

Lord of Our Resources (Gifts)



SABBATH—AUGUST 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Deuteronomy 8:7-18; Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 24:45-51; 1 Corinthians 9:11-14; Philippians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:5; James 1:16, 17.

MEMORY VERSE: “Every good and perfect gift is from God. It comes down from the Father. He created the heavenly lights. He does not change like shadows that move” (James 1:17, NIV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Every good and perfect gift comes from God. We are not owners but stewards (managers) of these gifts the Lord kindly gives us for our use.

THE GREATEST GIFT. The psalmist¹ reminds us that “the earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it. The world belongs to him. And so do all those who live in it” (Psalm 24:1, NIV). Every good and perfect gift we receive comes from God’s hand. The greatest gift of all was given when God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. “God poured out all heaven to man in that one great gift. And then He finished the work by giving man unlimited blessings, from gift to gift. In this way, He opened to our view all the treasures of the future world.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, “Missionary Work,” *Signs of the Times*, August 17, 1891.

We have been saved by Jesus’ blood. So He is Lord of all our resources. This is because all our resources come only from Him, not from ourselves. We are stewards (managers) of these gifts. We do not own the gifts. As stewards, we announce to the world that we belong to the Master. We announce that He gave us these gifts to manage. We must accept the responsibilities of a steward by acting in Jesus’ place.

Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 20.

¹psalmist—person who wrote the psalm.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 14**GIVING THANKS FOR EVERY
GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT
(James 1:16, 17).**

What truth does James give in James 1:16, 17? What are some of these gifts? What error is he trying to help his readers avoid?

Our culture tells us we get what we earn and we control what belongs to us. But the Bible reminds us we get what we do not deserve. The Bible also reminds us that the things we own really belong to God. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him. If it were not for our loving God, we would have no life, no meaning, and no future. Paul reminds us that “ ‘in him we live and move and exist [have life]’ ” (Acts 17:28, NIV).

Think for a moment about the blessings you enjoy every day. Has any of us really thought about how much we have to be thankful for? What do you own that did not first belong to God, our Creator? Wealth, power, and honor did not start with you. They started with God. God created all things. It is very important to always remember that truth.

How does the Sabbath remind us that our blessings start with God? Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15.



**God created us. Without Him,
we have no life.**

What danger did the children of Israel face as they prepared to take over the Promised Land filled with many blessings? Deuteronomy 8:7-18. How do we face the same danger?

What gifts has God given you? Why are these gifts so important? What can we do to protect ourselves against abusing them because we think we are “good”?

MONDAY—AUGUST 15**RETURNING A FAITHFUL TITHE²
(Malachi 3:8-10).**

The Lord gave the following command to the children of Israel through

²tithe—one-tenth of a person’s income. We are to pay back to God one-tenth of what we earn.

His servant Moses: “‘a tenth of everything the land produces [grows] belongs to me [God]. That includes grain from the soil and fruit from the trees. It is holy. It is set apart for me’” (Leviticus 27:30, NIV). The words “holy to the Lord” (NKJV) make more sense when you understand that the word *holy* means “set apart for holy use.” So the tithe is to be set apart for God. The tithe is to be used for Him and His purposes only. The tithe is something special. It is different from the rest of the “seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree” (NKJV).

Read Malachi 3:8-10. Why does God say that not paying tithe is robbery? What does that suggest about who owns it?

We see different parts of the tithing principle³ throughout the Bible. Abraham gave tithe to the priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). This is a fact in Hebrews 7:2. Jacob understood the idea of tithing (Genesis 28:22). After the Jews left Egypt, God re-established the law of tithing (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:24, 26, 28; Deuteronomy 12:6, 11, 17).

“Abraham is the father of all believers. For this reason, he is the example of tithe paying for Christians. Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God. So New Testament

believers give tithe to Christ, our High Priest of the Melchizedek priesthood (Hebrews 5:9, 10; Hebrews 7:1-22).” —Adapted from *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 272.

How do Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9:11-14 help us understand an important principle behind our duty to pay a faithful tithe to the church?

How is tithing an example of admitting that all things belong to God? Why is tithing such an important act of faith?

TUESDAY—AUGUST 16

PUTTING UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN (Matthew 6:19-21).

Rewrite Matthew 6:19-21 in your own words. Describe the important message you believe Jesus is telling us in these verses.

Jesus’ words are simple. But the idea behind them is deep. Jesus warns us that the things of this world last just a short time. Then why put all your treasure where one day it will be lost forever? Jesus is pointing us to eternal⁴ things, to heavenly things, to things that will still be here after this world passes away.

³principle—a basic rule of life.

⁴eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

How does 1 John 2:15-17 say the same thing Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21?



Do you love anything more than you love God?

How do you understand Jesus' advice to "lay [put] up . . . treasures in heaven"? What does laying up treasures really involve? Also read Luke 12:16-21.

Laying up treasure in heaven deals with our whole lives, not just with what we do with our money. What are the most important things to you? What are your biggest concerns? How much of your life do you spend on earthly things? How much of your life do you spend on spiritual and heavenly things? For example, how much

time do you spend in prayer, Bible study, or witnessing?⁵ How much time do you spend watching TV? Does your life show that you are preparing to meet Jesus and working to help others prepare to meet Him? People who are laying up treasure in heaven are daily making decisions for Jesus. They are choosing obedience over sin, love over hatred, and others over self. Laying up treasure in heaven is living the Christian life. It is a life shown by self-sacrificing love. It is a life that is not controlled by love of the world or things in the world.



