not stand the test of the law, and thus thousands of dollars have been lost to the cause. Our brethren should feel that a responsibility rests upon them, as faithful servants in the cause of God, to exercise their intellect in regard to this matter, and secure to the Lord His own.

“Many manifest a needless delicacy on this point. They feel that they are stepping upon forbidden ground when they introduce the subject of property to the aged or to invalids in order to learn what disposition they design to make of it. But this duty is just as sacred as the duty to preach the word to save souls. Here is a man with God’s money or property in his hands. He is about to change his stewardship. Will he place the means which God has lent him to be used in His cause, in the hands of wicked men, just because they are his relatives? Should not Christian men feel interested and anxious for that man’s future good as well as for the interest of God’s cause, that he shall make a right disposition of his Lord’s money, the talents lent him for wise improvement? Will his brethren stand by and see him losing his hold on this life and at the same time robbing the treasury of God? This would be a fearful loss to himself and to the cause; for, by placing his talent of means in the hands of those who have no regard for the truth of God, he would, to all intents and purposes, be wrapping it in a napkin and hiding it in the earth.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 479.

“Death will not come one day sooner, brethren, because you have made your will. In disposing of your property by will to your relatives, be sure that you do not forget God’s cause. You are His agents, holding His property; and His claims should have your first consideration. Your wife and children, of course, should not be left destitute; provision should be made for them if they are needy. But do not, simply because it is customary, bring into your will a long line of relatives who are not needy.”—*Ibid.*, p. 482.

- b. **Whether we live or die, what does God expect each of us to remember? Romans 14:8, 12.**
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3. THE FINAL WORK

- a. **What is our duty in these last days?** 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6; Zechariah 10:1. How can we receive the latter rain or “refreshing”? Acts 3:19–21.

“The great outpouring of the Spirit of God, which lightens the whole earth with His glory, will not come until we have an enlightened people, that know by experience what it means to be laborers together with God. When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God. God cannot pour out His Spirit when selfishness and self-indulgence are so manifest; when a spirit prevails that, if put into words, would express that answer of Cain—‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ [Genesis 4:9].”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 52.

“God calls for men to give the warning to the world that is asleep, dead in trespasses and sins. He calls for freewill offerings from those whose hearts are in the work, who have a burden for souls, that they shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 446.

- b. **What should be foremost in our mind today, as individuals and as a church organization?** Ecclesiastes 8:5; John 9:4.

“We ought now to be heeding the injunction of our Saviour: ‘Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not’ [Luke 12:33]. It is now that our brethren should be cutting down their possessions instead of increasing them. We are about to move to a better country, even a heavenly. Then let us not be dwellers upon the earth, but be getting things into as compact a compass as possible.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 152.

“For what shall we hoard up treasures? To be swept away by the flames of the last day? Shall we lay up gold and silver to be a witness against us in the Judgment—to eat our flesh as it were fire? Shall we cling to our possessions till they fall into the hands of our enemies? The time is coming when commandment keepers can neither buy nor sell. Of what use will houses and lands, bank stock and merchandise, be to us then? Now is the time to place our treasures where they will be eternally secure.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 6, 1887.

4. PRACTICAL PREPARATION

- a. **Why hasn't Christ returned yet? 2 Peter 3:9. How can we avoid losing all our means in the prophecy that is soon to be fulfilled? Isaiah 2:20; Ezekiel 7:19; Psalm 96:4-8.**
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"If our brethren would learn the value of souls in the light of what their salvation has cost Jesus, they would know that souls are of greater value than houses and lands, gold and precious stones, or high positions of honor."—*The Review and Herald*, February 5, 1884.

"The work of God is to become more extensive, and if His people follow His counsel, there will not be much means in their possession to be consumed in the final conflagration. All will have laid up their treasure where moth and rust cannot corrupt; and the heart will not have a cord to bind it to earth."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 60.

- b. **What does Christ promise to all who through faithful sacrifice are seriously preparing for His return? Isaiah 33:14-17.**
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"It is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble. I saw that if the saints had food laid up by them or in the field in the time of trouble, when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it would be taken from them by violent hands and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites.

"Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things. Then they will be free in the time of trouble and have no clogs to weigh them down."—*Early Writings*, pp. 56, 57.

5. A HIGH-YIELD INVESTMENT

- a. **Where is the best investment available today—and why? Luke 12:32–34.**

“Let us be honest with the Lord. All the blessings that we enjoy come from Him; and if He has entrusted us with the talent of means, that we may help to do His work, shall we hold back? Shall we say, No, Lord; my children would not be pleased, and therefore I shall venture to disobey God, burying His talent in the earth?

“There should be no delay. The cause of God demands your assistance. We ask you, as the Lord’s stewards, to put His means into circulation, to provide facilities by which many will have the opportunity of learning what is truth.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 44, 45.

- b. **What declaration will the Lord make at the end of time? Psalm 50:3–5. How will all who make a covenant by sacrifice be richly rewarded? 1 Corinthians 15:51–58.**

“There is reward for the wholehearted, unselfish workers who enter this field, and also for those who contribute willingly for their support. Those engaged in active service in the field, and those who give of their means to sustain these workers, will share the reward of the faithful. . . .

“The self-denial they have practiced in order to support the work is remembered no more. As they look upon the souls they sought to win to Jesus, and see them saved, eternally saved—monuments of God’s mercy and of a Redeemer’s love—there ring through the arches of heaven shouts of praise and thanksgiving.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 348, 349.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **What superstition about making wills is detrimental to God’s cause?**
2. **Why should we not neglect to speak about making wills?**
3. **What is one reason why many will fail to receive the latter rain?**
4. **What should we realize before the approaching time of trouble?**
5. **How and when is the interest paid on treasure laid up in heaven?**

Waking up to Practical Stewardship

“We are standing upon the verge of the eternal world. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many is waxing cold. Instead of this, love for God, love for purity, truth, and holiness, should be increasing in our hearts. The increase of wickedness around us should awaken in us more earnest zeal and stronger determination. . . .

“Our Lord forewarned His people that iniquity would abound in the last days, and would have a paralyzing influence upon true godliness. Wickedness is seen and heard and felt all around us. It seems to permeate the very atmosphere, and affects the faith and love of God’s professed people. It is difficult to hold fast Christian integrity.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 29, 1881.

A BOX IN EVERY HOME

“Children are to be educated to deny themselves. At one time, when I was speaking in Nashville, the Lord gave me light on this matter. It flashed upon me with great force that in every home there should be a self-denial box, and that into this box the children should be taught to put the pennies they would otherwise spend for candy and other unnecessary things. . . .

“You will find that as the children place their pennies in these boxes, they will gain a great blessing. They will tell the children of neighboring families what they are doing, and the way will open for these boxes to be placed in other homes. We are not to do anything to discourage this work. Every member of the family, from the oldest to the youngest, should practice self-denial. As the children of such families grow up, they understand something about mission work, because they are taught what it means to deny self in order that souls may be brought into the truth.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 22, 1905.

A PLAN IN EVERY HEART

“My brethren and sisters, study your plans; grasp every opportunity of speaking to your neighbors and associates or of reading something to them from books that contain present truth. Show that you regard as of first importance the salvation of the souls for whom Christ has made so great a sacrifice.

“In working for perishing souls, you have the companionship of angels. Thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand angels are waiting to cooperate with members of our

churches in communicating the light that God has generously given, that a people may be prepared for the coming of Christ. 'Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' Let every family seek the Lord in earnest prayer for help to do the work of God.

"Do not pass by the little things, and look for a large work. You might do successfully the small work, but fail utterly in attempting a large work and fall into discouragement. Take hold wherever you see that there is work to be done. Whether you are rich or poor, great or humble, God calls you into active service for Him. It will be by doing with your might what your hands find to do that you will develop talent and aptitude for the work. And it is by neglecting your daily opportunities that you become fruitless and withered. This is why there are so many fruitless trees in the garden of the Lord.

"In the home circle, at your neighbor's fireside, at the bedside of the sick, in a quiet way you may read the Scriptures and speak a word for Jesus and the truth. Precious seed may thus be sown that will spring up and bring forth fruit after many days. There is missionary work to be done in many unpromising places. The missionary spirit needs to take hold of our souls, inspiring us to reach classes for whom we had not planned to labor and in ways and places that we had no idea of working. The Lord has His plan for the sowing of the gospel seed. In sowing according to His will, we shall so multiply the seed that His word may reach thousands who have never heard the truth.

"Opportunities are opening on every side. Press into every providential opening. Eyes need to be anointed with the heavenly eyesalve to see and sense their opportunities. God calls now for wide-awake missionaries. There are ways that will be presented before us. We are to see and understand these providential openings. God's messengers are commissioned to take up the very work that Christ did while on this earth. They are to give themselves to every line of ministry that He carried on. With earnestness and sincerity they are to tell men of the unsearchable riches and the immortal treasure of heaven. They are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. They are to repeat Heaven's offers of peace and pardon. They are to point to the gates of the city of God, saying: 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city' (Revelation 22:14).

CHERISHING A SPIRIT OF SELF-DENIAL

"Every church member should cherish a spirit of sacrifice. In every home there should be taught lessons of self-denial. Fathers and mothers, teach your children to economize. Encourage them to save their pennies for missionary work. Christ is our example. For our sakes He

became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. He taught that all should come together in love and unity, to work as He worked, to sacrifice as He sacrificed, to love as the children of God.

“My brethren and sisters, you must be willing to be converted yourselves in order to practice the self-denial of Christ. Dress plainly but neatly. Spend as little as possible upon yourselves. Keep in your homes a self-denial box into which you can put the money saved by little acts of self-denial. Day by day gain a clearer understanding of the word of God, and improve every opportunity to impart the knowledge you have gained. Do not become weary in well-doing, for God is constantly imparting to you the great blessing of His Gift to the world. Cooperate with the Lord Jesus, and He will teach you the priceless lessons of His love. Time is short; in due season when time shall be no longer, you will receive your reward.

“To those who love God sincerely and have means, I am bidden to say: Now is the time for you to invest your means in sustaining the work of the Lord. Now is the time to uphold the hands of the ministers in their self-denying efforts to save perishing souls. When you meet in the heavenly courts the souls you have helped to save, will you not have a glorious reward?

“Let none withhold their mites, and let those who have much rejoice that they can lay up in heaven a treasure that faileth not. The money that we refuse to invest in the work of the Lord, will perish. On it no interest will accumulate in the bank of heaven.

“In the following words the apostle Paul describes those who withhold from God His own: ‘They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.’ 1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

“It means much to sow beside all waters. It means a continual imparting of gifts and offerings. God will furnish facilities so that the faithful steward of His entrusted means shall be supplied with a sufficiency in all things, and be enabled to abound to every good work. ‘As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.’ 2 Corinthians 9:9, 10. The seed sown with full, liberal hand is taken care of by the Lord. He who ministers seed to the sower gives His worker that which enables him to cooperate with the Giver of the seed.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 129–132.

First Sabbath Offerings



OCTOBER 1
for the Bolivian
Union Headquarters
(see p. 4.)

NOVEMBER 5
for Literature for
Needy Fields
(see p. 30.)



DECEMBER 3
for a Chapel in
Castellón, Spain
(see p. 51.)