How much time do you spend in Bible study and prayer?

Think about Jesus' words, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Where is your heart? What does your answer tell you about yourself and where your treasure is? Is it time to start putting your treasure into God's bank?

⁵witnessing—telling people about God through words and loving deeds.

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 17**LIVING AS FAITHFUL STEWARDS (MANAGERS) (Matthew 24:45-51).**

What message is Jesus giving us in Matthew 24:45-51?

Study the character traits of the faithful and wise servant. He is doing what his master expects him to do. It was not just that he believed correct doctrine.⁶ The important point is that the servant was obedient. The time of the master's return was not all that important. It made no difference when the master came back. This is because, at any time, he would find his servant working faithfully.

It is easy for us to criticize the unfaithful servant. But how many of us act much the same way? We use the resources (gifts) our Master (God) has given to us to serve ourselves. We may be too busy with our own desires and schedules. We do what we want instead of what God has asked us to do as stewards of the gifts He has given us.

Read again Matthew 24:45-51. How did the unfaithful servant show his attitude⁷ toward the Master? How might we show the same attitude while waiting for Christ's second coming?

⁶doctrine—church belief.

⁷attitude—how you think and feel about something or someone.

The unfaithful steward did not believe the master was not coming back. He thought the master was just going to be away longer than first expected. What could give a better picture of the danger that Adventists face? We have long been expecting Jesus to come. Often we talk about a “delay” in His coming. Have we changed how we live because we think Jesus' coming is delayed?

Suppose Jesus came back today. Would He find you a faithful or an unfaithful steward? If you answered an unfaithful steward, what would you have done differently to have become a faithful servant?

THURSDAY—AUGUST 18**LEARNING TO BE CONTENT (1 Timothy 6:6).**

Read 1 Timothy 6:6. The word “contentment” in 1 Timothy 6:6 suggests self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency means “the condition of one who supports himself or herself without help from others.” Supporting yourself without help from others was very popular among some of the philosophers in Paul's day. Paul also suggests contentment as something good. But he suggests that, for the follower of Jesus, contentment does not come from inside the person, but from knowing God.

Study Philippians 4:11-13 and Hebrews 13:5. How is a Christian able to experience contentment even in the most troublesome situations? How have you experienced some of the things Paul is talking about in these verses? What lessons did you learn in these experiences? Give examples of your situations and share them with your class.

Our contentment depends upon our confidence (faith) in our Lord and Savior Jesus. He is the One who makes us strong. He is our Rock, when everything else is moving sand. He is our Safety, when everything else is uncertain. Without Jesus, there is no true contentment.



Jesus is our Rock.

“In his letter to Timothy, Paul would advise him that it is necessary to teach and warn others that the rich easily deceive themselves into thinking they are much better off than the poor

because they are rich. They think they are better in showing wisdom and judgment, just because of their ability to get rich. In short, the rich believe that gain is godliness. This is a false, fearful lie. How few listen to the advice Paul told Timothy to give to the rich! How many fool themselves into thinking that riches are godliness! Paul says, ‘Godliness with contentment is great gain.’ Rich persons may devote their whole lives to the one goal of getting riches. But as they brought nothing into the world, they can carry nothing out. They must die and leave what they have worked so hard to get. They gave their all, even their interest in heaven, to get their riches, and have lost both heaven and earth.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 541.

Why is it not necessary for a person to be rich to think it is better to be rich than poor? Why is it not necessary to be rich to think that being rich is godliness? Why is too much effort to get worldly things dangerous? What useful steps can we take to make sure we do not focus our life on getting riches?

FRIDAY—AUGUST 19

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Contrast⁸ the story of the rich fool with the story of Nicodemus: Luke 12:13-21; John 3; John 19:38-40.

⁸contrast—show how things are different.

“By the parable of the foolish rich man, Jesus showed the foolishness of people who try to become rich. This man had received everything from God. . . . He did not understand that God had made him a steward (manager) of His things so he might help the poor. He had a blessed opportunity of being God’s servant to the poor. But he thought only of his own comfort.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 256.

“Now the Jews were trying to destroy the early church. But Nicodemus came forward in defense of the church. He was no longer a doubter. He encouraged the faith of the disciples and used his wealth in helping to support the church at Jerusalem and in pushing the gospel work forward. People who had respected him in the past now laughed at him. And he became poor in this world’s goods. But he did not weaken in the defense of his faith.”—Adapted

from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 105.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Suppose everyone felt free to pay their tithe wherever they wanted to, instead of to the church itself. Then it would be hard for the church to do its work. What should this tell us about the importance of where we pay our tithe? Discuss this as a class.
2. How does the act of returning tithes and offerings keep us from being selfish?
3. Suppose someone were to come to your class and say, “Look, I just lost my job. I have just enough money to pay the rent and feed my kids. I just cannot possibly pay tithe. I cannot get by on what I have now.” What would you say to that person? What could you do for that person?